

09/19/2015 - No 68

Big step towards title: Third victory of season for Ludwig and Asch

- Ludwig and Asch win at Zandvoort as pursuers in Porsche and BMW run out of luck
- Mistake at pit stop deprives Lamborghini of victory
- Audi man Weishaupt wins in Gentlemen class

Zandvoort/Netherlands: Mercedes-Benz pair on course for the 2015 championship, bad luck for Porsche challenger and bitter disappointment for Lamborghini team – the first of the two ADAC GT Masters races at Zandvoort delivered 60 minutes of pure drama. Current championship leaders Sebastian Asch (29, DEU) and Luca Ludwig (26, DEU/both Team Zakspeed) took a big step towards the title in the Netherlands with their third win of the season. The Mercedes-Benz duo drove an untroubled race to come home 4.6 seconds ahead the second-placed Audi R8 driven by Florian Stoll (34, DEU) and Marc Basseng (36, DEU/both kfzteile24 MS RACING). Rahel Frey (29, CH) and Philip Geipel (28, DEU/both YACO Racing) in another Audi finished third to secure their second podium of the campaign. “We had to score points, and I’m proud to say that we succeeded 100% in that respect,” said Ludwig with obvious delight. “We weren’t all that strong in qualifying, and I wasn’t expecting us to do quite so well over the distance. But in the race, everything was perfect, and if you’re driving at the front, that makes life so much easier.”

Key facts: Circuit Park Zandvoort, Zandvoort, Netherlands; Round 13/16

Length of track: 4,307 metres

Weather: 18° C, sunny

Pole position: Martin Ragginger (GW IT Racing Team Schütz Motorsport, Porsche 911 GT3 R), 01:38.895 mins

Winners: Luca Ludwig / Sebastian Asch (Team Zakspeed, Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG)

Fastest lap: Sebastian Asch (Team Zakspeed, Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG), 01:40.530 mins

Worrying moment at start for championship leaders

The route to a third victory of the season was not without drama for Ludwig and Asch. Asch realised there was a problem with a drive-shaft while heading for the starting grid. The Team Zakspeed mechanics performed sterling service in the race line-up by changing the shaft in only 20 minutes. The championship leaders then benefited from mistakes made by Porsche and Lamborghini. Pole-setter Martin Ragginger (27, AUT/GW IT Racing Team Schütz Motorsport) in the Porsche led from the Lamborghini of Tomas Enge (38, CZ/Reiter Engineering) during the first stint. A safety car deployment when Corvette driver Diego Alessi (43, ITA, Callaway Competition) made contact with a barrier and brought the field together. Ragginger and Enge then made contact in the first turn while battling for the lead on the restart. The Lamborghini took the lead, while the Porsche spun into the gravel. Ragginger was able to continue but eventually placed eleventh, meaning that co-driver and title contender Klaus Bachler (24, AUT) finished outside of the points.

Enge and team-mate Jaap van Lagen (38, NL) did not hold the lead for long, however, as Van Lagen was given a stop-and-go penalty after making a mandatory pit stop that was too short. Consequently, Ludwig was gifted P1 in the second stint of the race and secured the win at the chequered flag. With this success at Zandvoort, Ludwig and Asch have taken a big step towards clinching the title, because Dominik Baumann (22, AUT) and Jens Klingmann (25, DEU/both BMW Sports Trophy Team Schubert), who are placed third in the standings, ran out of luck and only took one point for tenth place. The championship leaders increased their lead from 23 to 48 points with three races to go before the end of the season. A total of 75 points are on the table for the winners of the remaining three races.

“We did have some luck today,” admitted Asch. “After the damage to the drive-shaft on the way to the grid, neither the team nor team boss Peter Zakowski thought that we would be able to start the race. It wasn’t easy for us as drivers to keep calm with so much going on before the start. The team members are the stars for me today. They are the ones who won the race, not us. I concentrated on nursing the tyres, because tyre degradation was another factor that could decide this race. I feel sorry for Klaus Bachler. He had a bit of bad luck, and we would much rather have beaten him in a direct confrontation out on track.”

Despite the victory, Ludwig wasn’t entertaining any talk of the title already being sewn up: “The BMW of Baumann and Klingmann starts tomorrow’s race from first place, and it has a good chance of winning. We’re way back in P9 on the grid, so we could lose 20 points to them. That would then throw the title chase wide open again.”

Stoll and Basseng drove a clean race to finish second. After a thrilling battle over the final laps, Geipel demoted the Bentley Continental of Luca Stolz (19, DEU) and Tom Dillmann (26, FRA/both Bentley Team HTP) to fourth place. Jordan Lee Pepper (19, ZA) and Nicki Thiim (26, DK/both C.Abt Racing) in an Audi R8 placed fifth at the finish ahead of the Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG driven by Hari Proczyk (39, AUT) and Bernd Schneider (51, D/Bottighofen, CH/both HP Racing). Andreas Wirth (30, DEU) and Daniel Keilwitz (26, DEU/both Callaway Competition) in a Corvette staged a magnificent charge up field. After skidding off track in qualifying, the duo had to start from the last row but succeeded in working their way up to finish seventh. Daniel Dobitsch (31, AUT) and Edward Sandström (36, SWE/both kfzteile24 MS Racing) in an Audi R8 crossed the line in eighth ahead of Andreas Weishaupt (42, DEU) who picked up the Gentleman trophy after being assisted by partner Christer Jöns (28, DEU/both C.Abt Racing). Remo Lips (32, CH/Callaway Competition) in his Corvette took second place in the Gentlemen stakes, thereby closing the gap on class leaders Dominic Jöst (37, DEU) and Florian Scholze (42, DEU/both MRS GT-Racing), who were unable to even join the starting line-up today after an accident in free practice.

BMW aiming to attack on Sunday

In the second race on Sunday, Baumann and Klingmann will be determined to keep their title challenge alive. The BMW duo start from the front row ahead of Jöns in the Audi. Nick Catsburg in the Lamborghini Gallardo shares the second row with Audi man Basseng. Championship leader Ludwig is ninth on the on the grid, while the pursuing Bachler starts from sixth. SPORT1 will be covering the second race from Zandvoort on Sunday live from 13:00 CEST.

Result: Race 1

1. Sebastian Asch / Luca Ludwig (Team Zakspeed, Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG GT3), 34 laps
2. Florian Stoll / Marc Basseng (kfzteile24 MS RACING, Audi R8 LMS ultra), +4.653 sec
3. Rahel Frey / Philip Geipel (YACO Racing, Audi R8 LMS ultra), +6.548 sec
4. Luca Stolz / Tom Dillmann (Bentley Team HTP, Bentley Continental GT3), +7.131 sec
5. Jordan Lee Pepper / Nicki Thiim (C.Abt Racing, Audi R8 LMS ultra), +18.228 sec
6. Hari Proczyk / Bernd Schneider (Callaway Competition, Corvette Z06.R GT3), +25.412 sec

Tickets, including access to the paddock, start at 20 euros

Fans who want to experience ADAC GT Masters action live at the track can now purchase tickets in advance. Prices start at 20 euros and include access to the paddock. ADAC members can take advantage of the ADAC preferential scheme. Tickets are available online at www.adac.de/gt-masters and at www.eventim.de, from any ADAC branch office and from more than 20,000 Eventim outlets throughout Europe.

The eight events and 16 races of the 2015 ADAC GT Masters season are to be staged at venues in Germany, Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands. ADAC GT Masters races will again be shown live by ADAC new live-TV exclusive partner SPORT1, who will broadcast all 16 ADAC GT Masters

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races live and in their entirety in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Broadcasts will normally begin at 1pm on race weekends.

Race schedule and venues for the 2015 ADAC GT Masters:

24/04 – 26/04/2015	etropolis Motorsport Arena Oschersleben
05/06 – 07/06/2015	Red Bull Ring (AUT)
19/06 – 21/06/2015	Circuit Spa-Francorchamps (BEL)
03/07 – 05/07/2015	Lausitzring
14/08 – 16/08/2015	Nürburgring
28/08 – 30/08/2015	Sachsenring
18/09 – 20/09/2015	Circuit Park Zandvoort (NLD)
02/10 – 04/10/2015	Hockenheimring Baden-Württemberg

Further information available at www.adac.de/gt-masters

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