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Luca Ludwig and Sebastian Asch win 2015 ADAC GT Masters

- Victory for Jordan Lee Pepper and Nicki Thiim in final race
- BMW Sports Trophy Team Schubert wrap up team championship
- Andreas Weishaupt new Gentlemen champion

Hockenheim: Luca Ludwig (26, DEU) and Sebastian Asch (29, DEU) have won the 2015 ADAC GT Masters title. In a thrilling finale at Hockenheim, with conditions made difficult by a drying track, a fifth-place finish for the duo in their Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG was enough to clinch the title. Victory in the final race of the campaign went to Jordan Lee Pepper (19, RSA) and Nicki Thiim (26, DEN, both C.Abt Racing) in an Audi R8 ahead of second-placed Frank Kechele (29, DEU) and Nico Verdonck (29, BEL, both Lambda Performance) in the Ford GT and third-placed Bruno Spengler (32, CAN) partnered by Dominik Baumann (23, AUT, both BMW Sports Trophy Team Schubert) in a BMW Z4. Baumann thus became the 2015 ADAC GT Masters championship runner-up – he would have needed an outright victory in this last race to have pipped Ludwig and Asch to the post. “It’s an incredible feeling to have won the ADAC GT Master for a second time,” said Asch. “I am very proud of this. Today we regained our former sparkle and kept our cool to secure the title.” Ludwig was overcome with emotion: “It hasn’t really sunk in. After yesterday’s race, some of us got quite nervous, and the changeable conditions could have thrown everything up in the air once again. But today, we were always in a position where we were going to take the title; there were no really dangerous moments.”

Key facts: Hockenheimring, Hockenheim, Round 16/16

Length of track: 4,574 metres

Weather: 21 °C, sunny

Pole position: Frank Kechele (Lambda Performance, Ford GT GT3), 01:38.916 mins

Winners: Jordan Lee Pepper / Nicki Thiim (C.Abt Racing, Audi R8 LMS ultra)

Fastest race lap: Florian Stoll (kfzteile24 MS RACING, Audi R8 LMS ultra), 01:54.522 mins

First stint characterised by two long safety car periods

The finale was not just a test of nerves for the title contenders. Two safety car deployments following crashes by Florian Strauss (30, DEU, MRS GT Racing) in the Nissan GT-R and Andreas Simonsen (25, SWE, Callaway Competition) in a Corvette put the brakes on the race in the first half. After starting on a wet track, Daniel Keilwitz in his Corvette took over the lead on the second corner from Kechele in the Ford, but Keilwitz could not hang on to P1 for long. Thiim in the Audi was pushing from behind and pulled past the Corvette on the fifth lap to take the lead. From that moment on, the Audi could not be caught by its pursuers. South African driver Pepper already had a lead of more than 15 seconds by the time a third safety car period was flagged up after the handover of drivers to Pepper following a spin by Michael Joos (24, DEU, MRS GT-Racing) in the BMW. After the restart, he drove a controlled race to finish ahead of the Ford and secure his maiden win in the ADAC GT Masters.

“What a great way to finish!” said Thiim. “It was the best thing that could happen to us here, and I think we deserved this success. We’ve had a lot of bad luck this year, but the team has worked hard, and I’m pleased with the win. I gave everything today, and once I’d taken the lead, I didn’t see any of our opponents in the rear-view mirror after a couple of turns.”

“I took over the car with a very comfortable lead, and there was no reason to take too many risks,” said Pepper. “But it was close once again at the restart following the third safety-car period. However, I was able to control the lead and still had something left in reserve. It’s been a tough season for us, but this is a great way to finish, for sure.”

Ludwig and Asch control the title contest

The situation in the battle for the drivers' championship was clear-cut at the start of the day: Ludwig and Asch needed to finish at least sixth to lift the title, whereas Baumann had to win. The title contenders resolutely focused on their individual targets. While Asch and Ludwig kept themselves in the Top Six throughout an action-packed race in tough conditions on a drying track, Baumann, aided by DTM star Spengler, worked his way forwards in an uncompromising and combative manner. But ultimately, it was not enough for the win that Baumann needed. Meanwhile, Ludwig and Asch were driving a controlled race to clinch the title. However, the BMW team from Oschersleben still had cause for celebration. The podium achieved by Spengler and Baumann meant that BMW Sports Trophy Team Schubert won the team classification, making them the most successful outfit in the 2015 ADAC GT Masters.

Daniel Dobitsch (31, AUT) and Edward Sandström (36, SWE, both kfzteile24 MS Racing) driving an Audi R8 LMS finished the race in fourth place ahead of the new champions. Saturday's winners Rahel Frey (29, CH) and Philip Geipel (28, DEU, both YACO Racing) placed their Audi R8 sixth ahead of another Audi driven by Stefan Wackerbauer (19, DEU) and the now deposed champion from 2014, Kelvin van der Linde (19, RSA, both C.Abt Racing). The Audi duo of Florian Stoll (34, DEU) and Marc Basseng (36, DEU, kfzteile24 MS Racing) finished eighth after an eventful race. For a long time, it looked as if Andreas Wirth (30, DEU) and Daniel Keilwitz (26, DEU, both Callaway Competition) in their Corvette were on course for a podium, but a slip-up by Wirth deprived them of a potential Top Three finish and consigned them to ninth.

Crossing the line in tenth place overall and as winner in the Gentlemen classification was Remo Lips (32, CH) partnered by Sven Barth (34, DEU, both RWT Racing Team), but it was bitter sweet victory, because second place for Andreas Weishaupt (42, DEU, C.Abt Racing) was enough for him to take the 2015 Gentlemen title. Weishaupt has been impressive throughout his debut season in the ADAC GT Masters. In his first year in a sprint series and behind the wheel of an Audi R8, he not only won the title with the support of co-driver Christer Jöns (28, DEU) but also posted more class wins than any of his rivals.

Result: Race 2

1. Jordan Lee Pepper / Nicki Thiim (C.Abt Racing, Audi R8 LMS ultra), 28 laps
2. Nico Verdonck / Frank Kechele (Lambda Performance, Ford GT GT3), +1.689 sec
3. Bruno Spengler / Dominik Baumann (BMW Sports Trophy Team Schubert, BMW Z4 GT3), +1.991 sec
4. Daniel Dobitsch / Edward Sandström (kfzteile24 MS RACING, Audi R8 LMS ultra), 3.094 sec
5. Sebastian Asch / Luca Ludwig (Team Zakspeed, Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG GT3), +5.099 sec
6. Rahel Frey / Philip Geipel (YACO Racing, Audi R8 LMS ultra), +6.082 sec

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

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