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Audi duo Niederhauser and van der Linde in maiden win for HCB-Rutronik Racing at Most

- First victory of the season for Audi in the ADAC GT Masters and a first P1 finish for HCB-Rutronik Racing
- Lamborghini pairing of Bortolotti and Engelhart in runner-up spot
- Audi driver Max Hofer wins the Pirelli Junior classification

Most: Patric Niederhauser (27, CH) and Kelvin van der Linde (22, ZA) in an Audi R8 LMS won Saturday's ADAC GT Masters race at Autodrom Most. It was a maiden victory for their team, HCB-Rutronik Racing, on only its third race in the series. The runner-up spot went to the Lamborghini pairing of Christian Engelhart (32, GER) and Mirko Bortolotti (29, ITA, both Orange1 by GRT Grasser), Max Hofer (19, AUT) and Christopher Mies (29, GER, both Montaplast by Land-Motorsport) subsequently being awarded third place in a Audi R8 LMS. "Getting the first win for our new team is obviously a very special moment," said a delighted Kelvin van der Linde. "I am very happy to be a part of it. I'm also happy for Patric – he likewise more than deserves this maiden win."

Key facts, Autodrom Most, Most, Round 3 of 14

Length of track: 4,212 metres

Weather: 19°C, slightly cloudy

Pole position: Patric Niederhauser (HCB-Rutronik Racing, Audi R8 LMS), 1:30.655 mins

Winners: Patric Niederhauser and Kelvin van der Linde (HCB-Rutronik Racing, Audi R8 LMS)

Fastest race lap: Marvin Kirchhöfer (Callaway Competition, Corvette C7 GT3-R), 1:31.800 mins

Niederhauser retains lead from the off

Patric Niederhauser got away to a perfect start from pole position to turn unchallenged into the tight first corner. Mirko Bortolotti in the Lamborghini followed him through in second place, and then came Audi driver Max Hofer (19, AUT, Montaplast by Land Motorsport). The cars behind the three front-runners were meanwhile bunched tightly together. In the battle for fourth place, Ferrari driver Luca Ludwig (30, GER, HB Racing) collided with Sven Barth's (38, GER, RWT Racing) Corvette and dropped back to the rear of the field. Several cars in the midfield were forced to drive through the gravel trap in Turn 1, including Porsche driver Timo Bernhard (38, GER, K&S Team75 Bernhard), whose car had to be recovered during a safety car deployment after the first lap. Niederhauser drew away from his rivals by posting a series of fast lap times. The Swiss pole-sitter in P1 had built up a cushion of 4.5 seconds on Bortolotti by the time the pit stop window opened. The lead for the number 31 car continued to increase steadily after the drivers had swapped places. Niederhauser's team-mate Kelvin van der Linde pulled out a gap of more than nine seconds at times on Christian Engelhart who had taken over the Lamborghini from Bortolotti. He eased off a little in the closing stages of the race to eventually win by four seconds. This was the former champion's eighth victory in the series, whereas for Niederhauser it was a first appearance on the top rung of the podium. It was a maiden win too for their team, HCB-Rutronik Racing, who are contesting only their second ADAC GT Masters race weekend at Autodrom Most.

Hard-fought battles for podium

The battles for the podium were extremely intense. Engelhart found himself under pressure in the second stint of the race from Corvette driver David Jahn, who had taken over from Barth. He won through by a mere 0.6 seconds in the end to claim the first podium finish of the season for himself and team-mate Bortolotti. It seemed that Barth and Jahn had finished third, but they were

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subsequently hit with a one-second penalty for a contact with the Audi of Christopher Mies, which had dropped the RWT Racing duo down to fourth. The final result for Barth was still enough for him to secure victory in the Pirelli Trophy class for non-pro drivers. Max Hofer and Christopher Mies had originally been classified fourth, but moved up to third after the penalty sustained by Barth and Jahn. Hofer also had the satisfaction of winning Pirelli Junior class.

Fifth place went to the Mercedes-AMG pairing of Indy Dontje (26, NL) and Maximilian Götz (33, GER, both Mann-Filter Team HTP) who finished just ahead of fellow Mercedes drivers Marvin Dienst (22, GER) and Aidan Read (20, AUS, both Schütz Motorsport). Mattia Drudi (20, ITA) and Florian Spengler (31, GER, both EFP by TECE) in an Audi advanced from twelfth on the grid to seventh place, crossing the line ahead of the Audi R8 LMS driven by Mike David Ortmann (19, GER) and Markus Winkelhock (38, GER, both BWT Mücke Motorsport). Jeroen Bleekemolen (37, NL) and Jimmy Eriksson (28, SWE, both Team Zakspeed BKK Mobil Oil Racing) finished ninth in another Mercedes-AMG GT3. Rounding off the Top Ten were Daniel Keilwitz (29, GER) and Maxime Martin (33, BEL, both Propeak Performance) in the new Aston Martin Vantage GT3 after mounting a furious pursuit from 23rd on the grid.

Comments from the winners:

Patric Niederhauser (HCB Rutronik Racing, Audi R8 LMS): “It’s indescribable, really – this morning my first pole position and now a first victory. What a great feeling. I got off to a good start. After the safety car, the R8 ran perfectly and I was able to pull out a gap. I focused on my own race so as not to make mistakes. Everything went smoothly right up to the handover to Kelvin.”

Kelvin van der Linde (HCB-Rutronik Racing, Audi R8 LMS): “It’s marvellous that I’ve been able to contribute to the HCB-Rutronik success story. Every victory is something special. It’s not easy to win in the ADAC GT Masters, so I celebrate every triumph accordingly. The car today was perfect. It was only late on that I had to watch out for the tyres and throttle back slightly.”

ADAC GT Masters race calendar for 2019

| | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| 26/04/19 – 28/04/19 | Motorsport Arena Oschersleben |
| 17/05/19 – 19/05/19 | Most (CZ) |
| 07/06/19 – 09/06/19 | Red Bull Ring (A) |
| 09/08/19 – 11/08/19 | Circuit Zandvoort (NL) |
| 16/08/19 – 18/08/19 | Nürburgring |
| 13/09/19 – 15/09/19 | Hockenheimring Baden-Württemberg |
| 27/09/19 – 29/09/19 | Sachsenring |

Further information can be found at www.adac.de/gt-masters

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