

Press Release – 31 March 2012, No 24

Lunardi / Martin, BMW ALPINA, gamble with tyres to win at season opener

- BMW ALPINA pair win the first race of the season
- Hürtgen / Schwager scrap livens up the final stages
- Oschersleben-based Schubert Team narrowly miss home win
- Poulsen celebrates victory in the amateur standings with Aston Martin
- YOKOHAMA slicks and wet weather tyres in use

Difficult weather conditions, a tyre gamble, exciting scraps and a heart-stopping finale dominated the season opener of the ADAC GT Masters at the Motorsport Arena Oschersleben. During the closing stages, defending champion Dino Lunardi (33, F, ALPINA) and Maxime Martin (26, B) emerged victorious in the BMW ALPINA from a thrilling scrap with the Schubert BMW Z4 of Claudia Hürtgen (40, Aachen) and Dominik Schwager (35, Eisenhofen). "We've won the season's first race, just like last year, and I hope now that the season takes a similar course to 2011," beamed winner Lunardi. Robert Renauer (27, Jedenhofen) and Nicki Thiim (22, DK), son of racing driver Kurt Thiim, secured third place on the podium in the FROGREEN CO2 neutral 911.

Keyfacts, Motorsport Arena Oschersleben

Circuit length: 3.696 kilometres

Weather: overcast, 8 degrees

Pole position Race 1: Christer Jöns, Prosperia uhc speed Audi R8

Fastest lap: Alfred Renauer (Team GT3 Kasko Porsche 911)

Tyre gamble at the start, key factor

A rain shower just before the race caused a slippery track and a lot of nail-biting during the initial phase. Quickest off the line was Corvette driver Diego Alessi (40, I, Callaway), who claimed the lead despite his seventh place on the grid. For the two drivers on the front row, Christer Jöns (24, Ingelheim, Prosperia uhc speed) in the Audi and Sebastian Asch (25, Ammerbuch, kfzteile24 MS Racing Team) in the Mercedes-Benz, any dreams of victory soon evaporated after making contact on the first turn, resulting in a spell in the pits.

Alessi, who started the race on wets, entered the pit lane on the fifth lap to change to slicks, allowing Robert Renauer already on slicks in the Porsche to take the lead. He retained his position until handing over to team-mate Thiim. When Thiim went back out after the changeover, however, the young Danish driver had to let through Maxime Martin in the BMW ALPINA B6 and Dominik Schwager in the BMW Z4, who had likewise begun the

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Media Contact:

ADAC GT Masters
Oliver Runschke
Mobile: +49 (0)176-222 18308
E-Mail: oliver.runschke@mac.com

ADAC e.V.
Kay-Oliver Langendorff
Tel.: +49 (0)89-7676 6936
Mobile: +49 (0)171-555 5936
E-Mail: kay.langendorff@adac.de

Web: www.adac.de/motorsport

race on slicks. Thiim's exit onto the gravel momentarily took some of the heat out of Schwager's scrap with Martin for the lead, but right to the chequered flag, a thrilling duel ensued from which Martin emerged as the winner. With this victory at the season opener, Martin continues to add to his already impressive tally of ADAC GT Masters results. So far, the Belgian driver has contested three races in the League of Super Sports Cars, winning all of them.

Surprise from two youngsters in the Ford GT

A surprising fourth place was claimed by the two youngsters, Jesse Krohn (21, FI) and Nico Verdonck (26, B, Lambda Performance), who celebrated the return of the American sports car icon Ford GT to the ADAC GT Masters by producing a strong performance, missing the podium by a narrow margin. Fifth were Christian Engelhart (25, Kösching) / Nick Tandy (27 GB, Team Geyer & Weinig / Schütz Motorsport) in the 911 ahead of the two Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG of Dominic Baumann (19, A) / Hari Proczyk (26, both HEICO MOTORSPORT) and Daniel Dobitsch (27 A) / Florian Stoll (30, Rickenbach, both kfzteile24 MS RACING Team).

New British supercar in the points at first outing in Germany

Aston Martin and McLaren, two new additions to the League of Super Sports Cars from England, finished in the top ten at their ADAC GT Masters debut. Kristian Poulsen (36) / Christoffer Nygaard (26, both from Denmark, Young Driver AMR) finished eighth in the Aston Martin, Christian Ott (Altdorf) and Alex Mueller (33, Rees, both Molitor Racing) in the McLaren came home in tenth place. The Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG of Sebastian Asch (25, Ammerbuch) / Maximilian Götz (26 Uffenheim, both MS kfzteile24 RACING team muscled in between the two newcomers.

Opening victory in amateur stakes for Kristian Poulsen's Aston Martin

Kristian Poulsen had the perfect start to his first season in the ADAC GT Masters after his switch to touring car racing. The Danish driver in his new Young Driver AMR Aston Martin V12 Vantage prevailed against Carsten Tilke (28, Munich, Prosperia uhc-speed Audi R8) in the amateur standings. Current number two in the amateur league Swen Dolenc (44, Maulbronn, FACH AUTO TECH-911) finished third. Meanwhile, Porsche driver René Bordeaux (Munich, Team GT3 Kasko) was having a nightmare ride. Three laps from the end of the race, he had to retire his 911 with a technical defect after looking set for second place in the amateur championship.

Disappointment for Frentzen, Margaritis and Stuck brothers

Ex-Formula 1 driver Heinz-Harald Frentzen (44, Neuss) and Andreas Wirth (27, Heidelberg, Callaway) in their Corvette will be hoping for a better outcome in Race 2, as will the Stuck brothers from Austria, Ferdinand (20) and John (25, Young Driver AMR) in the Aston Martin. After a promising

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Media Contact:

ADAC GT Masters
Oliver Runschke

Mobile: +49 (0)176-222 18308
E-Mail: oliver.runschke@mac.com

ADAC e.V.

Kay-Oliver Langendorff
Tel.: +49 (0)89-7676 6936
Mobile: +49 (0)171-555 5936
E-Mail: kay.langendorff@adac.de

Web: www.adac.de/motorsport

start, the Corvette duo lost three laps due to electronic problems, while the Stucks were forced to retire with a mechanical defect. Also experiencing a difficult start to the season was champion Alexandros Margaritis (27, Cologne), together with Lance David Arnold (25, Duisburg, SCHÖNER WOHNEN Polarweiss Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG GT3). The Mercedes duo started on rain tyres, were hit with a drive-through penalty and, after changing to slicks, were unable to finish any higher than 24th.

Winners Lunardi / Martin to start from pole on Sunday

Dino Lunardi and Maxime Martin will start the second race on Sunday from pole position and thus have a clear chance to double their maximum points haul. Next to the BMW ALPINA on the front row will be the pairing of Frank Kechele (25, Ulm) and Toni Seiler (54, CH, Callaway). The second row has been booked by the Mercedes-Benz driven by Asch/Götz and the Corvette of Frentzen/Wirth.

Comments from the winners:

Dino Lunardi, (#1 BMW ALPINA B6), Winner: "I started on slicks and the conditions were very difficult. I had to be very careful. After five laps, the track was dry and things improved. Because we had a problem with the air pressures, we opted for an early pit stop. It is a good start to the season. We started last season with a win, and I hope that this season follows a similar path as 2011."

Maxime Martin (#1 BMW ALPINA B6), Winner: "I had an exciting battle in the closing stages, however I had a problem with tyre degradation and dropped back after a small mistake. Luckily, I was able to fight my way back to the front."

Claudia Hürtgen: (#20 Schubert Motorsport-BMW Z4), Second: "I've been talking to the team boss Torsten Schubert all week about the start of the ADAC GT Masters, and this success at his home race is a great start to the season. The key to success today was the tyre choice, and Torsten Schubert made the right one. He comes from here, so who else would know the weather better than him."

Dominik Schwager: (#20 Schubert Motorsport-BMW Z4), Second: "I had a great battle with the ALPINA but they were too strong and I didn't really have a chance. The win would not have been possible since we are not strong enough to win, but I'm happy with the points."

Robert Renauer (#29 FROGREEN CO2 neutral-Porsche 911), Third: "In the opening phase, I tried to break away as much as possible, but I was held up by some back markers and lost some time as a result."

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Nicki Thiim (#29 FROGREEN CO2 neutral-Porsche 911), Third: "I watched the fight for victory from a distance and secretly hoped that I could benefit from the battle as a third party. Unfortunately, I made a small mistake into the gravel, otherwise the win would have definitely been possible."

Kristian Poulsen (#33 Young Driver AMR-Aston Martin V12 Vantage), Amateur class winner: "We started on slicks, which was the right decision. The first few laps were pretty slippery, but then things went very well. A perfect start to the season with a new team and car!"

As in previous seasons, all 16 races in the ADAC GT Masters are broadcast live on the free-to-air channel *kabel eins*. Viewers in Germany, Austria and Switzerland can tune in at 12.15pm on Saturday and Sunday. For continuous updates on completed laps and times during free practice and races, check out the Live Timing page at www.adac.de/motorsport.

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

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