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Tunjo/Apothéloz win the season-opener in the Prototype Cup Germany in Hockenheim

- **First victory for rookie team JvO Racing by Downforce Motorsports**
- **Julien Apothéloz wins the Junior competition**
- **Matthias Lüthen triumphs in the Trophy**

Hockenheim. The 2023 season of the Prototype Cup Germany kicked off with a fascinating and, above all, extremely tactical race at the Hockenheimring Baden-Württemberg. After roughly an hour of racing, it was Oscar Tunjo (27/COL) and Julien Apothéloz (22/CHE, both JvO Racing by Downforce Motorsports) who crossed the finish line first in their Duqueine D08 to take a commanding lights-to-flag victory. Fellow Duqueine drivers Gary Hauser (31/LUX) and Markus Pommer (32/Untereisesheim, both Racing Experience) came home second, ahead of Matthias Lüthen (42/Hamburg) and Laurents Hörr (25/Gerlingen, both Koiranen Kemppi Motorsport), who completed the podium in another Duqueine. “The joy and relief is obviously huge. Last year, I often narrowly missed out on victory in the Prototype Cup Germany. Now I have finally done it. Thank you to the team and Julien. I am overjoyed,” said a jubilant Tunjo on the podium.

The Columbian started the race from pole position. Having held onto first place at the start, he then set about pulling clear of the field in the first half of the race and had opened a gap of roughly eight seconds by the time he came in for the mandatory driver changeover. His closest rival was Laurents Hörr in the Koiranen Kemppi Duqueine. In third place at the round of pit stops was former ADAC GT Masters driver Markus Pommer, ahead of youngster Nico Göhler (19/Grasleben, both BWT Mücke Motorsport) in another Duqueine.

“I knew that the opening laps would be important, as Laurents is a very fast driver. As such, I gave it my all to keep him behind me. We had a very strong car today, which obviously helped. Once I had built up a lead, I wanted to look after the tyres a little for Julien. We also had a great pit stop. All in all it was the perfect race,” said Tunjo.

After the driver changeover, the order at the front initially remained unchanged. Tunjo’s team-mate Apothéloz was able to control the lead. However, Gary Hauser, who had taken over from Pommer, was increasingly putting Hörr’s partner Lüthen under pressure. With roughly 15 minutes of the race remaining, Hauser finally passed the North German to take second place. Meanwhile, Apothéloz went on to take a commanding victory with a comfortable lead of 8.3 seconds.

That also presented the young Swiss driver with victory in the Junior competition. “The result is obviously mega. It could not have gone better today,” said Apothéloz. “After Oscar’s super stint, I just had to manage the race. I did not come under much pressure from behind, and just wanted to

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maintain my rhythm. Everything worked superbly. The fact that I also won the Junior competition makes it twice as nice.”

Gabriela Jílková (28/CZE, JvO Racing by Downforce Motorsports) pulled off some remarkable overtaking manoeuvres in the second half of the race to work his way into fourth place. A drive-through penalty saw ‘Quick Gabi’, as he is known from GT4 racing, drop back through the field, meaning he and team-mate Lucas Mauron (24/CHE) ultimately had to settle for fifth place – behind the BWT Mücke duo of Göhler/Gustavo Kyrila (29/BRA).

Valentino Catalano (17/Westheim) and Robin Rogalski (22/POL, both DKR Engineering) finished sixth to complete a top-six shutout for Duqueine. The two Ligier JSP320 of Elio Sperandio (17/CHE, BHK Motorsport) and Max van der Snel (19/NLD) and Mark van der Snel (52/NLD, both More Motorsport by Reiter) completed the top eight. Victory in the Trophy competition went to last year’s champion Matthias Lüthen, who added another trophy to the one he received for finishing third overall.

Markus Pommer – second place for Racing Experience

“I had a good start and was able to keep pace well in third place at first. Towards the end of my stint, I actually managed to close in a little on Laurents Hörr ahead of me, but it was too late to launch an attack. We eventually came home in second place – I was super happy with that.”

Gary Hauser – second place for Racing Experience

“I was able to pass Matthias Lüthen really early in my stint of the race. I outbraked him coming into turn two. After that, I had a relatively quiet race. I tried to maintain my pace. The leader was simply too far in front. As such, I focussed on bringing home second place.”

Matthias Lüthen – third place for Koiranen Kemppi Motorsport

“The race was pretty good and we are very happy. New team, new car – given that, we can be really happy with a podium in the first race of the season. It is obviously also great to have taken victory in the Trophy competition. We want to do even better in tomorrow’s race.”

Laurents Hörr – third place for Koiranen Kemppi Motorsport

“It was a good race for us. We only received the car two weeks ago, which meant we had not had chance to do any testing with it at all. As such, we are happy with third place. We are looking at the overall standings, in which we want to be higher. As such, we will do a bit more work this evening, in order to be even faster tomorrow.”

Prototype Cup Germany calendar (subject to amendment)

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| 28.04. - 30.04.23 | Hockenheimring Baden-Württemberg (ADAC Racing Weekend) |
| 26.05. - 28.05.23 | Motorsport Arena Oschersleben (DTM) |
| 23.06. - 25.06.23 | Circuit Zandvoort/NL (DTM) |
| 07.07. - 09.07.23 | Norisring (DTM) |
| 01.09. - 03.09.23 | TT Circuit Assen/NL (ADAC Racing Weekend) |
| 13.10. - 15.10.23 | Nürburgring (ADAC Racing Weekend) |



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