

Media Information

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Title thriller in Hockenheim: Kelvin van der Linde wins his way back to the top

- **Audi driver moves to the top of the DTM table with his third win of the season**
- **Mirko Bortolotti follows in second place, just two points back**
- **Title to be decided in final race of the season on Sunday at the Hockenheimring**

Hockenheim. Kelvin van der Linde (ZA) has his fate in his own hands again in the thrilling title race. The Audi driver from Abt Sportsline won Saturday's penultimate DTM race of the year at the Hockenheimring Baden-Württemberg. In doing so, he also returned to the top of the table. The South African had to work hard for his third victory of the season and was kept particularly busy fending off the relentless attacks of Lucas Auer (A) from Mercedes-AMG Team Mann-Filter in the second half of the race. However, van der Linde showed no sign of nerves and took the chequered flag in first place after 37 laps. "That was possibly the most important win of my career. After a few laps, it was clear to me that the battle with Lucas Auer was going to run until the finish. I defended the lead with everything I had, and fortunately I did enough. We discussed many scenarios before the race. Leading the championship going into the final race was not really a realistic option," said the 28-year-old. Auer crossed the finish line in second place, 0.508 seconds behind van der Linde. Ayhan Güven (TR) finished third for Manthey EMA in a Porsche 911 GT3 R to celebrate his first podium of the season. The championship leader coming into the penultimate race, Mirko Bortolotti (I), came home fifth and now trails Kelvin van der Linde by two points in the table: "I had a super start and had made it up to fourth place. Unfortunately, I then lost that position after contact with Maro Engel. In the end, I just managed to salvage fifth place. On Sunday, we must get the very best out of our car again." The title decider can be seen live on ProSieben, with coverage starting at 13:00 on Sunday.

Key facts, Hockenheimring, Hockenheim, race 15 of 16

- **Length:** 4,574 metres
- **Weather:** 15 degrees, cloudy
- **Pole position:** Kelvin van der Linde (Abt Sportsline, Audi R8 LMS GT3 Evo2 #3), 1:48.797 minutes
- **Winner:** Kelvin van der Linde (Abt Sportsline, Audi R8 LMS GT3 Evo2 #3)
- **Fastest lap:** Jules Gounon (Mercedes-AMG Team HRT, Mercedes-AMG GT3 #4), 1:38.332 minutes

Right from the start of the 15th DTM race of the season on Saturday afternoon, there was palpable tension among the teams, drivers and spectators. Earlier in the day, Kelvin van der Linde had reduced Bortolotti's lead at the top of the table to twelve points with his third pole of the season, and he hung onto the lead at the start of the race, ahead of Auer and Güven. SSR Performance driver Bortolotti made a good start to the race in his Lamborghini Huracán GT3 Evo2, climbing from seventh to fourth place. Behind him, Maro Engel (Monaco), who lies third in the championship, slotted into fifth place in a Mercedes-AMG GT3. As the race progressed, the top five were able to pull clear from the rest of the field, with Auer a permanent fixture in Kelvin van der Linde's rear-view mirror.

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Engel was the first to come in for his mandatory pit stop and was then able to overtake Bortolotti, who had made his stop one lap later and was still on cold tyres. While Güven remained third, Auer took the lead after a late tyre change. However, it was not long before van der Linde successfully countered, and the top five found itself back in its original order – with the exception of Engel and Bortolotti, who had swapped places. Auer then switched to attack mode. He repeatedly attempted to overtake Kelvin van der Linde, and actually managed to pull alongside the Audi in his Mercedes-AMG GT3 at times. However, the South African drove flawlessly and successfully fended off all of the Austrian's attacks before eventually taking the chequered flag. The two drivers were within 0.8 seconds of each other for the whole of the second half of the race, serving up a feast of spectacular motorsport for the crowds in the busy grandstands at the Hockenheimring. Güven came home third, four seconds back, followed by Engel and Bortolotti.

Jules Gounon (AND) made a successful DTM debut in a Mercedes-AMG GT3 for Mercedes-AMG Team HRT. The Frenchman, who lives in Andorra, stood in at the last minute for the ill Luca Stolz (Brachbach), set the fastest lap of the race and finished sixth, within striking distance of Bortolotti. René Rast (Bregenz) fought back strongly, battling his way through from 16th to seventh place in a BMW M4 GT3 for Schubert Motorsport. Gounon's team-mate Arjun Maini (IND) was eighth, ahead of the second Schubert Motorsport BMW with Marco Wittmann (Fürth) at the wheel. Nicki Thiim (DK) from the SSR Performance team ended the 15th and penultimate race of the DTM season in tenth place.

Lucas Auer: "That was a very intense race. I really wanted to win, but Kelvin van der Linde drove very cleverly. He was a bit faster at the start, then I was quicker later in the race. However, I simply could not find a way past him. At one point, there was also contact, but that is racing in the DTM."

Ayhancan Güven: "After a really tough season, this podium feels fantastic. We analysed every detail during the summer break, after which we have gone from strength to strength. Third place was just reward for the hard work. It was important for me to defend my position at the start."

Result of race 15 of the season at the Hockenheimring

1. Kelvin van der Linde (ZA/Abt Sportsline)
2. Lucas Auer (A/Mercedes-AMG Team Mann-Filter), +0.508 seconds
3. Ayhancan Güven (TR/Manthey EMA), +4.194 seconds
4. Maro Engel (D/Mercedes-AMG Team Winward), +5.303 seconds
5. Mirko Bortolotti (I/SSR Performance), +6.010 seconds

Drivers' Championship after 15th race of the season

1. Kelvin van der Linde (ZA/Abt Sportsline), 217 points
2. Mirko Bortolotti (I/SSR Performance), 215 points
3. Maro Engel (D/Mercedes-AMG Team Winward), 197 points

The full result is available at dtm.com/en/results.

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