**A Lamborghini on pole at the**

**Hankook 24H Dubai**

**The GRT Grasser Racing Team will start the Hankook 24H Dubai from pole position when the desert classic gets underway for the 13th time at 14:00 on Friday. Italian Mirko Bortolotti took his place in the cockpit of the Lamborghini Huracán GT3 for qualifying on Thursday, and set the fastest time of 1:56.716 minutes to land his team on pole for the start of the first endurance race of the fledgling 2018 motorsport season. Hankook has been the exclusive tyre partner and title sponsor of the 24-hour classic in the United Arab Emirates since 2014. Despite sand on the track making for slippery conditions, the *Ventus Race* slick provided by the premium tyre maker still produced the high performance that drivers and teams have become accustomed to, ensuring that qualifying was exciting right down to the final second.**

***Dubai/VAE, 11th January 2018*** – The front row of the grid at the Hankook 24H Dubai will feature a Lamborghini and a Mercedes. The fastest man in Thursday’s qualifying session was Mirko Bortolotti (Lamborghini Huracán GT3, start No. 964), who secured pole position for the GRT Grasser Racing Team. Second place went to Dutchman Jeroen Bleekemolen (Mercedes-AMG GT3, start No. 3) of the Black Falcon team, who was just 0.035 seconds slower. His compatriot Yelmer Buurman (Mercedes-AMG GT3, start No. 2) was third fastest. The best-placed Audi R8 LMS (GT3 class, start No. 777) was that of Christopher Mies and the MS7 by WRT team in fourth place.

The lead changed hands many times over the course of an exciting qualifying session, with fastest lap times repeatedly being set on the 5.39-kilometre track at the Dubai Autodrome. Only shortly before the end of the session did Mirko Bortolotti clock the fastest time of the day. The fastest man in qualifying was actually Christopher Mies. However, the Audi driver’s best time did not count, as it was achieved during a yellow-flag period. The race tyre provided by title sponsor Hankook, which provides a standard premium compound for all tyre dimensions, consistently provided all the drivers with plenty of grip on the slippery asphalt, making it possible to lap quickly right through to the end of the session. The new Audi R8 LMS GT (GT4, star No. 248) run by the Phoenix Racing team enjoyed a successful debut, ending the qualifying session on the Hankook tyre in first place in the GT4 class. The debut of the Besagroup Racing team’s Mercedes-AMG GT R SP-X (GT4, start No. 233) also began successfully with second place in the same class.

Manfred Sandbichler, Hankook Motorsport Director Europe: “We can look forward to an exciting 24-hour race in Dubai on Friday. Qualifying showed how evenly matched all the favourites are, and that nobody can predict the result of this classic. Our race tyre was praised by all the teams and drivers. It is not only quick, but also gives the drivers the security you need to be successful in an endurance race.”

91 teams and a total of 394 drivers will line up in seven different classes at round one of the 2018 24H Series powered by Hankook, which comprises nine rounds in Europe, the USA and Asia. The race gets underway at 14:00 on Friday, and takes place on the Grand Prix circuit at the Dubai Autodrome. The 5.39-kilometre circuit is driven in a clockwise direction and is regarded as one of the most modern racetracks in the world. With a combination of technically demanding and fast passages, as well as 19 corners, the Dubai Autodrome places the highest demands on the drivers, cars and the Hankook race tyre.

**Mirko Bortolotti** (Lamborghini Huracán GT3), GRT Grasser Racing Team: “I am very happy with the Hankook race tyre, on which I also drove here in Dubai last year. The slick has a high peak and is very consistent. We did not have any issues at all and are very happy with the Hankook tyres.”

**Jeroen Bleekemolen** (Mercedes-AMG GT3), Black Falcon: “We had a good session and are very happy with this second place, as all the top GT drivers are here in Dubai. The Hankook tyre offered us a lot of grip – throughout the entire qualifying session. We did not just have one fast lap on it, but many.”

**Yelmer Buurman** (Mercedes-AMG GT3), Black Falcon: “The Hankook race tyre was very consistent. It quickly reached a high peak and was then very stable. It will be a long race on Friday. We cannot afford to make any mistakes, then we will have a good chance.”

Motorsport fans can follow the race from Dubai live in a 24-hour live stream at <https://www.hankooktire-mediacenter.com/index.php?id=endurance-race-2018> in the Hankook Mediacenter.

More information is available at www.hankooktire-mediacenter.com and www.hankooktire.com

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