**Hankook and the DTM head to Zolder for the first foreign leg, on the back of a thrilling opener at the Hockenheimring**

**Premium tyre maker Hankook and the DTM kicked off the 2019 season with some thrilling race action in Hockenheim. Fans at the iconic circuit near Heidelberg were treated to spectacular motorsport and a successful first outing for the new DTM cars, which this year line up with a new four-cylinder turbo engine and over 100 hp more than last season. The Hankook race tyre, on the other hand, has not changed. Despite this, it coped brilliantly with the extra strain resulting from the increase in power, demonstrating the excellent performance that DTM aficionados have become used to. This weekend, Hankook and the DTM are in Zolder, Belgium, for the first foreign outing of the season.**

***Zolder/Belgium, 14th May 2019*** – Circuit Zolder was officially opened in 1963, since when the layout has been modified five times, most recently in 2002. The current 4.003-kilometre track consists of fast straights, which lead into some very tight corners and challenging chicanes. While the first sector is rounded and flowing, the layout of the second sector, with its many small changes in direction and abrupt braking manoeuvres, makes it less smooth. “Zolder is a fast circuit, but one that has very tight sections and is not always flowing, particularly in the run-up to the start/finish. Good brakes are essential here. At the same time, the Hankook race tyre must have the right air pressures and be brought to the ideal working temperature, in order to allow the drivers to accelerate quickly out of these sections,” explains the Hankook engineer responsible for the DTM, Thomas Baltes.

The asphalt in Zolder is very smooth and, unlike the coarse surface in Hockenheim, offers the drivers a low level of grip. As such, caution is required – particularly after pit stops, when the drivers return to the track on cold race tyres. Thomas Baltes: “On the smooth asphalt, it is possible that the cars may skid at times, which in turn raises the temperature of the tyre’s running surface a little. However, that does not affect the performance of the Ventus Race.”

At the DTM opener at the high-speed Hockenheimring, it was primarily the construction of the Ventus Race that was put under the greatest strain, as the cars constantly hurtled across the high kerbs at top speed. The lower kerbs and different layout at Circuit Zolder means that this strain will be far lower. “While the Hockenheimring is a very demanding circuit for the Hankook race tyre – one of the most demanding on the DTM calendar – the strain on the Ventus Race is not so great in Zolder. It will be interesting to see what tactics the teams opt for. Hockenheim showed that it is also possible to be successful with a two-stop strategy. We will have to wait and see whether that could also be the key to success in Zolder,” says Thomas Baltes.

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