**2017 DTM kicks off with traditional opener in Hockenheim:**

**New generation of race tyre from Hankook**

**Premium tyre maker Hankook and the Audi, BMW and Mercedes-Benz teams in the DTM embark on their seventh season together at the Hockenheimring this weekend. Hankook has been exclusive tyre partner of the premium German car makers in what is probably the most popular international touring car series since 2011. During this time, Hankook’s *Ventus Race* tyres have always performed strongly at racetracks with a wide range of characteristics, whilst always maintaining the highest degree of consistency and safety. Hankook also continues to back youth, and will once again support the talented young drivers in the FIA Formula 3 European Championship and the Audi Sport TT Cup with its premium race tyres in 2017.**

**Hockenheim/Germany, 2nd of May 2017** – Fans await the opening round of the DTM in Hockenheim this weekend with great anticipation, as there have been a few changes ahead of the season-opener near Heidelberg. Exclusive tyre partner Hankook has met the desires of the car manufacturers and the organisers of the series, ITR e.V, by developing and producing a new generation of slick. Still the same dimensions as its predecessor, the new tyre offers even more grip but degrades faster. While the *Ventus Race Rain* remains unchanged, the new Hankook slick looks set to make the races even more exciting and interesting.

This season, both Saturday and Sunday’s races will be the same length: 55 minutes plus one lap. The drivers must also make one mandatory pit stop in each race. The cars are more powerful and have significantly less downforce. This makes the driver’s job even more demanding, particularly as it is no longer permitted to preheat the tyres. “That is a real challenge for the drivers. They will start with cold *Ventus Race* tyres and low air pressures, and must get the tyres working as quickly as possible. They cannot afford to push too hard though, as the Hankook race tyre only offers its full grip potential once it reaches an optimal temperature window. The pit stops will be particularly interesting. The drivers will come in on tyres that have been brought up to the optimal working temperature, but will then head back out again on cold slicks. Anyone who is not careful and accelerates too hard could soon end up in the pit wall,” said Manfred Sandbichler, Hankook Motorsport Director Europe.

The Hockenheimring is a real test for the newly-developed Hankook slick. The varied, high-speed circuit features slow and narrow sections, as well as fast corners and straights, making it one of the most demanding tracks on the DTM calendar. Above all, the fact that the cars so frequently drive over the high, sharp-edged kerbs at high speeds puts the *Ventus Race* under extreme strain. However, the tyre has always mastered this challenge perfectly in the past.

Manfred Sandbichler: “The Hockenheimring has a varied layout. The drivers and engineers must bear this in mind when setting the car up, in order to find the optimal package. The balance of the car and the aerodynamics play a key role on the bumpy track ahead of turn two and the hairpin, as the drivers strive to minimise bouncing and find the ideal braking point. A low camber, combined with high air pressures, can reduce the strain on the Hankook race tyre, particularly on the structure of the tyre.”

Tyre management will play a pivotal role at the season-opener in Hockenheim. “With the right air pressures and a perfect car set-up, and if the drivers employ the ideal approach early on in the race, it will not take long to get the cold *Ventus Race* up and running so that the drivers can fully exhaust the tyre’s extremely high grip potential. Should you also manage to delay the desired drop-off effect by driving less aggressively, thus allowing you to stay out on the track for longer on the initial set of tyres, you stand every chance of ending up on the top step of the podium,” said Hankook Motorsport Director Europe, Manfred Sandbichler.

The 2017 Audi Sport TT Cup also gets underway at the Hockenheimring this weekend. The junior series consists of seven rounds this year, six of which share the bill with the DTM. Six of the ten events that comprise the FIA Formula 3 European Championship, which began in April, will feature on the same programme as the DTM.

Manfred Sandbichler: “The Audi Sport TT Cup is a strong junior series, which we have supplied with tyres since it was launched in 2015. As in the past, we once again expect exciting races and thrilling battles, with a strong international field of drivers. Hankook is now in its sixth year as tyre partner of the FIA Formula 3 European Championship, which will share the bill with the DTM for the first time this season in Hungary. The Hungaroring hosts round four – races ten to twelve – of the single-seater series, which is the ultimate training ground to Formula 1. 2016 champion Lance Stroll is now driving in the top echelon of motor racing, where he joins Antonio Giovinazzi and Max Verstappen, who finished second and third respectively in the FIA Formula 3 European Championship in 2015 and 2014. Hankook is pleased to be able to help these talented youngsters on their road to Formula 1.”

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