**Gary Paffett wins season-opener in Hockenheim on the Hankook race tyre to claim his 21st DTM victory**

**It was a perfect start for Gary Paffett: The Mercedes-Benz driver won the opening race of the 2018 DTM season at the Hockenheimring. After 36 laps of racing, the Brit crossed the finish line first to take his 21st victory in what is probably the most popular international touring car series. In glorious sunshine and with track temperatures above 40 degrees, the race tyre provided by exclusive DTM partner Hankook performed excellently. The premium tyre maker’s *Ventus Race* provided the cars, which this year generate roughly a third less aerodynamic downforce than last year, with plenty of grip, allowing for fast lap times and rapid overtaking manoeuvres right through to the finish.**

***Hockenheim/Germany, 5th May 2018*** – Gary Paffett started Saturday’s opening race of the 2018 DTM season at the Hockenheimring from pole position. Fellow Mercedes-Benz driver Lucas Auer overtook the Brit on lap four, but was unable to open a decisive lead. Having come in for a new set of the Hankook race tyres on lap 16, Paffett moved back to the head of the field and hung on to the lead until the finish. Lucas Auer finished second, 1.449 seconds behind Paffett. Timo Glock was the best-placed BMW driver in third place.

Edoardo Mortara and Pascal Wehrlein came home fourth and fifth at the iconic 4.574-kilometre circuit near Heidelberg to complete a strong showing from the Stuttgart-based manufacturer, for whom all six drivers finished in the top ten. The best-placed Audi driver was reigning DTM champion René Rast in ninth place, earning him two points towards the overall standings.

Manfred Sandbichler, Hankook Motorsport Director Europe: “That was a great way to kick off the DTM season. The fans witnessed exciting motor racing in Hockenheim, with a many overtaking manoeuvres and fierce, but always fair battles for position. I am pleased for Gary Paffett, who produced a strong performance to claim his first DTM win for five years. The high grip levels provided by the Hankook race tyre more than made up for the reduced aerodynamic downforce and allowed consistently fast lap times right through to the end of the race.”

**René Rast (Audi):** “The Hankook race tyres coped very well with the conditions. They had a slight drop in performance at the end of each of my stints, but it was not significant. Generally speaking, I was very happy with the Hankook tyre.”

**Timo Glock (BMW):** “The Hankook tyre was really put to the test by the high temperatures. I found a good rhythm at the start of the race and stopped very early. That meant I had a long second stint, at the end of which the tyre was degrading a little. But that is absolutely normal.”

**Gary Paffett (Mercedes-Benz):** “I am very happy with my first DTM win since 2013. The high track temperatures in Hockenheim made tyre management very important. As such, we opted for a set-up that would really look after the tyres. The Hankook race tyre worked very well, particularly in my second stint, which meant I was able to hold on to my lead over Lucas.”

**Lucas Auer (Mercedes-Benz):** “The Hankook race tyre was superb, particularly when you bear in mind that all the drivers were right on the limit. The Hockenheim track is demanding on the tyres anyway, but you could manage the Hankook slick very well, even in the high temperatures.”

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