**Pole in the USA for Mercedes-AMG at the finale of the 24H Series powered by Hankook**

**The drivers at the Hankook 24H COTA USA battled it out for the top grid positions on Friday afternoon. In the final qualifying session ahead of the grand finale of the Creventic 24H Series powered by Hankook, it was Jeroen Bleekemolen in the Black Falcon Mercedes-AMG GT3 who impressed with the fastest time. The Dutchman took just 02:06.461 minutes to complete a lap of the 5.49-kilometre Circuit of the Americas. The Manthey Racing and Herberth Motorsport teams start from second and third with their Porsche 991 GT3 R. All 41 teams and 174 drivers are taking to the track on tyres provided by premium tyre maker and title sponsor, Hankook.**

***Austin/USA, 11th November* 2017** – The drivers in the Creventic 24H Series powered by Hankook took to the track for the final qualifying session of the year at the grand finale of the season. At stake were the best grid positions for the Hankook 24H COTA USA. Dutchman Jeroen Bleekemolen will start Saturday’s race from pole position in his Mercedes-AMG GT3 (Black Falcon), followed by Manthey Racing and Herberth Motorsport. The top three cars were separated by just 0.540 seconds.

“I am happy, but I am also well aware that, with so many cars, you also need a little luck to have a free track in qualifying. The Hankook tyres worked well. The track here in Austin really puts the tyres through their paces. However, I had a good feeling all the time, and that gives you confidence,” said the pole sitter after qualifying.

The slick supplied by premium tyre maker Hankook provided the drivers with a high level of grip and great consistency, ensuring that the battle for pole position remained exciting, right down to the final second. The continental championship is up for grabs for the teams at the Hankook 24H COTA USA. This also includes the two 24-hour races in Dubai and Portimao in Portugal. The Herberth Motorsport currently leads the title race with the Porsche 991 GT3 R. Their lead over second-placed Hofor-Racing (Mercedes-AMG GT3) stands at just one point, with PROsport Performance (Porsche 991 Cup) another point back in third place. In order to make the championship even more exciting, the organisers will award one and a half times the standard points at the season finale.

All 41 teams and 174 drivers are using a standard, high-performance compound, provided by tyre partner Hankook. “We supply all the teams and drivers with identical material. That is very important to us, as it should ultimately come down to the cars and drivers,” explained Manfred Sandbichler, Hankook Motorsport Director Europe. “We had never driven here and had no reference values. That was a big challenge in the run-up to the race weekend. We primarily have our experienced engineers to thank for the fact that the tyre is working so well for all the drivers. It is very important to find the right compromise with the high-performance compound, as the tyre must work well in high temperatures during the daytime, and in the cold at night,” said Sandbichler.

The tyres were shipped to the USA in 13 containers for the practice sessions, qualifying and the endurance race itself. Furthermore, more than 30 Hankook engineers and service experts are also on site to ensure that the teams receive a perfect tyre service throughout the entire race weekend.

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