**Black Falcon team claims fourth victory at the Hankook 24H Dubai with Mercedes-Benz**

**Hankook 24H Dubai once again kicked off the 2018 endurance racing season with a feast of spectacular motorsport. The 13th staging of the desert classic saw 91 cars and a total of 394 drivers produce a display of tough but fair racing for 24 hours, during which they received perfect support from exclusive tyre partner Hankook. After 606 exciting and eventful laps, the Black Falcon team’s Abdulaziz Al Faisal crossed the finish line first at the wheel of the Mercedes-AMG GT3. This was the Stuttgart-based manufacturer’s fourth win at the 24-hour classic in the United Arab Emirates. The Hankook *Ventus Race* slick impressed again with excellent consistency and a high level of grip, both in daytime track temperatures of over 40 degrees, and when the surface cooled dramatically in the night.**

***Dubai/VAE, 13th January 2018*** – The Black Falcon team and its Mercedes-AMG GT3 (car No. 2) started the face from third place at 14:00 on Friday, and immediately established itself in the leading group. When the team’s second car (No. 3) retired from the lead, following a collision four hours, from the end of the race, there was no denying Abdulaziz Al Faisal (Saudi Arabia), Hubert Haupt (Germany), Yelmer Buurman (Netherlands) and Gabriele Piana (Italy) victory on Saturday.

The Manthey Racing Porsche 991 GT3 R (car No. 12) produced an energetic final spurt to finish runner-up. Sven Müller, Otto Klohs, Lars Kern (all Germany) and Frenchman Mathieu Jaminet had started from 15th, but were able to gradually work their way through the field, thanks to a consistently good performance from all the drivers, and were ultimately rewarded for their fightback.

Brothers Mark and Rolf Ineichen (Switzerland), Christian Engelhart (Germany) and Mirko Bortolotti (Italy) ended the Hankook 24H Dubai in third place in their Lamborghini Huracán GT3 (car No. 964). The GRT Grasser Racing Team started the Hankook 24H Dubai from pole position on Friday, but dropped well back through the field after a fine start. However, the quartet managed to make up a lot of ground during the night, and eventually came home two laps behind the winners to claim the third spot on the podium. The best-placed Audi R8 LMS was the number 9 BWT Mücke Motorsport car. Drivers Markus Winkelhock, Mike-David Ortmann, Andreas Weishaupt, Christer Jöns (all Germany) and Switzerland’s Ricardo Feller crossed the finish line in fifth place after 597 laps.

The new Audi R8 LMS GTs (GT4, car Nos. 247 and 248), run by the Phoenix Racing team, enjoyed a successful debut on the race tyre provided by title sponsor and premium manufacturer Hankook, claiming a one-two in the GT4 class. There was also a successful debut for the Mercedes-AMG GT R SP-X (GT4, car No. 264 and 233), which finished third and fourth in the same class at the hands of the Black Falcon Team TMD Friction and Besagroup Racing teams.

Manfred Sandbichler, Hankook Motorsport Director Europe: “We once again witnessed a fantastic race here in Dubai in 2018, which was exciting right through to the end. The second and third-placed cars were separated by little more than five seconds after 24 hours of racing. That shows how close and top-class the competition was. The standard was incredibly high in all classes and there were fierce battles out on the track, but that is what we want to see in motorsport. Our race tyres worked perfectly on the sandy track, despite the diverse range of conditions, with high track temperatures in the day and cold at night. As it does every year, the Hankook 24H Dubai provided a great start to the 2018 endurance season. We are now looking forward to the next race in the 24H Series powered by Hankook, which takes place in Silverstone from 9th to 11th March.”

**Abdulaziz Al Faisal** (Mercedes-AMG GT3), Black Falcon: “I am delighted with my second victory at the Hankook 24H Dubai, but it was the toughest race so far for me. The competition was incredibly strong, we had a lot of traffic and there was a lot of debris on the track. The different conditions in the day and at night were also very demanding. We had to use various tyre pressures to compensate for the big differences in temperature, but that worked perfectly with the Hankook race tyre. The performance of the slicks was very good. Even on double stints, the Hankook tyre still provided a consistently high level of grip right through to the finish.”

**Yelmer Buurman** (Mercedes-AMG GT3), Black Falcon: “This is my fourth appearance at the Hankook 24H Dubai and I have won for the second time. I am overjoyed, particularly as it was the toughest race here. There were a lot of cars on the track, even during the night, when the field has actually always reduced in recent years. This made it very difficult to come through without any damage. The Hankook race tyres supported us perfectly. They were very good and easy for us to manage. You could always push on them, without having to worry about them wearing.”

**Sven Müller** (Porsche 991 GT3 R), Manthey Racing: “That was a great race, I am very happy with our podium finish. The Hankook race tyre was incredibly consistent and worked perfectly, both in the hot daytime temperatures and in the very cold night.”

**Mathieu Jaminet**, (Porsche 991 GT3 R), Manthey Racing: “I was always able to push on the Hankook slick, as the tyre did not degrade at all. In one stint, I drove 42 laps on the same set of tyres and consistently had plenty of grip the whole time.”

**Bernd Schneider**, (Mercedes-AMG GT3), HTP Motorsport: “We had a good balance and the car was excellent. We initially opened a lead of five laps in our class, but then lost eight laps after a technical issue. As such, we could have done far better. I fared very well on the Hankook race tyre and was very happy with it.”

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

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