**Gary Paffett is the new DTM champion – René Rast makes history with six wins in a row on Hankook tyres**

**Gary Paffett is the 2018 DTM champion. Third place in Sunday’s final race of the season at the Hockenheimring proved sufficient for the Mercedes-Benz driver to clinch his second title in arguably the most popular international touring car series, having previously won the championship in 2005. Paffett (255 points) ended the season just four points ahead of last year’s champion René Rast (Audi / 251 points), who made history again. The 31-year-old won the final race to set a new DTM record of six wins in a row. As it has done all season, the race tyre provided by exclusive DTM partner Hankook performed flawlessly at the finale in Hockenheim, supporting all the drivers with a lot of grip, high levels of consistency and maximum safety.**

***Hockenheim/Germany, 14th October 2018*** – In glorious autumnal weather, fans at the Hockenheimring on Sunday for the final race of the 2018 DTM season witnessed a lightning-quick start from René Rast. Starting from second on the grid, the Audi driver immediately passed pole-sitter Marco Wittmann (BMW), before defending his lead brilliantly through to the finish. Rast’s sixth win in a row sees him climb into second place in the championship. Despite his best efforts, Rast could do nothing to topple the new DTM champion, Gary Paffett (Mercedes-Benz), who clinched the title with a nerveless display.

The championship leader held onto his starting position of third, before coming in early for a fresh set of the Hankook race tyre on lap eleven. After a perfect stop, the Brit, for whom fourth place would have sufficed, drove a controlled race and avoided any unnecessary battles for position. After 36 laps of racing, Paffett crossed the finish line in third place on the Ventus Race supplied by premium tyre maker Hankook, behind Rast and Marco Wittmann. 13 years after his first title, Paffett celebrated winning the championship for the second time.

Fellow Mercedes-Benz racer Paul Di Resta, who led the championship ahead of the final round in Hockenheim, could do no better than 14th place on Sunday and dropped back to third place in the Drivers’ Championship. Behind him, two-time DTM champion Marco Wittmann and Timo Glock (both BMW) ended the season in fourth and fifth place respectively.

Manfred Sandbichler, Hankook Motorsport Director Europe: “Looking at the season as a whole, Gary is a worthy DTM champion. René made it really exciting in the end, with a great fightback and six wins in a row, but Gary drove a tactically clever final race and, as has so often been the case, produced a flawless drive. The spectators have enjoyed a spectacular 2018 DTM season, which was a great advertisement for motorsport and, in particular, the DTM. The Hankook race tyre contributed to this. It supported the drivers perfectly from the first race to the last and allowed individual race strategies. We are already looking forward to next year and more high-class DTM racing on Hankook race tyres.”

Audi Sport Team Phoenix once again completed the fastest pit stop of the race weekend at the finale in Hockenheim, in a time of 30.996 seconds. This earned them a further 25 points in the Hankook Best Pit Stop Award, the official pit crew championship. Audi Sport Team Phoenix had already been confirmed as the overall winners before the final DTM race weekend.

**René Rast (Audi):** “I was very happy with the Hankook race tyres all season. The fans witnessed great races. The intended tyre wear meant that the drivers had to manage the tyres well, which added to the excitement. I am already looking forward to next season with the Hankook tyres.”

**Marco Wittmann (BMW):** “We have had highs and lows all season. The highlight for me was winning my home race at the Norisring, where our performance and the Hankook race tyre were perfect. Second place in the final race in Hockenheim is a nice way to end the season. We had great pace on the Hankook tyre. Here’s hoping we can carry on in the same vein next season.”

**Gary Paffett (Mercedes-Benz):** “I am overjoyed with my second DTM title. Today is one of the best days of my life. The Hankook tyres worked perfectly for us all year in qualifying. We once again had incredible pace on the Hankook tyre in qualifying at the finale here in Hockenheim. It was not easy in the race. We have struggled a little compared to our rivals since the introduction of the minimum air pressure. In the end, however, everything worked out perfectly. Now it is time to celebrate.”

**Ulrich Fritz, Head of Mercedes-AMG DTM:** “The cooperation with Hankook was great again this year. The new minimum air pressure made it exciting, but this change was the same for everyone. It is not without good cause that Hankook has been a technology partner of the DTM for years now. They once again did a superb job this season.”

**Dieter Gass, Head of Audi Motorsport:** “Hankook has been a great partner again this year. There is absolutely no reason to complain. The new regulations, with the minimum air pressure, made it even more exciting. In hindsight, that played into our hands a little. I am sure that we will continue to work well with Hankook in the future.”

**Jens Marquardt, BMW Motorsport Director:** “As usual, the cooperation with Hankook was very good this season. We witnessed exciting races with consistent tyres that, importantly, were the same for everyone. The fans were treated to spectacular touring car racing, as we have come to expect from the DTM for years – with door-to-door battles that are fierce but fair. We are looking forward to next season on great Hankook tyres.”

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