

## **Tyre failure stops Maxi Buhk on way to win Sprint Cup title**

- **Thrilling Qualification Race with strong fight for race win**
- **Start-/Finish victory in main race is stopped by tyre failure**
- **Buhk and Perera third in Sprint Cup Championship**

### **Nürburgring (Germany), 20 September 2017:**

The season final of the Blancpain GT Series Sprint Cup had all aspects of a nerve-racking thriller, but unfortunately the reigning Champion Maximilian Buhk was the victim. Whilst on his way to win the title, a tyre failure stopped the #84 Mercedes-AMG GT3 and instead of taking the certain win, the AMG-driver and his team-mate Franck Perera claimed only third place in the Sprint Cup Championship at the home race of Mercedes-AMG Team HTP Motorsport.

Despite facing one or two issues with the #84 Mercedes-AMG GT3 during Free Practice on Friday, the team was as strong as usual for qualifying on Saturday morning. The competitiveness of the high-class starting grid was once again impressive with 21 cars running within 1.4 seconds. Buhk qualified the bronzed-livered HTP race car in P8 and also started from this position into the one-hour qualification race, which went ahead in dry and unusually sunny conditions at the Nürburgring.

Whilst many competitors went for all or nothing in the first corner, Buhk benefited from others going wide and therefore was already running sixth place on the first lap. Shortly after, the #59 McLaren running ahead of him was forced to pit and the #90 Mercedes-AMG GT3 had an off, which led for the Safety Car to come on track. On the first lap after the Safety Car, Buhk took fourth position and was running behind the PAM #333 Ferrari until his late pitstop in the 10-minute window. Thanks to a perfect strategy and faultless pitstop, Buhk's team-mate re-joined the race with approximately three seconds behind the leading #5 Audi of Marcel Fässler.

In the last part of the race, there was a head-to-head battle for both race victory and important championship points. Perera made-up the gap to the Audi within three laps, but a good pitstop by the #19 Grasser Lamborghini saw the green racer suddenly in the lead. Towards the end, the #8 Bentley of Soulet coming from fourth was also suddenly right within the battle and took third place of Perera on lap 25.

The events were overturning itself: Whilst the Bentley overtook the Audi, Perera saw his chance and also went straight passed the Audi. Whilst there was a small touch between the Bentley and the leading Lamborghini, Perera went to claim second position, which he kept until the chequered flag. Before the first three arrived in Parc Ferme, the Lamborghini was given a 1-second-penalty, meaning Buhk and Perera took victory in the Qualification Race. The title candidates not only had Pole Position for the last Sprint Cup Race of the 2017 season, but also seven points ahead of their direct rivals in the fight for the title.

"I would have never expected to win this race", said Buhk after the thrilling one hour. "We simply aimed for a solid race with as many points as possible to keep the title fight in our sight. I was super happy with second place and suddenly we had won the race, simply incredible. We will give everything for the race on Sunday."

Franck Perera started from Pole Position into the final and all-decisive Sprint Cup Race on Sunday afternoon and kept the lead of the race for the first few laps. The Frenchman managed to extend his lead by 6.7 seconds, but all efforts were destroyed when the Safety Car was called on track. The #5 Audi of Marcel Fässler was right behind the #84 Mercedes-AMG GT3 after the re-start, but Perera kept the lead once more. Fässler pitted right at the start of the pitstop window, whilst Perera waited until the very end. Unfortunately, there was a problem during the pitstop, which would have serious consequences. The wheel nut of the front left tyre was causing problems and the Mercedes-AMG Team HTP Motorsport lost a lot of time. Maxi Buhk was not able to keep the lead of the race and re-joined the race in second-place behind the #5 Audi. On his way to make up the gap, Buhk ran wide into the gravel in the last corner ahead of start/finish. After the off, Buhk was forced to park his race car a few corners further up on the side of the track with a broken left front tyre.

The Sprint Cup title win was gone. Due to the good results of the relevant competitors, Buhk and Perera are now in third place in the Overall Championship with 30 points behind the leaders.

“Today was one of those days that showed how brutal motorsport can be”, said a disappointed Buhk. “The race was in our hands, we dominated right from the start and only had to bring it home safely and that would have been the win. But there was a problem with the front left tyre, which seemed to slowly come off the rim. There was nothing I could do in that corner and the drive through the gravel destroyed the tyre completely. I cannot put this into words quite yet, it is simply very disappointing for Franck, the whole team and myself. We were so close and now it even looks very difficult for the Overall Championship and the Endurance Cup.”

Before heading to Barcelona for the Blancpain GT Series at Barcelona in two weeks, Buhk will race once again in the Blancpain GT Series Asia at Shanghai this coming weekend.

For more information, please visit [www.maximilian-buhk.de](http://www.maximilian-buhk.de).