**KWANDA CLOSES OFF WINTER SEASON IN STYLE**

*A double Barcelona podium for SA racing star Mokoena*

South African international racer Kwanda Mokoena rounded off his 2024 season preparations with another fine podium showing at the closing round GT Winter Series races in Barcelona, Spain over the weekend. The Kyalami lad joined the series for its final two races and went on to put it on the podium in five of the six races he started, culminating in two more second places over the weekend.

While qualifying was washed out and the grid formed on Friday’s final practice times, Saturday’s opening race was also a washout. Only five laps raced and the race was scored on half points. “That caught us out a bit and I only qualified well back as a result and it was hardly a race,” Kwanda explains. “So I was only up to 14th when they red flagged it. It was mad wet, so I think we were all quite relieved with that!”

The sun was out and Barcelona was bright for Sunday’s second heat. Kwanda wasted no time to slice through the pack and was up to third when the safety car was deployed late in the race. Mokoena then wasted no time to pounce on Johannes Kapfinger’s Porsche 992 GT3 R for second off the restart, before the race was brought to an early end by a red flag incident.

“That was super fun,” Kwanda beamed. “There was still a bit of standing water at Turn 1, so I was able to capitalise in my battle with Kapfinger and I saw an opportunity going into Turn 3. At the beginning, I could feel that the track wasn’t as good as it was on Friday, but I made the most out of it. There was plenty of excitement in the first laps, so I decided to stay cool and I went for it then when there was a gap.”

Kwanda then rounded off his weekend with second behind his Haupt Racing Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo teammate Finn Wiebelhaus in the final endurance heat. “The final two races of the GT Winter Series closed off my preparations for the 2024 ADAC German GT Masters championship with Haupt Racing Mercedes-AMG,” Kwanda concluded. “It’s been a confidence building experience and I am now ready to give it my all in Masters!

“Huge thanks to my team Haupt Racing, to my parents and everyone who made it all happen. Now I’m looking forward to a great season in Germany – can’t wait!” The ADAC GT Masters has proven the springboard for South African racers like Kelvin and Sheldon van der Linde and Jordan Pepper’s international carers. Kwanda hopes to continue that great tradition alongside Finn Wiebelhaus starting at Oschersleben 27-28 April.