**MOKOENA MASTERS MERCEDES GT3 DEBUT**

*Kwanda shines with two Spanish podiums for Haupt Mercedes*

Kyalami Kid Kwanda Mokoena caused something of a sensation when he arrived literally out of nowhere and put his Haupt Mercedes-AMG GT3 onto a double podium on debut at the fourth round of the European GT Winter Series in Valencia over the weekend. Mokoena came home third in the first race and second in the final heat, but he was thwarted of a triple podium following a brake failure in the second race.

The weekend started on the front for Kwanda, who put his AMG GT3 third on the grid for the opening race before delivering an exceptional debut third. While Haupt teammate Finn Wiebelhaus cleared off for the win, Mokoena was left to do race-long battle for the final podium spot under pressure from Michael Kapfinger’s Porsche 911, which the young South African duly held off to the flag.

“That was a bit of a tricky race!” Kwanda beamed as he celebrated a stunning debut podium. “I felt like we had the pace, we just have a little fine tuning to do with the car, but overall I have to be super-happy. A podium in our first race, I couldn’t ask for more!”

There was however heartbreak for Mokoena, who started the second, 55-minute endurance race on the front row and ran second throughout despite more pressure from Kapfinger, when the South African spun into the tyre wall. Haupt Racing quickly ruled out driver error, as Kwanda explains: “It was going perfectly, but we suffered a rare rear brake calliper failure, which locked the rear end and that was it!”

Kwanda however dusted himself off and was soon back to a strong second place behind his teammate in the final race, to make up for his earlier disappointment, once again with Kapfinger in hot pursuit. “The perfect end to an almost perfect weekend!” Kwanda concluded. “Huge thanks to my incredible Haupt Mercedes team for a dream debut and to my family and all my supporters who have helped make this happen!”