
World Premiere of the new AMG Mercedes CLK-DTM

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At the Geneva Motor Show on Monday evening, Mercedes-Benz presented the new CLK in its production and in its racing version for the 2002 DTM to 570 guests, including 400 international media representatives. For the first time ever, a Mercedes-Benz race car has been presented along with its production counterpart. Highlight of the presentation were DTM Champion Bernd Schneider and his new team mate Jean Alesi driving both the Mercedes-Benz CLK 320 and CLK 500 onto the stage in the Geneva Automobile Museum

The new AMG Mercedes CLK-DTM has been enhanced within the strict limits laid down in the championship's regulations. It has a completely new body and space frame and is more aerodynamically efficient. The kinematics of the redesigned suspension have been optimised for the new Dunlop tyres, which are taller and wider than the previous ones. Enhancements have also been made to various details of the four-litre eight-cylinder engine.

The new CLK will be driven by defending champion Bernd Schneider (Monaco/37), runner-up Uwe Alzen (Germany/34), Marcel Fässler (Switzerland/25), and Jean Alesi (France/37 years old) who retired from Formula One after 201 Grands Prix last year and entered DTM.

The Mercedes-Benz line-up will be completed by Christijan Albers (Netherlands/22), Peter Dumbreck

(Great Britain/28), Patrick Huisman (Netherlands/33), Thomas Jäger (Germany/25), Bernd Mayländer (Germany/30), and newcomer Stefan Mücke (Germany/20), a Mercedes-Benz-sponsored junior driver, who took second place in the overall ranking in last year's German Formula 3 Championship. These six drivers will use the 2001 CLK.

Norbert Haug, Vice President Mercedes-Benz Motorsport, explained: "The 2002 championship will be even more attractive. We all expect great races and exciting TV reports. Mercedes-Benz will enter four new CLK and six 2001 models. The sponsors showed great interest in the series, so that we could finance a total of ten cars like in 2001. I'm particularly glad to have Jean Alesi in the team who will certainly add to the attraction of the DTM."

Beginning at Hockenheim on 21 April, the DTM which was relaunched two years ago starts into its third season. Once again, the drivers of the Mercedes-Benz, Opel and Abt-Audi teams will be competing over ten races, four of which will be held in Belgium, England, Austria and the Netherlands.

The new DTM is already well established as a favourite with the public and the exciting touring car races regularly attract huge TV audiences: in Germany alone, the average number of TV contacts per race was put at 30 million while total DTM coverage on two of the main German TV channels (ARD and ZDF) amounted to 90 hours in 2001. Agreements securing live TV coverage of the series by the two state-owned broadcasters for the next five years have already been concluded

The close competition is also a consequence of the stable and strict regulations which allow only one engine (with an output limited to about 470 hp) per vehicle per season for practice sessions and one for racing. Another consequence of this rule and the restrictions on practice time is that costs have been reduced. For the 2002 season, the existing format of the short qualifying race (about 35 kilometres) and the main race (about 100 kilometres) has been retained. However, both now feature standing starts, as in Grand Prix racing. Scoring is also based on the Grand Prix model: 10 points for the winner, then six, four, three, two and one point down to sixth place; the winner of the qualifying race scores three points, the runner-up two, and the third across the line receives one point.

Story and photo: Daimler Benz Press

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