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ADAC GT Masters champions Mies & De Phillippi review their season

- Supremely confident even before start of 2016 ADAC GT Masters
- First win of season at Nürburgring gave them a huge boost
- Enormously grateful to Team Montaplast by Land-Motorsport

Munich: It's been some two months since the thrilling 2016 ADAC GT Masters finale in Hockenheim. Champions Christopher Mies and Connor De Phillippi now look back on what was a very eventful season in this extensive joint interview.

Mr Mies, your GT3 career is littered with successes. Where does the ADAC GT Masters title win figure?

Christopher Mies (CM): "I've always wanted to win the ADAC GT Masters ever since I first joined the series in 2009. I got very close to reaching my goal within a couple of years but not close enough, ultimately. Things have now finally worked out in 2016. Many people congratulated me on pulling off this major coup, which really pleased me and also proves just how popular the series is."

In your case, Mr De Phillippi, this is your first big championship win. Does it make you feel proud?

Connor De Phillippi (CDP): "To become the first American to win such an important series as the ADAC GT Masters makes me feel extremely proud. Returning home to friends and family was really great. They were all very aware of just how long and hard I'd worked to achieve this success."

Did you think before the start of the 2016 season that you would be championship contenders?

CM: "Certainly. I knew that I had in Connor one of the quickest drivers in the field alongside me as partner and that Montaplast by Land-Motorsport are a team, who are evolving incredibly quickly and learning a great deal. We drivers, the engineers and mechanics were already a close-knit outfit before the first couple of races in Oschersleben. That's the basis of success in motorsport."

CDP: "I personally was more modest in my predictions. I certainly hadn't expected to win the title at my first attempt but was sure we would play a big part in the overall standings. I wanted to win at least one race and achieve a couple of podiums, but as the season progressed, and it looked increasingly likely that we would be championship contenders, then I too began to come round to the belief that we would be in title contention."

The 2016 finale in Hockenheim was one of the most dramatic ever in the history of the series, the second race in particular. What did you go through as those decisive events unfolded?

CM: "Those were very emotional moments for me, because I made a mistake just before the driver handover, which almost cost us the title. Things went well for us in the end, luckily. Of course, the crash suffered by Jules (Gounon), our rival for the title, was terrible, but he soon recovered, thank goodness. I think he's an excellent driver."

CDP: "The season finale made me age five years. I felt like I was on a roller coaster from the first to the last lap. It was particularly bad when Christopher went off track and through the gravel. I knew when I took over the car that it wouldn't be easy, but I was also aware that all was not lost. We still had 30 minutes left. The team told me on the radio that I had to give it my best shot and finish in the last eight at the very least. I was mightily relieved when I then crossed the finish line, knowing that it was enough."

What's your favourite moment of 2016?

CM: "Our first win of the season at the Nürburgring. That was a huge relief. We'd already been within a whisker of winning one or two races previously. The team had worked hard throughout, and we drove like demons, but unfortunately up until then, we'd always been short of a bit of luck."

CDP: "Yes, I feel the same. The win in the Eifel was something very special for me as well. It was not just a big relief but also the turning point in our season. We suddenly found ourselves within striking distance of the leaders in the standings again."

What part did Team Montaplast by Land-Motorsport play in your title win?

CM: "To outsiders, it always sounds like a bit of a cliché when you thank your team for their great work, but I can say in our case without fear of contradiction, no way are we bullshitting. Even the days spent testing before the start of the season were really good. We tuned the suspension and tried to do our best in every situation. Every member of the team played a big part."

And the Audi R8?

CDP: "This was my first year in the new Audi R8. It was perfect right from the start, like no other car I've ever driven in my racing career. The more comfortable you feel, the better you drive and the more you concentrate. The Audi is very sensitive to minor modifications, so there were endless possibilities as regards tweaking the car to find the right balance."

Where do you keep your trophies?

CM: "I generally give them to the team unless it's one that's particularly dear to me. I only have one or two trophies at home – the one from the 2009 FIA GT3 European championship, for example, the winner's cup from the 2015 24-Hours of the Nürburgring, my trophy from the Asian Le Mans series and now the ADAC GT Masters Cup. They're all under my TV in the living room."

CDP: "I've put my trophy right next to my Nomex vest which I had signed by every member of the team. They will both serve as a continual reminder of this terrific success which no one can ever take from me."

Do you already have plans for the 2017 motor racing season?

CM: "One of the things I would like to do is to line up again with Montaplast by Land-Motorsport in the ADAC GT Masters next year."

CDP: "Things have not yet been finalised. Nothing is 100 per cent certain, but I would love to defend the title in the ADAC GT Masters with Christopher."

2017 ADAC GT Masters calendar (subject to change)

28/04–30/04/2017 Motorsport Arena Oschersleben
19/05–21/05/2017 Lausitzring (with DTM)*
09/06–11/06/2017 Red Bull Ring/Austria
14/07–16/07/2017 Circuit Park Zandvoort/Netherlands
04/08–06/08/2017 Nürburgring
15/09–17/09/2017 Sachsenring
22/09–24/09/2017 Hockenheimring Baden-Württemberg
*TBC

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