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Timo Bernhard: “Looking forward to new role in the ADAC GT Masters”

- Two-time Le Mans winner and endurance racing world champion set to debut in the ADAC GT Masters
- Bernhard will line up in a Porsche 911 prepared by his own outfit, KÜS Team75 Bernhard
- The German will share the car with Porsche works driver Kévin Estre

Munich: On the move from the FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) to join the ADAC GT Masters, sports car star Timo Bernhard (36, DEU) will line up in the Super Sports Car League for the first time this year. In this interview, the two-time Le Mans winner and FIA World Endurance Champion, who recently won the Nations Cup in the Race of Champions, talks about his goals for the season and his role as Team Principal. The ADAC GT Masters season will get under way in the Motorsport Arena Oschersleben on the weekend of 13th - 15th April. SPORT1 will televise all races live and in full.

Your team first lined up in the ADAC GT Masters in 2016. What do you think of the series so far?

Timo Bernhard: “I’ve been following the ADAC GT Masters for quite a while and always thought that the series might suit our team. We got things rolling in 2016, and I’ve been to watch a couple of races since then. The series has come on in leaps and bounds – the standard of the field of entrants has increased tremendously yet again, especially during the last two years. The line-up for 2018 is just amazing. The teams competing this year are the crème de la crème of GT racing and have already been very successful. That really spurs us on, because we also intend to be one of those top teams.”

What made you decide to join your team as a driver, racing in the ADAC GT Masters?

“I knew that I would continue with Porsche in GT racing when the LMP1 project finished. I wanted to do something along with the team, and then, the ADAC GT Masters, which is a top German series, just popped up. I like its format with sprint racing and the driver changeover. Another thing is that interest in the series continues to grow, and the SPORT1 TV package also looks very attractive. Of course, it’s also a watershed moment for me after ten years in prototype racing, but I’m looking forward to my new role.”

What will your role be next season? How will you juggle being both driver and Team Principal?

“I’ll focus on my role as a driver during race weekends. Driving for my own team will be a new experience for me, but I think we’re well prepared. We have some top people leading the team. My father looks after the cars as Head of Engineering, and Klaus Graf is responsible for pulling everything together as Team Manager. Of course, I’m involved in all that happens when the cars are not out on track, because it’s also my job to move things forward as owner of the team.”

Will you need a bit more time to hone your skills at driving the GT3 car after so many years in LMP1 sports cars?

“There will certainly be a transitional period. I contested my last GT race in 2013 at the 24-Hours of the Nürburgring. Many considerations that are important in LMP1 racing are totally irrelevant to GT3 cars, such as development and tyre testing. Instead, you have to do your best in the conditions on the day. What I also find very exciting about that, though, is the fact that there are a great many contenders for victory and lots of different brands. I’m going back to my roots with this move to GT racing, as I contested many GT championships during my early years as a Porsche works driver.”

MEDIA INFORMATION

You will be sharing the car with Kévin Estre, who will also line up in the WEC for Porsche during 2018. Will you be able to learn one or two things from him?

“Definitely, because Kévin is one of the best GT drivers in the world. He’s had plenty of experience and is extremely familiar with the car. He clinched four wins in our first year in the ADAC GT Masters in 2016 and also produced a top-class performance at Spa last season in our team’s maiden 24-hour race. I’m very pleased to have him as team-mate.”

What are your goals for 2018?

“I think that it might perhaps be considered flippant of me to talk in terms of positions. We’ve got a fresh line-up for this season and cannot yet say how things stand with the balance of power in this strong field of entrants. We definitely want to do better than we did in 2017 when our team took one pole position, a win, a podium and P8 in the drivers’ ranking. We won’t know how strong we are until the season actually gets under way.”

How do you expect the team’s other car to do with Klaus Bachler and Adrien de Leener?

“We fielded a second car in the ADAC GT Masters for the first time in 2017. Our two drivers were new to the series, so it was obvious that they would be training on the job. Adrien de Leener will now be contesting his second season with us, which is terrific. The most important factor as regards the second car is that we’ve managed to acquire the services of Klaus Bachler, who is another top driver. Unfortunately, he’s often underestimated in my opinion. Klaus knows the Porsche 911 GT3 R and the tracks extremely well. He’s been a contender for the ADAC GT Masters title and can help both Adrien and us as a team. We aim to regularly finish in the points with two terrific cars that have great drivers at the wheel in order to make further progress up the team standings. I think we’re in an excellent position in that respect.”

Calendar for the 2018 ADAC GT Masters

13/04/18 –15/04/18	Motorsport Arena Oschersleben
27/04/18 –29/04/18	Autodrom Most (CZ)
08/06/18 –10/06/18	Red Bull Ring (AUT)
03/08/18 –05/08/18	Nürburgring
17/08/18 –19/08/18	Circuit Zandvoort (NL)
07/09/18 –09/09/18	Sachsenring
21/09/18 –23/09/18	Hockenheimring Baden-Württemberg

Further information can be found at www.adac.de/gt-masters

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