

### The new ADAC GT Masters champions: Kelvin van der Linde and Patric Niederhauser

- Audi drivers clinch title at Hockenheim with win number two of the season
- Duo took over the championship lead with the third race of the season at Most
- Friendship, consistency and strong qualifying results are the secret of their success

Hockenheim: It's official – Patric Niederhauser (27, CH) and Kelvin van der Linde (23, ZA, both HCB-Rutronik Racing) have wrapped up the ADAC GT Masters drivers' championship at Hockenheim with a second victory of the campaign, and with two races to spare. The Swiss-South African pairing have rounded off a strong season in which they made their mark early on.

Team principal Fabian Plentz, whose HCB-Rutronik Racing outfit is contesting its first season in the Super Sports Car League, was full of praise: "Kelvin and Patric complement each other incredibly well. They offer mutual support and are not at all competitive towards each other. That is the absolute key to success here. They have delivered big time. It was clear to me from the start that Kelvin should be one of our drivers in our ADAC GT Masters debut season. We then looked for the right partner and found the ideal person in Patric."

The way the season has developed thoroughly vindicates Plentz's choice. Niederhauser and van der Linde made their first podium appearance in the opening race at Oschersleben. On the subsequent weekend at Most, they booked pole position on Saturday and converted it into a first win of the season, which was enough to take them to the top of the championship table, a lead which they were then to retain through to the end of the campaign. There ensued a long wait for the second win which eventually came on Sunday but, by virtue of regular Top Five finishes, the HCB-Rutronik Racing pairing steadily established a points cushion. The ADAC GT Masters has been contested every year since 2007, but this is the first time in its history that the outcome has been decided in advance of the final weekend.

The Niederhauser and van der Linde story began two years ago. "Patric and I were team-mates at Aust Motorsport in 2017, but unfortunately we weren't sharing a cockpit at the time," says van der Linde. "I could already see that he was a top talent. We always wanted to do something together, and this year we've had that opportunity." Niederhauser adds: "We had already built a friendship back then. The chemistry is just right between us. He is a really good friend." The two newly crowned champions see consistency and good qualifying results as the key to their success. "Because we've almost always started at or near the front of the grid, we have been scoring points on a regular basis," explains van der Linde. "This consistency has been a very important factor in winning the title." Teammate Niederhauser agrees: "Except for Zandvoort, which was the only place we came away from empty-handed, we consistently finished in the points. We've rarely been the absolute fastest on a weekend, but we have always got the maximum out of the situation."

While Niederhauser is lifting an ADAC GT Masters championship trophy for the first time, it is the end of a five-year lean spell for van der Linde who comes from a racing family in South Africa – his father and grandfather were both national touring car champions in their time. After previously winning three titles in a row in Volkswagen one-make cups in his home country and in Germany, van der Linde made an instant impact on first entering the ADAC GT Masters. In only his debut season of 2014, he and future DTM champion René Rast won the title – quite a feat for a newcomer to the series, and especially for an 18-year-old. To this day, he still holds the record for being the youngest

## MEDIA INFORMATION

champion: “After that, I had what were probably my two toughest years and did not have the right car with which to compete for the title. I was in contention with Aust in 2017 and with my brother Sheldon at Land-Motorsport in 2018. It was apparent that, with the right material, it was still possible to have a say in the destination of the championship. Now, as we see, it has all worked out again with this second title.”

Unlike his team-mate, who made his way into touring and GT racing at an early age, Niederhauser aspired to a career in formula racing for a long time, winning the Italian Formula Abarth in 2011 and also notching up race wins in GP3: “My dream was to race in Formula 1. But it was difficult to make your way in formula racing in Switzerland which is not a car-producing country. My aim was to become a professional racer and earn a living from motorsport, which was easier in touring and GT racing. I then contacted Lamborghini in 2016, who inducted me into their junior programme.” Niederhauser made his debut in the same year in the ADAC GT Masters, to which he remained committed in 2017. He returned to the Super Sports Car League in 2019 after a successful season in Asia: “I might well have had the opportunity to race in the ADAC GT Masters in 2018, but conditions were such that I would not have been able to compete up front, because the field is of such a high calibre and everything has to be just right to succeed. A little dream of mine came true, though, last December when HCB-Rutronik Racing rang me about the possibility of sharing a cockpit with Kelvin.”

### ADAC GT Masters race calendar for 2019

26/04/19 – 28/04/19	Motorsport Arena Oschersleben
17/05/19 – 19/05/19	Most (CZ)
07/06/19 – 09/06/19	Red Bull Ring (A)
09/08/19 – 11/08/19	Circuit Zandvoort (NL)
16/08/19 – 18/08/19	Nürburgring
13/09/19 – 15/09/19	Hockenheimring Baden-Württemberg
27/09/19 – 29/09/19	Sachsenring

Further information can be found at [www.adac.de/gt-masters](http://www.adac.de/gt-masters)

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