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Masterful: Interview with newly crowned ADAC GT Masters champions Asch and Götz

- ADAC GT Masters title won in a Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG
- Asch continues successful family tradition with Mercedes-Benz
- Sixth winners of the title in the history of the series

Sebastian Asch (26, Ammerbuch) and Maximilian Götz (26, Uffenheim / kfzteile24 MS RACING Team) rounded off a successful ADAC GT Masters season by winning the championship. In a final race at Hockenheim that went just like a dream, the new champions steered their Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG to victory and to the ADAC GT Masters trophy. In an interview with ADAC, they talk about the secret of their success and what happens next.

This is your first season together driving for the kfzteile24 MS RACING team. How did this partnership come about?

Sebastian Asch: “In the final race of the 2011 season at Hockenheim, our crews were positioned adjacent to each other in the pits. We exchanged phone numbers and kept in touch over the winter. For a long time, I wasn’t sure whether I would be continuing with Porsche or switching to Mercedes-Benz. The decision was made fairly late on. But it has certainly worked out for the best, because it has been absolutely great working with Maximilian and the team. We get along well and are always of the same opinion in relation to the car. That means we never have to compromise.”

Maximilian Götz: “For me, it was clear early on that I would be continuing with kfzteile24 MS RACING, but the seat next to me remained vacant for quite a while. The decision that Sebastian was to be my team-mate came not long before the start of the season.”

Going into the new season, did you see yourselves as title favourites?

Götz: “No, not really. There were a lot of new factors in the series such as new teams, drivers, cars and even a new tyre partner – Yokohama. So it was difficult to assess the balance of power. But I was convinced that we would be competitive and that we were capable of a Top Five finish.”

Asch: “Going into the new season, it was all a bit of a rush, so even after the first test, we still didn’t have a clear idea of where we stood relative to the opposition. Essentially, my aim was to be part of a team that was in with a chance of the title. I’ve been competing in the ADAC GT Masters for some years now. Obviously, you look very carefully for a combination that will be competitive in championship terms.”

At what point did you realise that you had a realistic chance of taking the title?

Asch: “We saw right at the start of the season that we were up there with the front-runners. First place was tantalisingly close in so many of the races. However, the field was extremely well matched, and at the top, it was really tight. Alessi and Keilwitz in their Corvette built up an early 30-point lead, but that just evaporated. So you could never be sure of anything. But one thing was clear to us – unless we could actually win a race, we weren’t going to make it. The ADAC GT Masters is so competitive that you can’t take the title solely on the basis of podium finishes.”

Oschersleben
30/03/12 – 01/04/12

Zandvoort (NL)
04/05/12 – 06/05/12

Sachsenring
08/06/12 – 10/06/12

Nürburgring *
13/07/12 – 15/07/12

Red Bull Ring (A)
10/08/12 – 12/08/12

Lausitzring
24/08/12 – 26/08/12

Nürburgring
14/09/12 – 16/09/12

Hockenheim
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Götz: “After the race at Zandvoort, I knew that we were in with a chance of challenging for the title. We were fast right from the start of the season, so when we got to the Netherlands and showed that our good form in the opener at Oschersleben wasn’t a flash in the pan, I knew that we were championship contenders.”

In almost every qualifying and race, you were the fastest Mercedes-Benz duo. What was the secret of always being ahead of the others?

Götz: “The team already knew the car from the previous year and had usually been the fastest Mercedes-Benz crew in the 2011 season. MS RACING have done a simply fantastic job and always prepared the car perfectly. Also, we had a good strategy, two absolute top engineers and a good setup. To get results as good as these, everything had to be perfectly coordinated. The whole team – with the two of us as drivers – was a good combination. This outfit can hold its own with the best, as it proved by winning the team championship. Everyone at MS RACING can feel rightly proud of what they have achieved.”

Asch: “With this Mercedes-Benz, we had a car that had good pace on every track. Whereas our main rivals were extremely fast on some circuits and less so on others, we were consistent in terms of speed on all of them.”

What was the most difficult race weekend for you this season?

Götz: “Without any doubt, the race at the Red Bull Ring. In free practice and qualifying, we were in nowhere land, and we couldn’t work out why. I was afraid that our good run had come to an end at that point. But after qualifying, we traced the cause to a relatively minor fault in the car. We managed to fix it in time for the race. And of course, Hockenheim wasn’t an easy weekend either; in fact, it was an emotional roller-coaster.”

What tactics did you have in mind going into the final race weekend at Hockenheim?

Götz: “The team prepared the car perfectly right down to the smallest detail, and we didn’t let the pressure get to us, because we knew the odds were in our favour. We were aiming for a podium finish in the first race, and it was clear to us that we simply had to win the second race on Sunday.”

What went through your head when you were forced to retire from the penultimate race on the Saturday at Hockenheim?

Asch: “When I saw that Maximilian had been forced out with a puncture, I immediately wrote off our championship campaign, because the Porsche driven by our main rival Engelhart was leading the race and he was clearly heading for the title. So when Engelhart also had to retire with a puncture two laps later, his misfortune was our salvation. At that moment, we started to believe in our title prospects again, as we had the better grid position for Sunday’s race.”

Asch and Mercedes-Benz have been associated in the fans’ minds for more than 20 years now. Does this particular combination make winning the title even more special?

Asch: “You’re right. The combination of the Asch and Mercedes-Benz names has a certain ring to it. My father was DTM championship runner-up twice with Mercedes-Benz. I’m very proud to be carrying on this tradition. I can remember having looked up and seen my father on the podium at Hockenheim when I was quite young; now we’ve had the same situation in reverse. My father is

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very proud, and it means a lot to him that I've won the title with Mercedes-Benz. We live not all that far away from the Mercedes-Benz works in Sindelfingen, and it's amazing how much support we get from the staff there and how many fans we have cheering us on."

What were the first few days like for you after winning the title?

Götz: "On Sunday, we stayed quite late at the trophy awards ceremony which brought the ADAC Masters Weekend at Hockenheim to a close. On Tuesday and Wednesday, I went to the Oktoberfest, but unfortunately Sebastian was unable to join me. We have a celebration planned for the whole team quite soon, and I'm really looking forward to that. I was also absolutely delighted by the extensive media coverage. It's clear from this that the series has risen in prestige and prominence."

Asch: "Life goes on, of course, but the thrill you get from being champion is immense; hopefully it will carry on that way for a long time. When I returned home on Monday, the reception was simply overwhelming. In my house and at the place where I work, there were large posters hanging on the walls. It was only then that the sense of achievement really sank in."

Do you know yet if you will be defending your ADAC GT Masters title in 2013?

Asch: "My aim is to contest the ADAC GT Masters again and of course to defend the title. But so far, nothing has been decided. It would be great to continue partnering Maximilian, but for now, we'll just have to wait and see what the coming weeks bring."

Götz: "Defending the title has to be the objective under all circumstances, but at the moment, it's still too early to say anything definitive about 2013. But as the well-known saying goes, never change a winning team!"

Note for press: ADAC GT Masters website: access to Press Area via 'Press' in the top menu bar at www.adac.de/motorsport.

Further information available at www.adac.de/motorsport and www.adac-gt-masters.de

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