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Raffaele Marciello – A profile of the 2022 German GT Champion

- **27-year-old secures his first title in ADAC GT Masters**

Munich. A dream end to a virtually perfect season for Raffaele Marciello: with the ADAC GT Masters title in the Mercedes-AMG GT3 of Mann-Filter Team Landgraf, the Swiss driver brought to a fitting end a year, the likes of which do not come along very often. After victory at the 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps and the title in the GT World Challenge Europe, the Zurich-born Mercedes-AMG works driver won the title in the German GT Championship to add one of the most prestigious sprint series in Europe to his success on the endurance scene.

Marciello, known simply as “Lello” by everyone in the paddock, is a real character, who doesn’t mince his words and can be outspoken in his opinion. He demonstrated this with his change of nationality before the start of the season: having previously driven for Italy, he now lines up with a Swiss licence. “My family is from Italy, and I actually feel Italian. The Italian Motorsport Federation agreed to give me a lot of support, but nothing came of it. I don’t need any support, but if you promise something, you have to keep that promise. As I live in Switzerland, it was only logical that I would then appear under the Swiss flag.”

The 27-year-old has enjoyed success from the start of his career. “Lello” was sat in a kart at the age of just three and a half, but was not initially impressed. “My father was not a racing driver, but he was a motorsport fan and really wanted me to go down that line. However, I had little ambition in that regard at first.” Over time, he became faster and from 2003 won the Swiss Karting Championship twice and the Champions Cup. “When you start winning and realise that you are good and fast, your attitude changes. From then on, it was clear to me that I wanted to be a racing driver,” said the Swiss.

After a successful kart race in 2009, Marciello was accepted into the Ferrari Driver Academy. He switched to Formula racing and won the 2013 FIA Formula 3 European Championship with 13 victories to his name. This was followed by Formula 1 tests for Sauber, but his membership in the Ferrari Driver Academy was not extended in 2015, bringing to an end his involvement in Formula 1. This was the first time his career had stood still. “It was a difficult time, I didn’t know what to do next. Ferrari did not extend the contract and I did not have the necessary budget for Formula 1. There was no plan B, as I never considered doing anything except racing. Fortunately, I had contact with Mercedes-AMG and they offered me a great opportunity to drive in GT racing. I became a works driver and have enjoyed a lot of success with Mercedes-AMG.”

The change did him no harm at all, as proven by his title in the German GT Championship. After sixth and fourth place in the past two years, Marciello really went for it this season. “You need a lot of experience in the ADAC GT Masters, because it is a special format. You share the car with a colleague and only spend about 30 minutes behind the wheel in a race. You have to avoid mistakes, as it is difficult to make amends, because the standard is incredibly high. Qualifying is particularly important,

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you can lose a lot of ground there. Right from the word go, we focussed on finishing every race. It didn't matter whether that was in second, third or fifth place, we wanted to score points consistently. Our car was not the fastest, but we tried to ensure that we always got the maximum out of it. We were also fortunate never to have been involved in a crash, and there were no punctures. However, luck is part and parcel of motorsport."

Marciello's belief in his own strengths was a key factor en route to winning the title in Germany's fastest GT3 series. After the mediocre first half of the season, the Swiss driver and his team-mates managed to pull clear of the field in the second half of the year. Even when he started from further back on the grid, he was able to fight his way onto the podium and ruthlessly took advantage of any turbulent phases in a race to gain positions. "I am very good at adapting to a diverse range of conditions, taking advantage of certain racing situations, and driving tactically to keep risk to a minimum. However, I am very aggressive when overtaking, sometimes a little too aggressive, which can result in mistakes. However, that is what makes motor racing so special," he explained.

The newly-crowned champion does not yet know what he will do next season. However, he assumes that it will look something like this year – including the ADAC GT Masters again, to defend his title. In contrast, Formula 1 is no longer a topic for the quiet Swiss. "You can always dream, but you have to be realistic and Formula 1 is not for me. In the future, I will continue to do what I have always done in my career: win as many races as possible."

Team principal Klaus Landgraf sums up the character of Raffaele Marciello this way: "Raffaele is a very nice person, ambitious, focussed and emotional. However, he always remains calm and never flips out." Despite the success, Klaus Landgraf can still be a little self-critical. "We repeatedly made strategic changes in the first half of the season, which made life a little difficult for ourselves. The second half of the season was all about consistency, and that paid dividends." The team principal is certain that the hospitality in the paddock will not survive the title win and the ensuing celebrations in one piece. Klaus Landgraf: "The team has been fighting for this project for two years, and has been rewarded with the title. You can afford to sacrifice the hospitality in this case."

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