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An interview with ADAC GT Masters champions Kalender and Seppänen

- **Kalender:** "I still smile when I think about winning the title."
- **Seppänen:** "As the winner of the "Road to DTM", I would like to take the next step."

Munich. Tom Kalender (Hamm/Sieg) and Elias Seppänen (FIN) were crowned champions of the ADAC GT Masters at the season finale in Hockenheim. Speaking in an interview, the duo describe the weeks after winning the title, and how they celebrated. They also discuss their route to success and what they both have planned for the 2025 season.

It is now a few days since you won the title. How do you feel when you look back at the last few weeks?

Elias Seppänen: It still feels a bit odd to be the first driver ever to successfully defend the title in the ADAC GT Masters. That is something I am very proud of, especially as there have been an awful lot of fantastic racing drivers in this series before me. If I had to compare my two titles, I could not say that one means more to me than the other. 2023 was definitely more stressful, as Salman Owega and I suffered a few setbacks. Tom and I worked very well together from the outset, and the whole team did a perfect job. As such, I was confident from early on in the season that I could win a second title.

Tom Kalender: Now that a little time has passed, what Elias and I achieved this year has started to sink in. Despite that, it is still an awesome feeling, which still puts a smile on my face. I am also really happy that Elias and I helped make it three titles in a row for Landgraf Motorsport.

How were the few days after the season finale?

Elias Seppänen: Many people wrote to me and congratulated me on winning the championship. I tried to relax a bit and play some sport with my mates. Only now can I process it and start planning for 2025.

Tom Kalender: I found it a real shame that the season was over. After all, it had been an extremely good one for us. I could happily have had a few more events. I am now focussing fully on school again. And I am obviously already making plans for the new season, in which I hope to continue to work with Landgraf Motorsport.

One of your greatest strengths was qualifying. In twelve qualifying sessions, you only failed to score points twice. Did you prepare specially for qualifying in the run-up to the season?

Elias Seppänen: I did not practice for that specifically. However, we were always conscious that we had to work meticulously to get the best possible result. Plus, I was familiar with the car and all the circuits except Spa. That definitely helped.

Tom Kalender: The qualifying procedure and the way you work with the tyres are different to in Formula racing. With that in mind, it was important for me to simulate the processes and get the Pirelli

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tyres into the optimal working window, in order to set the fastest possible time for one lap. Unfortunately, it was not quite good enough for pole position. Generally speaking, however, I am very happy with my results.

Victory at the Red Bull Ring was a big step towards the title. Did that change your mindset going into the season finale?

Elias Seppänen: The comfortable lead did bring a certain calm to the team. It was a totally different situation to last year, as Tom and I were not under too much pressure. We ultimately just tried to avoid doing anything stupid and to bring the car home in one piece. And we managed to do precisely that.

Tom Kalender: For me, it was actually just business as usual. Because we never really looked at the table, we were generally really relaxed. We always wanted to do our very best. It would appear that this was a good approach, and one that helped us throughout the entire season.

What do you particularly appreciate about your team-mate?

Elias Seppänen: Firstly, I must say that it was a completely new situation for me. This was my first time as the more experienced driver. I tried to pass my knowledge on to Tom, to get him off to a good start in his first season in GT3 racing. He was very open to any information and developed really quickly. I am still impressed that he had such a steep learning curve at such a young age. The year with Tom was a lot of fun.

Tom Kalender: I am very grateful to Elias for his support. I was able to benefit from his greater experience, particularly in the winter. However, he also gave me valuable tips on the track, which allowed me to improve consistently.

Finally, let's look ahead to next year: Will you start your title defence at the season-opener at the Dekra Lausitzring?

Elias Seppänen: I can't actually tell you that yet. As the winner of the "Road to DTM", I would obviously like to take the next step. However, the ADAC GT Masters is an attractive series, so why not try to win another title?

Tom Kalender: So far there are a lot of options, but nothing definite. In principle, I can definitely imagine working with Landgraf Motorsport in the ADAC GT Masters again. However, I now have to look closely at every possibility, and decide what is best for my career.

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