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## Tom Kalender and Elias Seppänen – the record-breaking duo in profile

- Tom Kalender is the youngest champion in the history of the ADAC GT Masters
- One for the history books: Elias Seppänen is the first driver to successfully defend the title
- Landgraf Motorsport wins its third championship in a row

Hockenheim. Big celebrations for Elias Seppänen (FIN) and Tom Kalender (Hamm/Sieg): the two Mercedes-AMG drivers from Landgraf Motorsport finished third in the eleventh race of the season at the Hockenheimring Baden-Württemberg to wrap up the title in the 2024 ADAC GT Masters. A historic moment for the team from Gensingen in the Mainz-Bingen district, which claimed its third Drivers' Championship in a row. Seppänen has been involved in two of those triumphs, and he managed to successfully defend his title this season – a feat that nobody had achieved before him. However, the 20-year-old Finn is not the only one to make history. At just 16 years, six months and 23 days, his team-mate Kalender becomes the youngest title winner ever, beating the record previously held by Kelvin van der Linde (ZA) who was 18 when he won his first title.

Seppänen originally started out on two wheels rather than four in his native Finland. “My parents were heavily involved in Motocross, but at some point it became too dangerous for me, so I switched to karting,” says Seppänen, who enjoyed multiple karting victories early on in his career. He has remained true to two-wheel sport, just without an engine. He goes cycling almost every day and has been on a tour of the Westerwald forest together with his team-mate. After his time in karting, his next step took him to ADAC Formula 4, in which he again demonstrated his talent. Seppänen ended the 2020 season in third place and with one race win to his name. He remained in Formula racing for another year and first raced in the ADAC GT Masters in 2022, at the wheel of a Mercedes-AMG GT3 for Landgraf Motorsport. The following year, he won his first ADAC GT Masters title alongside Salman Owega (Cologne), who switched to Haupt Racing Team for the 2024 season. Now with two titles to his name, Seppänen is one of the most successful drivers in the ADAC GT Masters. Up until today, only three drivers had won the championship on two occasions, in the form of Kelvin van der Linde, Christopher Mies (D) and Sebastian Asch (D). They have now been joined by the flying Finn.

As well as the Driver title, he also won the “Road to DTM”, for which he receives funding for the 2025 DTM season in the form of the entry fee. “It would be fantastic to be involved in the DTM next year. That would be a dream come true,” says the champion. Were he to start in the DTM, he would follow in the footsteps of his Finnish role model Mika Häkkinen, who drove in the top German motorsport series between 2005 and 2007. Another person who plays an important role for Seppänen is Bernd Schneider. The five-time DTM champion acts as a consultant for the young drivers in the Landgraf team. “He has a wealth of experience and is a remarkable person. I am pleased that he is always willing to listen to us drivers,” says Seppänen, describing the former racing driver.

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For Kalender, it has been a perfect start to life on the GT3 scene. He was just 16 years and 31 days old when he made his ADAC GT Masters debut, immediately finishing on the podium. One day later, he joined the list of race winners. The teenager learned his trade in karting, since when he has progressed through all the ADAC series. Among his achievements were winning the title in the ADAC Kart Masters (2019) and finishing runner-up in the German Junior Kart Championship (2022). Last year, the youngster from the Westerwald was driving a Formula car in the French Formula 4 Championship for the ADAC Formula 4 Junior Team. After a season in France, he went in search of a new challenge – and found it in the ADAC GT Masters, which he literally mastered.

Alongside his motorsport career, Kalender also still attends school, where he is in the eleventh grade and on his way to doing his Abitur (school leaving examination). Unsurprisingly, his favourite subject is sport, which also dominates most of his free time. His strengths include his relaxed composure: “All year, I have continued to focus on my original goal, which was to end the season in the top five. In doing so, I have avoided putting any pressure on myself. The team has also been an important factor, as the Landgraf crew has done an awesome job and always provided us with an outstanding car.” Even difficult situations have not knocked him off his stride. “I made a few mistakes at the Nürburgring and Spa-Francorchamps, for which we were unnecessarily punished. Unfortunately, that cost us some valuable points. I looked at that closely subsequently and tried to learn a lesson from those kind of scenes,” says the rookie.

The two drivers spend a lot of time together, both on and off the track. Seppänen views that as a big advantage: “Before the races, Tom and I always train together in the simulator. We also meet up on weekends for a joint sports session. I think that was an important factor in winning the title, as it allowed us to get to know each other’s personality and working methods better. That was really very helpful.” Kalender has also been impressed by his team-mate: “Working with Elias was super from day one. We immediately got on well and I have learned a lot from him.”

As early as the opening round at Motorsport Arena Oschersleben, the signs were there that this would be an exciting battle for the title. Victory in the first race of the season went to Maxime Oosten (NL) and Leon Köhler (Erlenbach am Main) from FK Performance in a BMW M4 GT3, ahead of Seppänen and Kalender. The Mercedes-AMG drivers struck back with victory in race two, which took them to the top of the table. From then on, the two pairs of drivers were embroiled in a thrilling duel for the championship. Seppänen and Kalender enjoyed a pivotal weekend at the Red Bull Ring in Austria, where they took a big step towards the title by battling their way to third place in race nine of the season, while their closest rivals from BMW had to settle for ninth. The Mercedes-AMG youngsters claimed their second lights-to-flag victory of the season in race ten, extending their lead over the second-placed duo to 29 points. That gave them match point, which the young Landgraf drivers converted in the penultimate race of the season in Hockenheim, ensuring they would be crowned champions in the 18<sup>th</sup> season of the ADAC GT Masters. Third place was sufficient to give them an unassailable lead at the top of the table.

# Media Information



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