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An interview with halfway leaders Wiebelhaus and Owega

- Ford duo claimed the first victory for the new Ford Mustang in Europe
- Wiebelhaus and Owega also lead the “Road to DTM” competition
- Ford Performance Juniors discuss the development of the Mustang

Munich. Into the break with a bang! Salman Owega (20/Cologne) and Finn Wiebelhaus (19/Obertshausen/both Haupt Racing Team) claimed their first win of the season at the Nürburgring, in the final race before the ADAC GT Masters heads into its summer break. This was also the maiden victory for the Ford Mustang GT3 in the ADAC's GT3 series, and the first anywhere in Europe. That win catapulted the duo to the top of the Drivers' Championship with 98 points, making them the pair to catch in the second half of the season.

Congratulations on leading the championship at the halfway point. What does this mean to you?

Finn Wiebelhaus: A lot. We have already had one DNF this season, and the fact that we are still top of the table is down to an impressive team effort. We are learning so much about the car every weekend, and hope that we can put what we have learned into practice over the rest of the season, so that we can be even stronger.

Salman Owega: It is obviously not a bad thing to lead at the halfway point. However, we still have the same number of races ahead of us, in which just as much can happen. With that in mind, we are definitely not going to celebrate prematurely.

You were team-mates last season, but are sharing the car in the ADAC GT Masters for the first time in 2025. How are you getting on, personally and in the car?

Finn Wiebelhaus: Salman is the easiest team-mate I have had during my career so far. We are roughly the same age, have met up privately in the past, and drove a few races together in the winter. We help each other. For example, we look after the tyres well for each other in the races. Neither of us tries to set the fastest lap. Instead, we rely on consistency to progress and hand the car over to the other in good condition.

Salman Owega: Finn and I have the same goals and same approach to motorsport. We both always want to do better, and give 100 percent to make that possible. As far as the set-up is concerned too, we both want very similar things and complement each other very well.

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Despite the team switching manufacturer from Mercedes-AMG to Ford, you have both remained true to HRT. How important is the team in the background?

Finn Wiebelhaus: The environment is definitely crucial. If it is not right and you don't feel comfortable, then you don't perform to your best. It is very important to me to form a connection with the team. I also did a lot of work with them in the winter, testing the Ford, and soon made the decision to continue with the team. The Ford Mustang was obviously a change for the whole team, but we are all pulling together to make the car really competitive. We determined the two drivers early on in proceedings, and it was clear to me that it would be a good season with this concept.

Salman Owega: It is not easy to switch manufacturer. However, the team and Ford are doing all they can to make it to the top and establish the conditions, in which that is possible. It is an honour for me to be involved in a programme like this. We want to continue developing the car together with HRT and Ford, and obviously to enjoy success down the line.

Could you describe the way the Mustang handles, what its strengths are, and where it has potential for improvement?

Salman Owega: It has a very big engine, which not only sounds good but also has plenty of power. That definitely does not do any harm. It is very beefy, loud and sounds brutal, which goes down particularly well with the fans.

Finn Wiebelhaus: We have a long wheelbase and, for various reasons, are still working on our performance in some corners. The Mustang is already really good on faster tracks with more high-speed sections. We are in the middle of the development work and it certainly does not yet drive like a fully-developed car. But we are still at the start of the whole project.

What benefits does that have for you in the long term?

Finn Wiebelhaus: We can tailor the development and set-up of the car to our driving style. When another driver is in the car, they must adapt more than we must. It is also very important for our development as drivers. The meetings with the engineers help us to understand exactly what actions have what effect. That is making us more complete racing drivers.

We already mentioned the positive response from fans. Where do you notice that most as drivers?

Salman Owega: Actually in social media. People are very interested in photos, videos and everything else. It is new to see an American car driving in the ADAC GT Masters and the DTM, and for it to have established itself so well. When I saw the first images of my current car last year, I also really liked it personally. As such, I can really understand the fans.

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The second half of the season takes you to the Salzburgring, the Red Bull Ring and Hockenheim. How do you rate your chances at these circuits?

Finn Wiebelhaus: The Red Bull Ring, with the characteristics of the track and its many straights, mean it should obviously not be bad for our car. Then again, we showed at the Nürburgring that it can also perform at circuits, which generally speaking do not tend to suit it. That gives us confidence for all the remaining racetracks.

You are currently first and second in the “Road to DTM” standings. How important to you is this opportunity to move up on the ADAC platform?

Salman Owega: It is definitely a good chance for young drivers, who did not previously have so many opportunities. I am pleased that the ADAC has launched this additional incentive. It helps the winner and also raises a bit more awareness. However, a full season in the DTM obviously also requires more support from other parties.

You are both ‘Ford GT3 Performance Juniors’. What does this role involve?

Finn Wiebelhaus: We help the team and are always available when it comes to issues such as ABS and traction control. We can also help determine the direction, in which the car is developed on the electronics side. I am very proud to have been integrated in this programme with such a big brand, which is only just returning to Europe. It is my second year in GT3 racing and I have worked hard for it. My main goal is to become a works driver, and I am doing everything in my power to achieve that.

Salman Owega: I am also very happy to be in this position. It takes me one step closer to my great ambition of one day becoming an official works driver.

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