Media Information

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An interview with Felix Hirsiger and Finn Zulauf: What is the secret to their success?

- **Dream season for the champions with Liqui Moly Team Engstler Motorsport**
- **The champions on harmony, mutual criticism, and the highlight of their season**

Munich. It is roughly a month since Felix Hirsiger (28/CHE) and Finn Zulauf (22/Königstein im Taunus) were crowned the new ADAC GT Masters champions. With five wins, two podiums and five pole positions to their name, the drivers from Liqui Moly Team Engstler Motorsport won the Drivers' Championship and the Silver Cup, while Zulauf also added victory in the "Road to DTM". In an interview, the two Lamborghini drivers discuss their season, the secret to their success, and their plans for the future.

Have you had enough time since winning the title to take everything in?
Felix Hirsiger: I actually returned to everyday business and my usual work very quickly. It is fantastic to win, and I enjoy it very much - especially as I have now been crowned champion in different series for three years in a row. At the same time, the end of a season means the start of the next, and people have short memories. With that in mind, it is now important to keep improving and go again next year - the opposition never sleeps.

Finn Zulauf: I have actually been on the go a lot, including in South America, where I have done some coaching and a bit of driving myself. Plus, I have had tests and a few functions in my role as 'Official Lamborghini GT3 Junior'. At the same time, I have tried to unwind a bit after all the hullabaloo, and to simply enjoy and take in the title win.

Did you get any particularly nice messages of congratulations?
Felix Hirsiger: I had a few, mainly from other drivers - Kiano Blum, for example. He was really sincere, which pleased me. There were obviously also messages from DTM drivers like Jules Gounon and Marco Wittmann. You should not take that for granted, as they are so successful themselves. It means a lot to me that they have noticed and recognised our success.

Finn Zulauf: The number of messages and phone calls was unbelievable. It took me a few days to really read and reply to them all. There were also many from people, from whom I had not heard for a long time. For example, my mechanic from my days in karting. I was really pleased to hear from them.

Were you confident from the outset that you would be in with a chance of winning the title?
Finn Zulauf: We are both extremely ambitious and self-critical, and we don't want to be competing for the booby prize in any series we enter. I knew that the team was doing a great job, and it was clear to me that Felix knows what he is doing behind the wheel. As such, there was hope from the word go - and faith in Felix. I was always relaxed when he was in the car.

Felix Hirsiger: My expectations were mixed. Prior to the start of the season, I had only driven in one GT3 race, so it was hard to predict how I would fare compared to the opposition. However, I knew that

Finn can really drive - particularly in this car. But that also added a bit of pressure. I wanted to perform, if my team-mate was also doing so. That is what made the combination so exciting.

What made you so strong as team-mates?
Finn Zulauf: We both have a similar driving style, which gave us an incredible amount of wiggle room when it came to strategy. If the others came in early, we stayed out a bit longer, and vice versa. That is how we won in Zandvoort, for example.

Felix Hirsiger: There is no place for ego with us. If the team told me to come in earlier, I did not ask why or criticise. Finn and I were never angry that the other was in the car for longer. Neither of us was worried about being worse than the other. We were well balanced, and that gave us a lot of freedom.

That harmony was also visible from the outside. How important was it to your success?
Felix Hirsiger: In the past, I would not have considered it as being all that important. In hindsight, however, I can tell you that it was extremely important. It was vital in discussions about strategy, the car, and just in general. The steps towards success are far bigger in a positive environment.

Finn Zulauf: It automatically reduces the amount of pressure on you personally. Particularly in difficult moments, it would be easy to strike out at your team-mate and create tension. That might help some people, but it has the opposite effect on me. With Felix and me, I always knew that everything was fine and we would never end up in such an uncomfortable situation.

When your relationship is so good, does it not make it more difficult to criticise each other?
Finn Zulauf: It makes it easier. He has always been honest, as have I. I am very critical of myself and believe that everybody can work on themselves and improve. If I make a mistake, I admit it. That is important if you want to keep developing.

Felix Hirisger: Any criticism between us was done in a funny way and was never reproachful. For example he drove a super qualifying, but the final sector was not perfect. Afterwards, I told him he could take a look at my onboard footage, as he could learn a thing or two. He did exactly the same, because he was better in a different sector. It is fun to work together on that level. That way, nobody is angry with the other about anything.

Looking back at the season, what was your highlight?
Felix Hirsiger: The second race at the Salzburgring was right up there for me. We were having a really bad weekend and, for various reasons, had not been rewarded for our strong performances - until the Sunday. We both produced the kind of performance we had never produced before, even though we had won previously. It was not simply another win, but was on a par with the victory in the final corner at the Red Bull Ring.

Finn Zulauf: I agree with Felix, definitely the victory at the Salzburgring. That was one of the best I have had in my whole career. To come through from last place to take victory was very cool - particularly given the situation with the DNF the previous day, and surrendering the lead in the championship. The team worked all night, and that success was redemption for us and the whole team.

What are your plans for the coming season?
Finn Zulauf: It is cool that I won the "Road to DTM", and I would obviously be delighted if I were actually able to step up a series. We are pushing in that direction, and there are a few things going on in the background. However, I really don't know any more than that.

Felix Hirsiger: I will definitely be back in the car, but I cannot actually reveal much more than that at the moment. However, I am confident that we will be able to announce something shortly. Whatever happens, it is going to be a cool and intensive year. Every kilometre is worth its weight in gold and takes me a step closer to turning professional and, hopefully, to the DTM.

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