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Halfway champions Fourie and Zimmermann on the pressure of expectation, team spirit, and grand ambitions

- BMW duo from FK Performance Motorsport offer insights into their partnership
- Fourie leads the "Road to DTM" and has sights set on the title
- Championship leaders reveal who they are away from the track

Munich. Leyton Fourie (20/ZAF) and Tim Zimmermann (29/Langenargen) lead the ADAC GT Masters at the halfway point. The two FK Performance Motorsport drivers moved to the top of the table in the final race before the midway point of the season. In an interview, the BMW duo discuss their expectations, offer insights into the way they work together as team-mates, and reveal why honest words are sometimes needed.

As runners-up last year, you were among the favourites for the title coming into this season. Would it have been a disappointment, if you were not sitting pretty at the top of the table right now?

Leyton Fourie: "We were one of just two driver pairings that remained unchanged from last year. With that in mind, we knew the potential of our package and what we had to do to exhaust that potential. However, the season opener was a bit of a bumpy start, as a few variables did not exactly play into our hands. Zandvoort, on the other hand, was a dream weekend, with a win and a second place. When we arrived at the Lausitzring, we did not know exactly how strong we would be, although I had a really good feeling from the word go. Had anyone asked me at the Red Bull Ring whether we would lead the championship at the halfway point, I would probably have said no. Now I am just happy to be on top, with the progress we have made, and with what we have extracted from the package."

Tim Zimmermann: "The funny thing is that, before I switched to BMW, everyone said that the Red Bull Ring is the perfect circuit for that car, and that it is really fast there. When it came down to it, we not only had bad luck, but also no pace – and that goes for this year and last. We knew that it would not be our favourite track this year, but we always remained positive. That was one of the reasons why we performed as well as we did in Zandvoort. We are now in the thick of the title race, although there is still a long way to go this season, and a lot can happen. Despite that, I am very positive now."

How great was the sense of relief after your dream weekend in Zandvoort?

Leyton Fourie: "It was not that great at all, because we already had confidence in our package ahead of that weekend. When we won, it felt more like a kind of revenge for what happened at the Red Bull Ring. I believe we needed that – both emotionally and for the way we felt. It was good for the team, and gave us our confidence back."

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When did it become clear that you would line up as team-mates for FK Performance Motorsport again?

Tim Zimmermann: "I was always certain that I wanted to remain with the team, which is why I made my decision pretty early. I think we already had a contract in Hockenheim. Back then, however, nobody knew who my team-mate would be. I was obviously hoping for Leyton, because we form a strong partnership together."

Leyton Fourie: "In my case, I still had a few things of a different nature to clear up first. Once they were sorted, I made my decision. I drove for FK Performance Motorsport when I was in ADAC GT4 Germany, and made the step up to the ADAC GT Masters with them. Plus, we could see that we had a package, with which we could win the championship."

What makes FK Performance Motorsport so special as a team?

Tim Zimmermann: "For me, there has actually been something not quite right in every team up to now. I am not just referring to the work at the racetrack. I bring a lot of guests to every event, and everything has to run smoothly. With FK Performance Motorsport, I would say that this is the first time that absolutely everything has run seamlessly. Everyone works well together, and I am really very happy. I hope I can stay here for many years to come."

Leyton Fourie: "Even back in my GT4 days, the team already felt like a family. Although the engineers have obviously changed over the course of the years, the environment has remained the same. Every time I arrive here from South Africa, it is like coming to a second family, far away from my actual family back home. There is always a good, positive atmosphere and nothing to complain about."

This is your second year as team-mates. How has the way you work together changed? Do you speak to each other or criticise one another differently now?

Tim Zimmermann: "To be honest, we had our tricky moments at the start of the season. The expectations this year were incredibly high. And of course, if things do not go as you are expecting, emotions run much higher. However, we addressed the fact that we needed to remain calm, even if things were not going to plan, and continue to do our best. Now we are back on course. The same goes for our overall package."

Leyton Fourie: "The team is ultimately like a family. And in every family, you sometimes have disagreements when things are not going as they should. However, it is nice to see how the environment and relationships function within the team. Even after such situations, we still immediately manage to get back on track. We are able to calm each other down, keep a clear head, and focus on the important stuff. In our second year together, we understand each other much better. At the same time, we are always honest with each other. That is the way we work."

Tim Zimmermann: "And that is a good thing!"

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Who are Leyton Fourie and Tim Zimmermann when they are not sat behind the steering wheel?

Leyton Fourie: "At home, I am quite busy with my studies. That may be a bit frustrating sometimes, but it is going really well. I am also quite involved with my church. My faith is very important to me personally. I also play golf now and again, including with Joe [Joseph Elleringer]. He only lives about 20 minutes from me. Furthermore, I also do a bit of work coaching young drivers where I used to drive, and where Kelvin and Sheldon van der Linde also began their careers. Youth development is very close to my heart. Training obviously also goes with the territory, but I prefer fun activities. I enjoy cycling, but probably more in the gym."

Tim Zimmermann: "I organise pretty big events for my partners and sponsors at race weekends. As such, a lot of time goes into planning. However, I am also a very good dog owner. I live right next to the lake, so I enjoy spending time on or by the water – for example, by renting a boat, or going wakeboarding or cycling. I also enjoy hiking and climbing. Generally speaking, I am very active away from motor racing."

Leyton, you lead the "Road to DTM". How important is that competition to you?

Leyton Fourie: "Last year, I came up just short. As such, winning it now would be a little way of making amends. It will probably come down to a battle between me and Finn [Zulauf]. He is also a strong driver, so it promises to be very competitive all season. My focus will be on winning the Drivers' Championship, which would also be enough to win the 'Road to DTM'."

What are your long-term motorsport goals?

Leyton Fourie: "My cooperation with BMW now stretches back a long way – to the M2 Cup. I have been through virtually the whole development programme, and obviously dream of becoming a works driver. It would also be nice to make it into the DTM. It goes without saying that the classics – for example, the Le Mans 24 Hours in a hypercar – also appeal."

Tim Zimmermann: "I can definitely imagine racing in the ADAC GT Masters for a few more years – happily with FK Performance Motorsport. A lot obviously depends on my partners and sponsors. When it comes down to it, they are also involved in deciding which direction I head in. The DTM is also an option, but it is on a different level when it comes to costs. We'll have to wait and see."

The second half of the season features race weekends at the Nürburgring, the Salzburgring, and the finale in Hockenheim. How optimistic are you going into these races?

Tim Zimmermann: "As long as it doesn't rain, I am happy." (laughs)

Leyton Fourie: "I think the Nürburgring will be our biggest challenge. However, we definitely know that we have the right overall package. As has already been mentioned, we are confident and believe in our opportunities. All we have to do now is take full advantage of everything we have and make the most of every situation."

Media Information

Media Contact

ADAC e.V.

Oliver Runschke, T +49 89 76 76 69 65, E-mail oliver.runschke@adac.de

Kay-Oliver Langendorff, T +49 89 76 76 69 36, E-mail kay.langendorff@adac.de

adac.de/gt-masters

adac.de/motorsport