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René Rast and Kelvin van der Linde: Interview with the ADAC GT Masters champions

- New champions van der Linde/Rast review their championship season
- Consistency was trump card: Audi pair secure points in every race
- Van der Linde and Rast talk about the highs and lows of the 2014 ADAC GT Masters season

The title was theirs after 16 races and three wins, four pole positions and nine podiums in all. After an impressive season, Kelvin van der Linde (18, South Africa) and René Rast (28, Germany / Prosperia C Abt Racing) came top in the ADAC GT Masters drivers' standings in the Audi R8. The two new champions talk about their masterly feat.

How did you spend your days following the title win? What were your reactions, did you really push the boat as far as celebrating your achievement was concerned?

René Rast: "We celebrated, but kept things low key. The fans and the media reacted great to the title. I've never seen so much activity on my Facebook page as after the finale. People's reactions also showed me just how important the series has become."

Kelvin van der Linde: "There were some great moments. We had terrific support from the fans. Many fans in South Africa also wished us luck, and I've made a lot of people there very proud with the title. We celebrated with family and a few close friends on my return to South Africa, but unfortunately, everyday life has caught up with me all too quickly, and school is now beckoning once again."

You were continually at the top of the standings right from the start of the season in the etropolis Motorsport Arena Oschersleben. When did you first begin to believe that you could actually win the title?

Rast: "We started our first race with an eye to the title. Our tactic was to consistently score points and not take any risks. Last year, you could be in title contention despite not scoring. We wanted to be a bit cleverer this season and consistently finish in the points. It became obvious that our chances were very good after a double victory at the Sachsenring and our subsequent decent lead in the standings."

Van der Linde: "We couldn't be certain during the season, because we never knew what surprises van Lagen's Porsche might have in store for us. However, after the double victory at the Sachsenring, we knew that there was very little that could go wrong. But really, I never had time to worry much about the standings, because the entire season went by in a flash. I still can't believe that the last race is over and done with."

How did you both react when your team boss, Christian Abt, told you that you would be lining up together in the ADAC GT Masters?

Rast: "Naturally, I was a bit surprised, because I'd never heard of Kelvin before, but ultimately, it was the team's decision to choose my partner. I didn't tell Kelvin all my secrets straightaway, because he had to earn my respect first. However, he did that very quickly. As for me, I became more frank with him in view of his steep learning curve and gradually revealed more to him."

Van der Linde: "The team wanted to combine a junior driver with a pro, so it was apparent to me that I would be getting a very fast team-mate. I then got quite excited when I found that René was to be my team-mate. I've followed his career very closely. He's one of my idols in motor

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racing. For me, it was like a dream come true to race with him. I knew I could learn a lot from him, and that's what happened. Many racing drivers have very big egos and are very reluctant to reveal anything, but René was always very open. He showed me many things and explained a great deal. And then in Hockenheim when everything was hanging in the balance, he taught me a few more tricks."

Which weekend was your toughest?

Van der Linde: "That has to be the Slovakia Ring. We couldn't get up to speed. BMW were very strong, plus, we conceded a penalty. We'd hardly scored any points with just three race weekends to go before the end of the season and had also dropped down from the top spot to third."

Which race and which particular success was the most important on your way to clinching the title?

Rast: "That was for me the second place in the second race at the Red Bull Ring, which meant that we headed off for the summer break as leaders in the standings. But for those points, we would have been in a very different situation at the start of the second half of the season. We would have had to take more risks and attack much more towards the end of season. Things were much more relaxed thanks to securing second place and the championship lead at the half-way stage."

Van der Linde: "The double victory at the Sachsenring was definitely very important, but securing second place at the Red Bull Ring which is not easy on our car was just fantastic. We were the first to achieve a podium there in an R8 on a dry track. That result had a major impact on the second half of the season."

The finale was again tremendously exciting. Your main rival Jaap van Lagen got very close at times in the first race at Hockenheim. How did that make you feel?

Rast: "It looked like van Lagen would finish on the podium and take a lot of points out of us, whereas we would fail to score at all. The team then told me on the radio that van Lagen had been penalised for a pit stop infringement, and I immediately began to reckon things up in my head, as I was driving along. It was a quite a while before he served his penalty and I asked the team several times what was happening until finally, they told me, quite incomprehensibly, to concentrate on the race. Once the Porsche had served the penalty and emerged behind us, I knew that we would win the championship."

Van der Linde: "I didn't quite understand what was going on. I was very disappointed with my performance after my stint. I left the pits and sat down in the stands where there were no TV screens, so I didn't really know what was happening. Only when I returned to the pits just before the end of the race did I discover what had happened. I had very mixed feelings at the time. Well yes, the title was ours, but I wasn't too happy about the fact that someone else had got a penalty."

Will you defend the title next year?

Rast: "If I contest the ADAC GT Masters again, my goal will be to defend the title, for sure. I would love to line up once again in the ADAC GT Masters, but ultimately, it's not down to just me. No definite plans have been made as yet."

Van der Linde: "I would love to drive again in the ADAC GT Masters, line up for Audi and stay in Christian Abt's team. I will do everything I can to ensure that happens. At the moment, however, it's still too early to talk about next season."

Media information

For further information, visit www.adac.de/gt-masters

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