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Kelvin van der Linde: “I aim to keep start number 1”

- Interview with ADAC GT Masters title defender Kelvin van der Linde
- 18-year-old South African to line up with Audi for second ADAC GT Masters season
- van der Linde will team up with Stefan Wackerbauer in Audi fielded by Christian Abt

Munich. Kelvin van der Linde (18, South Africa) will begin his second ADAC GT Masters season with #1 on the door of his Audi R8. After winning the title last year alongside René Rast (28, Frankfurt), the champion will now mount his title defence with new team-mate Stefan Wackerbauer (19, Gundihausen) in an Audi prepared by C Abt Racing.

What have you been up to since winning the title in October?

Kelvin van der Linde, “I relaxed a little at the end of the season and took a few days holiday, but things got under way again in January with initial talks for the 2015 season. I cranked up my fitness programme another notch and have also been busy packing boxes ready for the move from South Africa to Germany in March. I’m renting an apartment very close to the team’s base in Kempten.”

You were a newcomer to the squad last year and had a chance to learn, but your task will now be very different as reigning champion. How do you view this challenge?

“I’ve learned a lot and feel ready to take this next step. I think I can share my knowledge with other drivers. The situation is a bit strange, because my team-mate Stefan Wackerbauer is older than me. We already know each other from last year, and I’m certain that we’ll make a very competitive pairing. “

Has the pressure on you as defending champion now increased?

“Actually, I feel relieved after last year’s triumph. Of course, there’s a certain amount of pressure, but nothing new. I had to prove myself last year because it was my only chance to get established in Europe. If I had not succeeded, then I probably would not be driving this year. So, I can tackle the 2015 season without any worries and concentrate purely on racing. I feel mentally stronger than ever and have continued to work on my fitness. Of course, all eyes will be on us this year as defending champions in both the drivers’ and team standings. We intend to win again and, of course, I will try to successfully defend start number 1.”

After achieving success in the ADAC GT Masters, you are now a member of this year’s squad of drivers on Audi’s customer sport programme. Was that a fitting end to last season?

“It’s an important step for me and a great challenge. Audi would not be giving me this chance with the R8 on their customer sport programme if they did not believe in me. I’ve always wanted to become a professional racing driver and now my dream is coming true.”

You are not the only South African who will be contesting the 2015 ADAC GT Masters with Christian Abt’s Audi team. Jordan Lee Pepper, who has a very similar motor racing career behind him will also line up with Team Abt. What can we expect from him?

“I can’t wait to find out and want to wish him good luck. I’ve known him since our karting days and will get to know him even better this year because he’s also moving to Kempten. He’s in the same boat in the ADAC GT Masters as I was twelve months ago. However, you have to

Media information

remember that 2014 was a very exceptional season for us. It doesn't happen often, but things went brilliantly well as far as we're concerned."

The ADAC GT Masters season kicks off on the weekend of 24th-26th April in the etropolis Motorsport Arena Oschersleben. What else is on the agenda prior to the start of the season?

"Firstly, there's the move to Germany at the beginning of March when we will almost certainly do some more testing. I'm looking forward to the official pre-season tests in Oschersleben scheduled for April 8th/9th when we'll be running the new Pirelli tyres and coming up against new drivers and new cars fielded by the competition. I'm really looking forward to that. I think it's going to be a mega season, full of excitement."

Tickets, including access to the paddock, start at 20 euros

Fans who want to experience ADAC GT Masters action live at the track can now apply for tickets for the races in Oschersleben, at the Lausitzring, Nürburgring, Sachsenring and for the finale in Hockenheim. Ticket prices start at 20 euros and include access to the paddock. Tickets are available online at www.adac.de/gt-masters and at www.eventim.de, from any ADAC branch office and from more than 20,000 Eventim outlets throughout Europe.

The ADAC GT Masters will line up for the 2015 season in Germany, Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands, staging eight events and 16 races. ADAC GT Masters races will again be shown live by ADAC new live-TV exclusive partner SPORT1, who will broadcast all 16 ADAC GT Masters races live and in their entirety in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Broadcasts will normally begin at 1 pm on race weekends.

Race schedule and venues for the 2015 ADAC GT Masters:

24/04 – 26/04/2015	etropolis Motorsport Arena Oschersleben
05/06 – 07/06/2015	Red Bull Ring (A)
19/06 – 21/06/2015	Circuit Spa-Francorchamps (B)
03/07 – 05/07/2015	Lausitzring
14/08 – 16/08/2015	Nürburgring
28/08 – 30/08/2015	Sachsenring
18/09 – 20/09/2015	Circuit Park Zandvoort (NL)
02/10 – 04/10/2015	Hockenheimring Baden-Württemberg

Further information available at www.adac.de/gt-masters

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