

15.9.2023

Lucas Auer: “The guys really put me in my place”

- An interview with the Austrian from Mercedes-AMG Team Winward ahead of his home race
- Auer discusses his most important DTM win and reveals why fans can look forward to the weekend at the Red Bull Ring

Munich: More than 130 DTM races and approaching eight seasons: Austrian Lucas Auer is one of the most experienced drivers in this year’s field. After a difficult start, his form improved with two podiums at the Nürburgring. The coming DTM race weekend at the Red Bull Ring (22nd to 24th September) will be a home event for the 29-year-old from the Tyrol region. In an interview, the Mercedes-AMG Performance driver talks about the love of motorsport in Austria, unrealistic expectations in his debut season, and the challenges faced after his injury.

Your home race at the Red Bull Ring is just around the corner. What are you expecting in Spielberg?

I am really excited about the Red Bull Ring! It is the absolute highlight of the season for me. I have usually had some pretty cool home races, and the Austrian fans celebrate this kind of event. I am currently on nine DTM wins. It would obviously be awesome to reach the next milestone at the Red Bull Ring.

What does the circuit in Styria have to offer?

Qualifying is obviously very important in the DTM, but there are also a lot of overtaking opportunities in the race at the Red Bull Ring. However, the thing that clearly differentiates it from other racetracks is the surroundings. Everyone just feels good against this perfect backdrop, with the mountains and natural scenery. Whether you’re a fan, engineer or a driver.

What role does motorsport play in your homeland?

Austrians are mad about motorsport. For a long time, I was the only Austrian in the DTM. I am pleased that our country is now represented by three top drivers, in Thomas Preining, Clemens Schmid and me. I find it impressive how many super drivers from Austria are plying their trade in GT racing all over the world. In my native Austria, people are proud of us sports people – I can feel that and it is great to see.

How would you rate your season so far?

Generally speaking, I feel the season has been a positive one. After my crash in Daytona, and the ensuing operation, it was not clear for a long time exactly when I would be fit again. I am very pleased that everything worked out in time for the start of the season. Having said that, I was not at the pre-season test and did not have a classic preparation. We really struggled at the first two race weekends in Oschersleben and Zandvoort, but we have fought back successfully since then.

What do you believe is behind the improvement?

To a certain degree, I trace it back to my injury: the lack of preparation meant we were not able to try out a lot of things until the season was actually underway. There are a few new things this year,

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including the Pirelli tyre, which plays a big role. At first, we were simply lacking experience, plus we were testing a few things with the set-up. At some point, it finally clicked for me, and we took a big step forward.

You currently have nine DTM wins to your name. Which of them means the most to you?

Definitely my first win at the Lausitzring in 2016, because that was my breakthrough. That was a magical moment. To be honest, there was quite a lot of pressure on my shoulders at the time. I just knew that I had to finally get my first DTM success at some time. If you don't perform as a young driver, you are going to be out sooner or later. In my opinion, that was more extreme back then than it is today, because there were an incredible number of talented drivers waiting in the wings at the time.

You are in your eighth DTM season. What relationship do you have with the series?

The DTM is my sporting home. This is where I matured as a professional driver. I can still remember my rookie season. Back then, the field included such big names as Mattias Ekström, Timo Scheider and Gary Paffett. It feels unbelievable that I have now been involved for so long. The DTM is the toughest GT3 series in the world. This is where the best drivers and teams go head to head. As soon as you make a mistake, you are out of it. This competition is simply great fun.

With what expectations did you go into your first DTM season back in 2015?

I was always rather used to being successful, and thought it would be a similar story in the DTM. I would go in there and blow them all away. However, the guys really used to toy with me on the track. It was a totally new world for me. I first had to learn how to work with such a big team. The first races were really tough, but then I started to find my feet. I even made it onto pole position at the Nürburgring, so I definitely had the speed.

With all your experience from over 130 DTM races, what advice would you give to young drivers?

You obviously need a budget in motorsport, but as a young driver you have to have a better work ethic than the competition. I am convinced that performance is always recognised in the end. That is what brings you to the attention of sponsors and manufacturers. Anyone who is determined to make it and has the necessary talent will find a way. Plus, you have to learn quickly from your mistakes, as it doesn't last forever.

Tickets for the weekend at the Red Bull Ring are available online at dtm.com. Admission is free for under 16s when accompanied by a paying adult. ADAC members also benefit from a ten percent discount when purchasing tickets in advance online.

The two DTM races in Spielberg both start at 13:30 on Saturday (23rd September) and Sunday (24th September). ProSieben is showing all of this season's races live on German free-to-air TV. The qualifying sessions are also streamed live at ran.de.

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2023 DTM calendar

26.05. – 28.05.2023	Motorsport Arena Oschersleben
23.06. – 25.06.2023	Circuit Zandvoort / NL
07.07. – 09.07.2023	Norising
04.08. – 06.08.2023	Nürburgring
18.08. – 20.08.2023	DEKRA Lausitzring
08.09. – 10.09.2023	Sachsenring
22.09. – 24.09.2023	Red Bull Ring / A
20.10. – 22.10.2023	Hockenheimring Baden-Württemberg

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