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Halfway point at the Nürburgring: Who will top the table going into the second half of the DTM season?

- **Leader Thomas Preining and his closest rival Sheldon van der Linde are well placed**
- **Local favourites Jusuf Owega and Luca Stolz have top spot in their sights at the Nürburgring**
- **The NXT Gen Cup becomes the first fully-electric racing series to feature at a DTM event**

Munich. After the scorcher at the Norisring, the DTM heads to another iconic German circuit for round four of the season this coming weekend (4th to 6th August). The Nürburgring is the venue for races seven and eight, which bring the first half of the season to a close. The races on the sprint layout of the racetrack in the Eifel Mountains will determine who is sitting pretty at the top of the table going into the second half of the season. The two men best placed to secure top spot are Porsche works driver Thomas Preining (A), who currently leads the championship, and his closest rival Sheldon van der Linde (ZA/BMW). However, should the run of six different winners from the first six races continue, the fans and spectators at the Nürburgring could be treated to more new faces on the top step of the podium at the Nürburgring. ProSieben is showing both races live on German free-to-air TV, with coverage beginning at 13:00 – half an hour before the start of the race – on both Saturday and Sunday. The NXT Gen Cup will add something totally new at the Nürburgring: for the first time, the DTM support programme will feature a fully-electric racing series.

Key facts, Nürburgring, Nürburg, races 7 and 8 of 16

Circuit length: 3,629 metres

Layout: 11 corners (seven right, four left), driven clockwise

2022 winner, race 1: Sheldon van der Linde (BMW M4 GT3, Schubert Motorsport)

2022 winner, race 2: Luca Stolz (Mercedes-AMG GT3, Mercedes-AMG Team HRT)

Will the top two pull clear after the first half of the season?

Preining pulled off a vigorous overtaking manoeuvre to pass BMW works driver René Rast (Bregenz) and claim his first win of the season at the Norisring. In doing so, he also returned to the top of the table. Preining, whose team Manthey EMA is particularly motivated ahead of its home outing at the Nürburgring, currently holds a ten-point lead. However, the 25-year-old can expect a stiff challenge from second-placed Sheldon van der Linde. The South African got one monkey off his back at the Norisring: the 24-year-old emphatically rejoined the title race with his first victory at the street circuit in Nuremberg and third place in race two. The BMW works driver from Schubert Motorsport won on the iconic track in the Eifel region last year, when he and Kelvin van der Linde (ZA/Audi) achieved a first in the popular GT series: this was the first in DTM history that two brothers had climbed onto the top step of the podium.

Ricardo Feller (CH/Audi) and Maro Engel (Monaco/Mercedes-AMG) are level on points in third and fourth place, and trail Preining by 27 points. Their goal for the Nürburgring is to close the gap to the

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championship leader. The same goes for the Lamborghini drivers at SSR Performance, Franck Perera (F) and Mirko Bortolotti (I), who are just one point back on 60. Bortolotti has been impressively consistent so far, having always finished in the top eight, with the exception of one eleventh place. A win at the Nürburgring could be the catalyst for the 33-year-old to enjoy a successful second half of the season. Rast is another who should never be ruled out, particularly on the back of recent strong performances. The 36-year-old already has three victories to his name in the Eifel Mountains. After securing his first pole position for BMW at the Norisring, Rast now has his sights set firmly on a maiden win in the BMW M4 GT3 at the Nürburgring.

Local favourites and home teams at the Nürburgring

The Nürburgring is a home outing for Cologne's Jusuf Owega. He first came into contact with motor racing as a young boy at the legendary circuit, and has often driven with his father and Brother on the Nordschleife. The 21-year-old gained more valuable experience on the track in the ADAC GT Masters in recent years. This season, he lines up there for the first time as a DTM driver and Mercedes-AMG Junior. "The first section, with its unusual combinations of corners, is very special. However, if you want to be at the front, you cannot allow the layout to play a role. I have finished in the top ten twice, in Oschersleben and Zandvoort. I am confident that there is more to come as the season progresses," said Owega.

Fellow Mercedes-AMG driver Luca Stolz will also be out to challenge at the head of the field in his home races. The man from Brachbach may live 130 kilometres from the Nürburgring, but he is a regular guest there. The 28-year-old also claimed his first DTM victory in the Eifel in 2022. As he did back then, Stolz lines up proudly for Mercedes-AMG Team HRT, which is based just six kilometres from the Nürburgring in Drees. Manthey EMA has even less distance to travel from Meuspath. The Manthey team, for whom the Nürburgring is like a second living room, is out to ensure Preining ends the season at the top of the table. The third home team is Toksport WRT from Quiddelbach, for whom Porsche drivers Christian Engelhart (Starnberg) and Tim Heinemann (Fichtenberg) will go in pursuit of points.

Varied sprint circuit – unpredictable Eifel weather

The DTM has been racing on the 3.629-kilometre sprint variant of the Nürburgring since 2002. The shorter layout guarantees fans good views of the entertaining races, with the best overtaking opportunities coming at the end of the start/finish straight. While the first section is more winding with some tight turns, the second section has flowing passages with fast straights and corners. One key factor at any time can be the unpredictable Eifel weather. The sudden onset of rain, hail or thick fog has often caused chaos at the iconic circuit. However, that is precisely what makes the Nürburgring, which enjoys cult status around the world, so popular with the fans.

Fully-electric DTM premiere

With the NXT Gen Cup, a special series is set to make its debut on the DTM support programme at the Nürburgring: both races feature the fully-electric LRT NXT 1 car, which is based on the street legal Mini Cooper SE and generates up to 230 hp. Only talented youngsters are at the wheel in the Swedish series. ADAC GT4 Germany, the Porsche Carrera Cup Deutschland and the BMW M2 Cup will also make for a spectacular weekend in the Eifel, with six races between them.

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All races live on ProSieben

TV partner ProSieben is showing all 16 of this season's races live on free-to-air TV. Qualifying sessions are streamed live at ran.de. The official TV partner of the DTM in Austria is ServusTV. The private Salzburg-based station is showing all the DTM races live or repeated in full. ServusTV Deutschland will also broadcast a summary of the best action in the evening after each race.

2023 DTM calendar

26.05. – 28.05.2023	Motorsport Arena Oschersleben
23.06. – 25.06.2023	Circuit Zandvoort / NL
07.07. – 09.07.2023	Norisring
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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