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DTM legend Ruch on the fascination of Mustang and Ford's comeback

- **Cult driver thrills fans in a 540-hp Ford Mustang 5.0 GT at the DTM test**
- **Ruch: "Some fans knew my life better than I did"**

Munich. Gerd Ruch was a real crowd favourite with the Ford Mustang 5.0 GT. From 1988 to 1995, the man from Berlin started more than 100 DTM races with his own team Ruch Motorsport. A privateer, Ruch went toe to toe with the works teams. His passion and tireless dedication soon earned him cult status. Over 30 years after Ruch's final DTM race in the legendary Mustang, Ford is set to make its comeback this year. Ruch will be at the opening round of the season in Oschersleben (25th to 27th April) to watch the DTM race debut of the two Mustang GT3, run by HRT Ford Performance, and to attend the autograph session with the DTM drivers. In an interview, Ruch discusses the return of Ford to the DTM, special fan moments, and the life of an underdog in the world of professional motorsport.

How did it feel to take your old Ford Mustang out for a few laps at the official DTM test day in Oschersleben?

It was enormous fun. Even if we only did a few demonstration laps, it is always nice to be sat in that car. A few days after I discovered that Ford was returning to the DTM with the Mustang, I received a phone call from Stefan Mücke. He has reassembled my old Mustang and told me that HRT Ford Performance would like to do something with me. I was surprised to receive a request from so high up, and that they even remembered us after so many years.

The DTM return of the Ford Mustang has sparked a real sense of euphoria. How do you explain this excitement?

I believe that is down to the special time we experienced in the DTM back then. It was an amazing atmosphere, and one that people enjoy reminiscing about. Even decades later, the DTM from that era still has its very own charm. To this day, people still approach me to ask for autographs. The Mustang was one of the first cars, with which people could identify. One that you also saw on the streets. I am confident that the GT3 version will also thrill DTM spectators.

How did your fascination with the Ford Mustang come about?

To be honest, it was a coincidence. The Mustang was simply the car that was the best value for money. Only afterwards did I become so fascinated in America. In the USA, I paid 16,000 dollars for 540 hp - that was unbeatable. An engine rebuild cost about 4,000 to 5,000 dollars, whereas you would easily be forking out 80,000 marks for a BMW or Mercedes engine.



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As a privateer in the DTM, you played the role of the underdog. What motivated you to go up against the pros and manufacturers?

I always wanted to race against the big names and in the DTM. With such a small budget, it was obviously a bit like David verses Goliath, but with an incredible amount of passion. I used to still be working on the car on the Thursday evening, then it was loaded up and we drove to the circuit. I did not get a lot of sleep, because I still had a firm to run. Our goal in the DTM at the time was to stay in touch with the front-runners and to see the chequered flag as often as possible.

You finished tenth and in the points in Hockenheim. What do you remember about that?

That was a nice experience. The spectators were really pleased for us. However, our focus was actually always on the battle with privateers like Georg Severich und Günther Murmann. If we could hold our own against them, then that was a success for us. Generally speaking, my entire time in the DTM was a highlight for me.

As a private driver with your own team, you were a real crowd favourite. Did you have some special moments with the spectators?

Meeting the fans was always a very positive experience. Sometimes people would be stood by our with their albums while we were still setting up, asking for autographs. It was also amazing just how well informed some of the fans were. Some of them knew my life better than I did, which was quite remarkable.

Would you be tempted to drive the current Ford Mustang GT3?

I have already discussed that with the team. It is obviously something I would like to do. However, it is always important to me that, when driving other people's cars, I really don't want to break anything. In principle, however, it is definitely something that would really appeal to me.

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