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René Rast on special DTM moments, his biggest rivals, and his future plans

- **Three-time champion looks back on his impressive time in the DTM**
- **"I will always remember winning the title in 2017"**

Munich. The DTM finale in Hockenheim was a highly emotional weekend for René Rast (Bregenz): The BMW works driver first announced he would be leaving the series after eight seasons, before setting about trying to win his fourth title. Unfortunately, Rast had to bid farewell to that dream when his race came to a premature end - but he still exits the DTM stage as one of the most successful drivers in the history of the series. In an interview, Rast discusses how other drivers have reacted to his departure, his special relationship with the ADAC, and the dream of a farewell lap in front of his fans.

What did you make of the reactions to your departure from the DTM?

I received an unbelievable amount of messages from my fans on social media. And in Hockenheim, some of the drivers came up to me and wished me good luck ahead of my final DTM race. For example, Thomas Preining gave me a helmet with a few personal words. There were a lot of nice reactions. That really helped me after the DNF in the race.

A few days down the line, how does that decision feel?

I would have loved to have battled for the title out on the track, but instead my race unfortunately came to a premature end. I had actually decided beforehand that I was going to thank all the fans and do a few donuts in front of the packed grandstands. Regardless of how the title race played out, I would really have enjoyed that farewell lap after eight seasons in the DTM. Particularly as the entire Schubert Motorsport team had put so much effort and commitment into the season. Seldom have I had such a passionate crew at my side.

The weekend in Hockenheim was a spectacular showdown. As a driver, what is your experience of a finale like that?

The situation was clear for almost all the title contenders. We knew we had to finish ahead of our rivals. As a result, everyone took a little more risk than usual. In a situation like that, you have to take any chance you get to overtake someone. You never know whether you will get another opportunity. That is what I was thinking during my battle with Ayhan Güven. However, I did not expect him to counter again. That was hard racing, but fair. Unfortunately, I was hit from behind shortly after that and was forced out of the race. Ayhan was a worthy champion in the end. He did a fantastic job over the course of the year, as he underlined with the manoeuvres he pulled off at the finale.

Three titles and 31 race wins is an impressive record in the DTM. What were your best moments?

Definitely my first title in the 2017 season. Back then, there was a radio ban in the DTM, so I could not receive any information from the team. When I crossed the finish line, I did not actually know that I was the champion. Because I did not notice anyone celebrating, I thought I had come up short. That made it all the sweeter two corners later, when I heard the cries from my team. I will always remember that moment. Just as I will my first race victory in Budapest in 2017, and the perfect Nürburgring weekend a year later, when I secured both pole positions and went on to win both races.

Which drivers have been your fiercest rivals on the track?

Lucas Auer is definitely one of them. He was racing in my rookie season in 2017 and remains a really good racing driver to this day - someone who always showed a lot of fight on the track. Another that comes to mind is Gary Paffett, when he won the title for a second time in 2018 - his final year in the DTM. And, of course, Nico Müller, who performed extremely well in 2020 and was hard to beat. Of the current crop of drivers, I would say Thomas Preining, who has stood out with many impressive displays in recent years.

What role has the ADAC played in your career?

The ADAC plays a huge role in German motorsport, which would not be the same without it. My very first steps in motorsport were in Formula BMW ADAC, and later I also raced in the ADAC Volkswagen Polo Cup and the ADAC GT Masters. I was also supported by ADAC Stiftung Sport. The ADAC leads the way when it comes to German motorsport, and therefore plays a big part in my career and those of the many other racing drivers.

What are your plans with the Rast family after your decision to retire?

Above all, I am looking forward to being at home more often and spending much more quality time with my family. Dropping the kids off at Kindergarten or school in the mornings, attending parent evenings, and supporting the kids when they are doing their sport. They are all everyday things that I would like to be more involved in.

Might we see a Rast comeback in the DTM one day?

The days after the finale were emotional for me. However, I stand by my decision - although you should never rule anything out completely. I am very happy with the situation at the moment. Despite this, I would like to do that final lap in front of the fans some time - however it comes about. That is missing from my CV.

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