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Wiebelhaus in the fast lane: Ford youngster on his rapid rise to the DTM

- **From karting to the DTM in six years: “Still feels surreal sometimes”**
- **“Road to DTM” winner Wiebelhaus on his impressive races and goals**

Munich. Two podiums, impressive displays, and the lead in the Rookie classification: following his promotion to the series as the winner of the “Road to DTM”, Finn Wiebelhaus (Obertshausen/HRT Ford Racing) has already caught the eye in his first year in the DTM. Ahead of the race weekend at Motorsport Arena Oschersleben (24th to 26th July), the 20-year-old Ford driver talks about his unusual career path, a key moment in the DTM, and his excitement about the two coming races in the Magdeburg Börde region.

Finn, the DTM is in Oschersleben this weekend. What makes the circuit so special?

For me, Oschersleben is a real old-school circuit. There is hardly any discussion about track limits, because you have grass or gravel next to the track. You drive to the limit, and notice immediately when you have crossed it. The track is tight, technical, and has a nice rhythm. We will see whether it suits our Ford Mustang GT3. Regardless of that, I am very much looking forward to the weekend, because I really like the circuit.

How would you sum up the first half of the season?

Coming into the season, I did not expect the first half to go so well. The many appointments, such as media conferences and autograph sessions, took some energy out of me on the weekends at first. I have now settled in well. I would give myself a grade B. You can always do a bit better, but I don't think I've made many mistakes so far.

Has there been one moment, in which you realised: now I have really arrived in the DTM?

The podium at the Lausitzring was extremely important for me. Prior to that, I had failed to finish twice, through no fault of my own, and had not really been able to show what I am capable of. At some point, you ask yourself why it is not working out. However, everything fell into place on the Sunday at the Lausitzring. That result gave me a lot of confidence, particularly for the following weekend at the Norisring. You have to drive very close to the walls there, and you need the utmost trust in your car. After the podium and the many messages of congratulations, I felt I had finally arrived.

What has impressed you most in your first few months in the DTM?

Above all, the many fans! It was incredibly busy at the Norisring. At times, I could hardly make it through the paddock, because I was forever being stopped for a photo or an autograph. Even a short distance can take quite a long time in those circumstances. If you desperately need to get

to an appointment, it can obviously get a bit stressful. Despite that, I try to give them as much of my time as possible. The fans are hugely important for our sport.

You only started out in motorsport in 2020. Why were you so late getting into the sport?

As a child, I used to watch Formula 1 with my father, and was a huge Sebastian Vettel fan. Other than that, however, motorsport did not play a big role in our family. I drove my first virtual laps on the 2016 Formula 1 game, using a steering wheel that cost € 40. Then we went to the karting fair in Offenbach in 2020, and I made the spontaneous decision to buy a second-hand kart. My mother was not particularly thrilled at first. After that, everything gained momentum pretty quickly, and six years later I am driving in the DTM. Sometimes it still feels a bit surreal.

What role has the ADAC played in your career?

A very important one, particularly thanks to the ADAC Stiftung Sport foundation. With the "Road to DTM", the ADAC has put together a youth programme that leads from karting to the DTM. In my living room at home, I have trophies from the ADAC Kart Masters, the ADAC GT Masters, and my first DTM podium. From that, it is easy to recognise the route I took. After my success in the ADAC Kart Masters, I was given the chance to go into Formula racing. Later, I decided on GT racing. I then made my case for the DTM by winning the title in the ADAC GT Masters, and with it the "Road to DTM". I am proud to be able to show young drivers on the kart track what they can achieve.

Which drivers were your role models as a child?

Sebastian Vettel was my big idol during his time at Red Bull. In the DTM, René Rast was the one I followed most. Back then, he uploaded a lot of onboard footage on YouTube, in which he explained what he was doing in the car. I used to find that extremely interesting. To now be racing against drivers like Timo Glock is obviously special. We get on very well, and he always has something amusing to say. When Timo was racing in Formula 1, I hadn't even driven a kart yet.

What are your goals for the remaining races?

My main goal is to win the Rookie competition. One or two more podiums would obviously be nice too. However, the DTM is tough. You can have two or three difficult weekends. That goes with the territory. I am particularly looking forward to the Nürburgring. That is the home event for my team, HRT. I like the circuit, and have usually been fast there in the past. I am also excited about the Sachsenring, as I have never driven there before.

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