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Interview with Nicki Thiim: Title contender, unmistakable figure, and Nürburgring expert

- **Aston Martin driver explains why confidence in the car is key**
- **"I have put my name and reputation on the line for the DTM dream"**

Munich. Nicki Thiim (DK/Comtoyou Racing) travels to the Nürburgring in second place in the table, and as one of the main title contenders. The iconic circuit in the Eifel region is far more than just the next stop in a close title race for the Aston Martin works driver. Ahead of round six of the season (14th to 16th August), Thiim discusses his special relationship with the Nürburgring, the all-important trust in one's car, and how he deals with setbacks.

Nicki, how do you feel heading to the Nürburgring?

Above all, I am unbelievably happy and proud of what we have achieved so far as a team. Comtoyou Racing is a relatively small team and is contesting only its second season in the DTM. Despite that, we have done a virtually flawless job so far. The fact that we travel to the Nürburgring in second place in the table, and are in the discussion when it comes to the title, is something we dreamed of ahead of the season. It goes without saying that it is still too soon to think about that too much. But one thing is clear: when you are second in the championship, you are definitely a title contender.

What makes the Nürburgring so special?

People live for motorsport around the Nürburgring. You only have to go to the small villages in the Eifel. Almost every single person has some kind of link to motor racing. The entire region is shaped by motorsport, and it is known for precisely that all over the world. Furthermore, almost all the DTM drivers do more laps there than at any other circuit, because many line up regularly in the Nürburgring Langstrecken-Serie and the 24-hour race.

What are the standout features of the sprint circuit at the Nürburgring?

The short variant is particularly nice for the fans, because they see a lot of the cars. For us drivers, the circuit is a good mixture of tight corners and fast sections. It is particularly tricky in the Mercedes Arena, because the first corner influences how you get through the entire first sector, right up to turn five. That is followed by a number of fast sections and the chicane, which you can really fly over. It looks good on television, and is a lot of fun in the car too. Plus, the chicane is more difficult to drive through, because you have to get it just right. That is what I love about the DTM: we often use different circuit variants to many other racing series.

How would you explain your strong season?

The answer is relatively simple for me: I am finally in a car, in which I feel at home. All my career I have been desperate to drive in the DTM, and I knew that the first few years would be intense. SSR Performance and Abt Sportsline gave me the opportunity, for which I am very grateful. However, it was clear to me that, as an Aston Martin works driver, it would be difficult in a Lamborghini to match someone like Mirko Bortolotti. But I am someone who loves a challenge. I have put my name and reputation on the line, because I really wanted to achieve my childhood dream of the DTM.

Why is trust in the car so crucial?

As a racing driver, a lot has to happen instinctively. In the car, as soon as you think too much about what could happen in the next corner, you are automatically slower and hold back a little. I know the Aston Martin inside out. You need exactly that kind of trust in the DTM, because the field is so incredibly evenly matched. You have to squeeze out the all-important one or two tenths of a second. In qualifying, you sometimes have to go beyond the limit and know exactly how the car is going to react. Without that feeling, you don't have a chance in the DTM.

What do you think of critics, who saw you more as an entertainer than a winning driver before the start of the season?

Ultimately, I don't care. If you cannot take other people's opinions, and don't find a way to deal with it, then you might as well not bother. That is the nice thing about sport: in the world of professional sport, an awful lot is in the head. It is vital to believe in yourself. In recent years, I have also won some big races outside of the DTM - such as the 24 Hours of Spa, for example. However, I am obviously particularly enjoying this DTM season. I am now able to show that I am one of the top drivers.

You are one of the most distinctive characters in the DTM. Have you always been that way?

I grew up in a time, when many racing drivers were big personalities. My father was one of them, along with Roberto Ravaglia, Johnny Cecotto and Nicola Larini. The action films of the 1980s and 1990s were also brought to life by striking characters. I am probably a mix of all those guys. I am happy that Aston Martin allow me to be myself. At the same time, I am pleased that many fans like my style.

What do you expect from the closing stages of the title race?

Maro Engel has got himself a small lead and has been incredibly consistent this year. Anyone who is still right up there after the Nürburgring will probably be in contention to the end of the title race. I reckon at least three or four drivers will still be in with a chance of winning the championship at the finale. At the same time, I am confident that we can be among the front-runners again at the Nürburgring.



Your father, Kurt, knows what it takes to win a DTM title. How is he following the season?
Hardly anyone is more pleased about my good races than my father. Back in his day, he was also a crowd favourite in the DTM. However, he was a bit more introvert as a person. Typically Scandinavian, you could say. We chat about a lot of things, even if motorsport back then was completely different to today. I am thrilled that he will be at the circuit for the first time this DTM season at the Nürburgring. My big goal is to challenge for the title at the finale in Hockenheim, and to have him there watching.

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