

08/09/17 – No 48



Lirim Zendeli optimistic about ADAC Formula 4 championship run-up

- Teenager from Bochum still with an eye to the top of the table
- Zendeli: “We have to get our act together”
- With school-leaving exams now out of the way, full focus on motor sport

Munich: There is no let-up as the last two weekends of the season approach. Lirim Zendeli (17, Germany, ADAC Berlin-Brandenburg e.V.) is upbeat and brimming with confidence on the home straight of the campaign. “We are in good shape, and we can hopefully pick up where we left off at the Nürburgring,” he says, looking ahead to the last six races of the 2017 championship at the Sachsenring (15th - 17th September) and at Hockenheim (22nd - 24th September). With 15 races already contested and two fixtures remaining on the calendar in this third season of ADAC Formula 4, Zendeli, who is currently fifth in the table, hopes to have a say in the final destination of the championship trophy.

The 17-year-old from Bochum, whose family have Albanian roots, has now got over what he himself describes as a “weak start to the season” caused by various technical problems. Although he notched up a maiden victory in the ADAC junior formula series on the first race weekend at Oschersleben in late April, the performance he put in more recently at the Nürburgring in early August means far more to him: “After we eventually sorted out the technical problems, the car was really fast at the Nürburgring. In fact, we clocked the fastest time of the day on Friday. Then we took pole on Saturday and victory in the first race.” He was also the runner-up in Race 2 and mounted a charge through the field in Race 3 from tenth on the grid to finish sixth.

Zendeli is intent on improving his position in the general classification. With a current points tally of 103, he is 79.5 adrift of championship leader Juri Vips (17, Estonia, Prema Powerteam) and 56.5 off third-placed Felipe Drugovich (17, Brazil, Van Amersfoort Racing). Of almost greater importance to him, however, is the newly found self-confidence with which he will approach the two final weekends: “A Top Five finish would be nice, and in theory, even more may be possible. What matters to me now is building up my self-confidence, getting good results and knowing that I have what it takes. Position in the championship then follows automatically, as long as I always try to get the best out of the situation.”

Helping him to emerge from the dip in form around the middle of the season is his sports psychologist, with whom he confers before and after races. “He gets to hear a lot about my results and about how things are going. We discuss how I feel and whether I’m aware of any mental blocks. We mostly get to the root causes. His main contribution – even though it always comes down to the same thing – is to keep repeating that I just need to concentrate on driving. Of course, anyone – including your parents – can tell you to ‘just concentrate on driving’, but it’s quite different when you’re talking to a sports psychologist and he says, no matter how good or bad the car is, try to get the best for yourself at that moment in time.”

Ahead of the last two race weekends in Germany, Zendeli will be competing at Imola in the Italian Formula 4 series – race kilometres which the 17-year-old feels will be advantageous: “All these track kilometres which I’m about to put in will serve me well in the ADAC Formula 4 championship.”

Zendeli successfully completed his school-leaving certificate in the spring and is therefore free to focus on his motorsport ambitions at the moment. Future study plans are on the back burner as he prepares for the Sachsenring in the middle of September, having now got over the disappointment of the equivalent fixture last year: "In 2016, I was fast but didn't get past the third round of qualifying," The recent test results on this 3.64km roller-coaster of a circuit have given cause for optimism: "Despite having the flu at the time, I was able to keep up with the fastest, and I'm assuming that I have even more potential for improvement."



Zendeli also has reason to feel optimistic about the grand finale at the Hockenheimring: "Last year, I had two Top Five finishes. Hockenheim and Sachsenring have always been good tracks for Mücke Motorsport and also for me. Now, we need to ensure that we really get our act together."

2017 ADAC Formula 4 schedule

28/04/17 - 30/04/17	Motorsport Arena Oschersleben
19/05/17 - 21/05/17	Lausitzring (with DTM)
09/06/17 - 11/06/17	Red Bull Ring Spielberg/AUT
07/07/17 - 09/07/17	Motorsport Arena Oschersleben
04/08/17 - 06/08/17	Nürburgring
15/09/17 - 17/09/17	Sachsenring
22/09/17 - 24/09/17	Hockenheimring

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