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## **Final thriller at Hockenheim: Three Audi drivers want the DTM title**

- **The big three-way interview with the title contenders**
- **Defending champion René Rast is the hunted for the first time this season**
- **Pursuer Nico Müller believes in his title chances, Robin Frijns is an outsider**

**Neuburg a. d. Donau, November 2, 2020 – Even before the finale at the Hockenheimring, it is certain that the 2020 DTM champion will be driving an Audi RS 5 DTM. René Rast, Nico Müller and Robin Frijns will be competing for the last championship title in the Class 1 era of the popular racing series (live on SAT.1 on Saturday and Sunday from 1 PM CET).**

Audi broke numerous records with the Audi RS 5 DTM this year and prematurely secured all three championship titles in the manufacturers', teams' and drivers' standings. Audi has won 14 of 16 races in the 2020 season so far and achieved 39 of 48 possible podium finishes. An Audi driver has started from pole position 15 times. Now it will be decided which Audi driver will be the 2020 DTM champion.

“Our goal was to leave the DTM in a dignified manner with a strong final season,” says Head of Audi Motorsport Dieter Gass. “The results have by far exceeded our own expectations. We have once again proven ‘Vorsprung durch Technik’ in motorsport. At the end of this fascinating era, I’m now looking forward to an exciting finale at Hockenheim. This could be a real final thriller. I’m very curious to see who will be in the champion at the end. René, Nico and Robin have all had an extremely strong season. Each of them would have deserved the title and will go ‘all in’ at Hockenheim once again.

### **The three title contenders in an interview before the big showdown at Hockenheim**

#### **Who will be 2020 DTM champion?**

René Rast: Of course, I have the best chances, because I have a 19-point lead over Nico. But, as we recently saw at Zolder, anything can still happen. Two retirements or two bad races for me and two good races for Nico, then the tide will turn again. But of course, I hope to become champion.

Nico Müller: I still firmly believe in it and know that we have what it takes to become the 2020 DTM champion.



Robin Frijns: The fastest. Of course, it will be quite difficult for me because I am 41 points behind. I will do my best, but I will need a lot of luck.

**With what attitude will you go to the DTM finale at Hockenheim?**

René: For the last three years, I've almost become accustomed to fighting for the title in the DTM. In 2017 and 2018, the final races at Hockenheim were also all about the championship trophy. From that point of view, I'm actually quite relaxed. I don't have to win this third title with all my might. If it comes, it's mega, then I will be really happy. But, it's not like I'm saying: I absolutely need it and without it I can't do it. I will see what happens there.

Nico: Full attack! For the first time this season, we will begin a weekend in the role of the hunter. Up to now, we were always the hunted. Of course, I would rather travel to the finale in the lead, but I think it also has something positive. There's only one direction. You can fully attack and just give everything to turn everything around again. It won't be easy, but we still have a very good chance. Two strong performances like the ones when we delivered during six of the eight DTM weekends will certainly put us in a position to put René under a lot of pressure. And anything can happen at a finale.

Robin: I have nothing to lose. I have already secured third place in the championship. So, I can go 'all in' and see what happens.

**Is the 2020 DTM title particularly valuable because there was no support from your brand teammates?**

René: Every DTM title is valuable. I didn't have any support in 2017 either. That's why the title would have the same value for me as it did then.

Nico: A title is a title, no matter what season it was won in. This year, it has been an extremely tough three-way battle during the whole season. Each one of the three of us would deserve the title. We all fought hard and got no gifts from anybody. I think all three of us would give the title a high value.

Robin: The DTM title has no more or less value for me than three years ago. It is always something special to fight for a championship. This year, I was one of the title contenders from the very beginning. You work hard all year long for a championship title.

**What would the DTM title mean to you?**

René: It would be my third DTM title. I would be the only Audi driver with three titles and one of the best three DTM drivers in history. It would also mean a lot to me because it is the last title within the Class 1 regulations and also because it was a real rollercoaster ride for me this year.

Nico: The title would mean a lot to me. Ever since I was sitting in the grandstands at Hockenheim as a small boy watching the DTM finale, witnessed all the action and emotions, it was clear to me that I wanted to achieve this myself one day: to compete in the DTM, but also to win the title. Now, I have a good chance to achieve this goal. We have not only worked towards this chance this season, but also in my DTM career as a whole. It is the biggest thing I could achieve in my career so far.

Robin: Winning a championship title is always nice, whether in the DTM or any other racing



series. A title brings you respect from the manufacturer and from others in the racing world.

**How bad would it be if the title did not work out?**

René: Not bad. Before Zolder, we didn't even expect it anymore. Until then, we had a big gap and were always a bit behind the whole year. If things don't work out, then we will still have pressured the ABT guys a bit and taught them to be afraid.

Nico: You don't think like that at the moment. You only focus on the big goal. I hope I don't have to answer that question.

Robin: In the DTM, you are not the only one who has it in his hands. As much can happen as it did for me in Zolder. There, I lost a lot of points and therefore I only have minimal chances.

**What were the decisive moments in the 2020 season?**

René: We can start right at the first race weekend in Spa. I finished fifth in the first race. I won the second one, but a stupid mistake deprived me of the victory again. That led to the points gap between Nico and me that I've been carrying around with me all year. The next decisive moment was of course Zolder. The two Zolder weekends turned the tide once again.

Nico: The decisive moment is yet to come, nothing has been decided yet. At the end of the day, the only thing that counts is who is at the top at the very end. Of course, there have already been one or two important moments this season. For example, to start the season in Spa super strong, with a big exclamation mark and two victories. We've also had races that may not look so successful at first glance, but in which we were able to get out of awkward situations and score a lot of points. Be it at the Nürburgring with the sensor problem when I had a huge loss of power and still finished fifth, or again at the Nürburgring, when I was turned around and was able to fight my way up from last place to fifth. There were many important moments, but the most important one is still to come.

Robin: Definitely the two Zolder weekends. There we had two bad races, twice zero-point scores. The other title contenders have continued to score points, so it's going to be difficult for me now.

**Were you surprised that you three were so much stronger than everyone else? What do you see as the reasons for this?**

René: It surprised me a bit. I didn't expect it to be so close between the three of us all year round. ABT was generally very, very strong this year. In the practice and qualifying sessions, their two cars were always very fast, except for Zolder. For ABT, it worked very well with the high temperatures, we were not so strong. In Zolder, it was exactly the other way around: The cold temperatures there worked for us, not so much for ABT.

Nico: It was definitely a three-way fight from A to Z between René, Robin and me. We pushed ourselves extremely hard within the team right from the start, even during the tests. I personally knew that Robin would be very strong. With René, the question marks were also within limits. After his performances in the last years it was clear that he is the one to beat. The fact that the gap to the pursuers has been so big surprised me a little bit. In the DTM, we are all at such a high level that it comes down to the little things that make the difference in the end.



We often managed to do things better than the others. That's what characterizes this three-way fight. Without being given anything by anyone, the three of us were always up in front, always fighting for victory. That is relatively rare in the DTM.

Robin: It was a bit surprising that the three of us were so strong throughout the season. Why that was the case, I don't know. We just did our job. We want to win as many races as possible.

### **Was it particularly strenuous to complete the 2020 DTM season in just 100 days?**

René: Yes and no. Of course, it was much more compressed. But, for someone who has been in the DTM for a long time, who knows the procedures, the tracks, the team, it was okay. Of course, it was more strenuous than usual, because there was less time for preparation and follow-up, but on the other hand, the weekends themselves, without the fans and PR appointments, were less stressful. What was added to that for the three of us was the Formula E, especially for me. I first had to get used to it. That was the biggest stress factor for me this year. Not just the six races in Berlin, but all of the preparation.

Nico: It was a very intensive time, because all three of us were allowed to take part in other programs in addition to DTM, be it Formula E or endurance racing at the Nürburgring. There was hardly a weekend off, hardly any time to take a deep breath. Mentally and physically it was actually no problem for me personally. You had to be able to plan very well, you needed the support at home. I'm in a great situation and I really appreciate having a family that supports me and takes care of everything else so that I can concentrate on my job.

Robin: I didn't find it as exhausting for us drivers as for the mechanics, who had to completely rebuild the cars in only three days between the double headers at the Nürburgring and at Zolder. That was pretty hard work, especially after my accident during the first Zolder weekend when the car was damaged by a fire. The guys had to give everything to provide me with a car again. It was really exhausting for them.

### **How did you spend the days between Zolder and Hockenheim?**

René: I was at home. We had actually planned to do the Spa 24 Hours, but that was cancelled for the three of us. Fortunately, because there were positive Corona cases after Spa. I had a visit from my parents. We celebrated my son's birthday and we celebrated my birthday. From that point of view, it was very relaxed.

Nico: All three of us didn't go to Spa in order to prepare ourselves optimally. I was in a lively exchange with my team and my engineer to learn the important lessons from Zolder that will only make us stronger for the finale. It is exactly these weekends that make you grow and become stronger. That's why it was very important to invest the time in analyzing Zolder. Then the focus was on the preparation for Hockenheim. Going over everything that happened in the past and what you need to have on the screen for set-up decisions and so on. We will do everything to be 100 percent ready to get the maximum out of our package and hopefully win both races. Then we will see what the final outcome will be.

Robin: I just relaxed. After a bad weekend like at Zolder, I don't think about racing. I put my phone away, stay away from social media and things like that and just relax.



**Have you prepared especially for the finale?**

René: No. We simply want to maximize the result, get the most out of the package we have there. We hope to be strong at Hockenheim. That was actually always a track that suited us. I hope to keep the points advantage and become champion.

Nico: We had a little more time than usual. I have never had two race-free weekends between two DTM events at any point this whole season, but we did not do anything different than usual. We trust in our strengths, try to do the job as well as possible and put a car on the track in which I feel perfectly comfortable right from the start.

Robin: No. We will just see what happens. I hope I can still win one or both races. That would be really nice. Then we'll see where we end up in the championship.

**Will it be a special feeling to drive a race with the Audi RS 5 DTM for the last time?**

René: I do not think that it will sink in on Friday or Saturday, but I think on Sunday it will be a very special feeling when you park the car afterwards. When you drive the last laps with it, you will become very aware of it. There will certainly be a tear in your eye.

Nico: It will be very special. I think you will only realize that after the checkered flag has fallen in the second race, that these are really the final meters in the RS 5 DTM. A really, really cool car. It has been a privilege to drive it in the DTM for Audi. It has been pure joy to drive an Audi RS 5 DTM in such a hard-fought championship and to celebrate many successes, a car that will carry many memories and a time that I really enjoyed.

Robin: It is always great to drive a DTM car. The car is well balanced and has had a lot of power with the turbo engines during the last two years. It is a lot of fun to drive such a car. It is a pity for everyone that it is the last race weekend for these cars.

**What will you miss most about the DTM so far?**

René: The cars, for sure. They really were the ultimate. Pure prototypes, great sound, fast cars. At Spa, Formula 2 or LMP2 cars were only slightly faster. Just by looking at that fact, you can tell that they are really cool racing cars.

Nico: The Class 1 beasts. If you have experienced them up close, you will miss them. These are mega-racing cars that offer great races and it is a lot of fun to push them to the limit.

Robin: The cars. The balance, the precision, the power. The whole mix. But, also the team spirit. You're like part of a family and I don't know if I'll be part of it next year.

**Can you imagine a future in GT3 DTM?**

René: Yes, absolutely. Of course, I have to wait and see if there are any clashes with Formula E. But, I can generally imagine that, even if the DTM will not be the same anymore: The GT3 cars are slower, have ABS and traction control. There will be no standing start anymore and there will certainly be some drivers who otherwise would not have made it into the DTM. A lot will change there. You have to wait and see.

Nico: The DTM with its new technical regulations is certainly also on the radar for me. I am still a big DTM fan. I also believe that the new technical regulations will allow us to continue to offer racing at the highest level to fans, teams and drivers.



Robin: I am still young and want to continue doing what I do – and definitely in a GT3 DTM. Let's see if I'll be there next year.

**What was, apart from the DTM, the most important event of the year for you?**

René: The most important thing is that we are all healthy. The fact that we have come through the corona period without any problems so far was certainly the most important thing this year. Apart from that, of course, my entry in Formula E with Audi.

Nico: The birth of our son Fynn on August 24 this year. A moment that naturally has an extreme impact on you as a human being. I am super thankful to have such a healthy, great little family. It makes coming home after the races even more wonderful. I'm already looking forward to hopefully bringing home two more nice big trophies for the little one from the final.

Robin: That might have been the Nürburgring 24 Hours, which I unfortunately missed due to illness. The six final races of the Formula E in Berlin were also quite exhausting for everyone. There has never been anything like this before.

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