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In profile: Sheldon van der Linde wins Pirelli Junior classification

- Audi driver is best Junior of 2018 in ADAC GT Masters
- South African is enormously talented
- In successful partnership driving with older brother, Kelvin

Hockenheim: Sheldon van der Linde (19, ZA, Montaplast by Land-Motorsport) is the winner of the Pirelli Junior classification in the 2018 ADAC GT Masters. The Audi driver secured the title of best young driver in the Super Sports Car League in the finale at Hockenheim. He missed winning the overall championship by only one point. "It's great to have won the Pirelli Junior classification. Competition in the class was extremely high this year. We can be proud of our achievement," said the Junior. "While it does hurt just a little to have lost the championship by only one point, I'm very pleased with my first season in the ADAC GT Masters. We gave it our best shot."

There was nothing but praise from Team Principal Christian Land: "Sheldon not only has great talent but is also very hard-nosed even for his tender years. He gets the maximum out of the vehicle in every situation and always stays cool at the same time. He can also be very amusing, which makes working with him a real lot of fun. We've been tremendously impressed with him ever since our first race together in 2017."

Van der Linde made a strong start to the season along with older brother Kelvin (22, ZA), with whom he shared an Audi R8 LMS during his first full season in the ADAC GT Masters. The 'VDL brothers' promptly went out and secured second place in their first race. And they did especially well in the second half of the year, clinching their maiden win and another second place in the penultimate race of the season at the Sachsenring after taking second place earlier at Zandvoort. Thanks to these results, the duo were in title contention as they headed to Hockenheim where the brothers continued to do well with a third place and their second win of the season. On Saturday, Sheldon secured the title in the Pirelli Junior ranking ahead of time, and the brothers were ultimately only beaten by one single point in the overall standings.

Sheldon van der Linde comes from a family with a fine motor racing pedigree that goes back more than 40 years. Grandfather Hennie van der Linde (70) won three national touring car titles in the 1980s. His father Shaun (48) won the South African championship in 1994 and his uncle Etienne (40) even managed to make his way into Formula 3000. Together with his brother Kelvin, the third generation of the family are now enjoying success in motor racing. Kelvin won the ADAC GT Masters in 2014 in his rookie season at the age of 18 and is the youngest driver to date ever to have done so. "I practically grew up at the track," said Sheldon van der Linde. "So it was pretty obvious right from the start that I too would become a racing driver. We've all got petrol in our blood."

Like his brother, Sheldon van der Linde enjoyed his first success in motor racing at a young age. He started karting at the age of six and won the South African Volkswagen Polo Cup in 2014 when just 15 years old. He is still the youngest driver ever to have won a national motorsport title in South Africa. In 2015, he repeated his triumph in the one-make cup and then followed his brother to Europe. In the Audi Sport TT Cup, he won four races in his first season and finished fourth overall. He joined the ADAC TCR Germany last year where he again caused a minor sensation by promptly securing third place in the standings with a win and four more podiums. That same year, he made his debut at the Sachsenring in the ADAC GT Masters where he stepped in at short notice to replace a driver, who was unwell, and drove Aust Motorsport's Audi R8 LMS together with brother Kelvin. At the end of the year he won the GTD class at Petit Le Mans, the season finale of the North American IMSA series, in Land Motorsport's R8. The young

MEDIA INFORMATION

driver remained with the team from the Westerwald in 2018: “But for Land Motorsport, I wouldn’t be where I am today. They recognised my talent and gave me the opportunity to show it on the racetrack.”

Van der Linde comes from Johannesburg but now lives in Kempten in the Allgäu where he shares a flat with his brother. “There can’t be many brothers around, who get along as well as we do. Even in the car, we’re in perfect harmony, because we’ve got a very similar style of driving and are the same size,” said Sheldon. Moving to Bavaria at the age of 17 was a big step for him. “It was not easy at first because the culture is different. Besides, I couldn’t speak German to begin with,” he continued. “In the meantime, I’ve learned the language, which makes things much easier. Of course, I also had to get used to the change in weather!”

2019 ADAC GT Masters calendar

26/04/19 – 28/04/19	Motorsport Arena Oschersleben
17/05/19 – 19/05/19	Most (CZ)
07/06/19 – 09/06/19	Red Bull Ring (A)
09/08/19 – 11/08/19	Circuit Zandvoort (NL)
16/08/19 – 18/08/19	Nürburgring
13/09/19 – 15/09/19	Hockenheimring Baden-Württemberg
27/09/19 – 29/09/19	Sachsenring

Further information can be found at www.adac.de/gt-masters

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