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WTCR home race for Volkswagen and Benjamin Leuchter on the Nordschleife

- Fifth round of the season in the spectacular surroundings of the 24h Nürburgring
- Portrait of a local hero: Benjamin Leuchter knows his way around the Nordschleife

Wolfsburg (Germany) – Volkswagen Motorsport and the Sébastien Loeb Racing team are looking forward to a highlight of the WTCR – FIA World Touring Car Cup calendar this weekend: from 20 to 22 June, Mehdi Bennani (MA), Rob Huff (GB), Johan Kristoffersson (S) and Benjamin Leuchter (D) will be driving their Volkswagen Golf GTI TCR¹⁾ on the legendary Nürburgring-Nordschleife (D). The WTCR drivers will be competing as part of the supporting programme for the 24h Nürburgring and 200,000 fans are expected to line the 25.378 kilometres of the combination of Grand Prix circuit and Nordschleife. After claiming the first podiums of the season at the last race in Zandvoort (NL), Volkswagen can approach the home race with plenty of confidence: this is especially true of local hero Leuchter. The Duisburg native knows the Nordschleife better than any other driver in the 27-strong starting field.



Benjamin Leuchter with his Golf GTI TCR (race car)

Conducting a paddock poll would reveal that the fifth race in the WTCR – FIA World Touring Car Cup at the Nürburgring is a special event on the calendar for all the drivers. It is the highlight of the motor racing year for Volkswagen driver Benjamin Leuchter. It was in March 2008 that the Duisburg native first got to know the circuit that changed his life. A flashback:

driving a Ford Fiesta 1600, Leuchter celebrated the class win at the first attempt in the VLN Endurance Championship Nürburgring.

By this point, Leuchter had already completed a tough apprenticeship in the sport. In 2003, he made it into the BMW Junior team after competing in an assessment day held by the Munich carmaker. Just eight talented young drivers enjoyed this support. Across the whole of Europe. Leuchter was one, and Sebastian Vettel was another. However, the two German youngsters went their separate ways more quickly than envisaged. Vettel continued to climb the career ladder all the way to the Formula 1 world championship title, while the first year confirmed to Leuchter that his

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family could not make the financial commitment required for a career in formula racing. He decided to switch to touring car racing and has been enjoying success there.

Competing in the WTCR represents a childhood dream come true for Leuchter. It is no surprise that the only German driver in the 2019 starting field is taking on the challenge with Volkswagen. Alongside his involvement as a driver, the 31-year-old is also a brand ambassador and motorsport representative for Volkswagen. And not just that: this year, Leuchter is celebrating his tenth anniversary with the brand. He had started work as an instructor in the Volkswagen Driving Experience team in 2009 – and continues to do that job to this day. He is also intensively involved in the testing and development programmes of new production cars for the brand.

Leuchter still proud of record lap

20 April 2016: Leuchter is aiming to set a new lap record for front-wheel drive production cars on the Nürburgring-Nordschleife – with the Golf GTI Clubsport S. This is not just any record attempt. It is a race against the clock on one of the toughest racetracks in the world. Leuchter's favourite track. Volkswagen had been working on the setup for the compact sports car for months. One lap. 20.832 kilometres. A flying start. The clock stops at 7:49.21 minutes – mission accomplished!

Leuchter does not know how many laps he has now completed on the Nordschleife. "I stopped counting after I reached the magic number of 1,000 laps in 2013," he says with a twinkle in his eye. "That's a shame, as my involvement in the Volkswagen test and development programme for production cars means that I have added plenty of laps since then. It must be several thousand by now." Another nine should be added to the list in the three WTCR races from 20 to 22 June – and Leuchter would like to complete these faster than ever before in the Golf GTI TCR.

¹⁾ *Golf GTI TCR race car*

About the Volkswagen brand:

Volkswagen Passenger Cars operates in more than 150 markets worldwide and produces vehicles at more than 50 locations in 14 countries. In 2018, Volkswagen produced around 6.2 million vehicles, including bestsellers such as the Golf, Tiguan, Jetta and Passat. Volkswagen has a current workforce of 195,878 employees around the globe. Added to this are more than 10,000 dealerships with 86,000 employees. Volkswagen is forging ahead consistently with the further development of automobile production. Electric mobility, smart mobility and digital transformation of the brand are the key strategic issues for the future.
