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MAPAL's Lukas Weiss wins German Championship in CNC Milling

Apprentice Lukas Weiss achieved the best result at the "WorldSkills 2020" and takes the title of German Champion in CNC milling. Julian Kraus, also training to become a cutting machine operator at MAPAL, takes the fifth place.

"It feels great," says Lukas Weiss, boasting a big smile from ear to ear. The trainee cutting machine operator who is completing his apprenticeship at MAPAL is the new German Champion in CNC milling. Lukas Weiss achieved the best result at the "WorldSkills 2020" held in Tuttlingen. Another MAPAL apprentice also did a great job in the competition to find Germany's best up-and-coming CNC milling cutter: His colleague Julian Kraus took the fifth place. "We're absolutely delighted for the two lads. "Their performance shows that we're doing something right with our apprenticeship concept," says Uwe Hessler, Head of Apprenticeship Programmes at MAPAL. Trainer Robin Offinger is also proud and finds it "simply brilliant that our apprentices performed so well right off the bat." MAPAL was taking part in the WorldSkills in CNC milling for the first time.

The apprentice cutting machine operators, now in their fourth year of training, had been preparing for the vocational skills competition since April. They were supported by their trainers, who gave them advice as well as time and materials for practice. This year's competition was hosted by machine manufacturer Chiron in Tuttlingen. Both Lukas Weiss, who lives in Fremdingen (Donau-Ries county) and Julian Kraus from Lauchheim-Röttingen (Ostalbkreis county), fared very well in the preliminary rounds, which took place in the summer. The two placed themselves at the top of 25 participants with equal points between them. Training at the MAPAL training centre was further intensified in anticipation of the finals scheduled to take place in early October. "We noticed that we were getting better and better with every workpiece and felt in good shape for the finals." As with the preliminary rounds, the apprentices returned to the Chiron plant in Tuttlingen for the championship finals, which usually

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take place at the AMB (the International Exhibition for Metal Working) in Stuttgart. This year's exhibition was however cancelled because of the pandemic.

The finalists were tasked with producing three workpieces within a specified time. The participants were provided 2-D drawings on paper from which they had to create 3-D models of the parts on their laptops. Using the 3-D models they coded the CNC program and then uploaded it to the CNC milling machine. The parts were then milled and drilled in different clamping setups. The participants were expected to adhere to precision measurements of up to two hundredths of a millimetre. The reason for this level of precision was a new task: This time around, the three modules would build on one another – an additional challenge for the young milling specialists. Four stressful days lay ahead for the participants.

At the beginning, things didn't go well for Lukas. "It happened right on the first day. I was working on a part when my machine suddenly stopped working. It had to be recalibrated. That took a while and made me even more nervous," explains Lukas. Even in the evenings at the hotel in Tuttlingen where he and Julian were staying, he couldn't relax and forget about the day's tasks. "I could barely sleep and was mulling over all the programming steps in my head again and again. I was wondering whether I had done everything right and whether my time management was going to work out."

Lukas Weiss and Julian Kraus both managed to manufacture their workpieces in the allotted time. This was not the case for all participants. Both of them also managed to keep within the strict tolerance limits. Their modules all slotted together nicely, and the individual components formed a model of a milling machine with a swivel table. But the uncertainty of not knowing the outcome didn't abate for the two apprentices until the award ceremony a week later. Lukas: "To be honest, I wasn't sure whether I would come in among the top three. But taking the first place, it was simply

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unbelievable. And it really was a tight race. The difference in points between the top six performers was very narrow."

Lukas Weiss now has a decision to make. He can either compete in next year's European Championship in Graz, or the World Championships in Shanghai. The title of German Champion guarantees his entry and MAPAL will continue to support the young milling talent on his journey.

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Captions:



Dr Jochen Kress congratulates Lukas Weiss, centre, on taking the title of German Champion and Julian Kraus on his 5th place.



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Julian Kraus and Lukas Weiss, from left, successful competitors at the German Championship.

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