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GROUP**

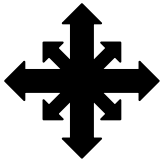
THILENIUS GROUP Finishes Seventh in VLN Debut with Aston Martin



Hey! Held over the weekend of April 8 under beautiful spring skies in the Eiffel region of western Germany, the DMV 4 Stunden Rennen was the second round of the Langstrecken Meisterschaft Nurburgring (VLN) series. The race represented my debut with **Aston Martin** and my only opportunity to get familiar with the **V12 Vantage** prior to the ADAC Zurich Nurburgring 24 Hour in May. Together with my co-drivers, Tony Richards and Jurgen Kroner, we recovered from tire issues and a penalty to record a seventh place finish in the competitive SP8 class.

The **V12 Vantage** prepared by the **Aston Martin Test Centre** is a big jump in performance from most of the cars I have driven at the Nurburgring and it took me most of the Friday test session to come to terms with the speed. I was decidedly behind the car, reacting to it rather than directing it, in my first stint. The **Vantage** has incredible acceleration and some aerodynamic grip at higher speeds but in the corners relies mostly on mechanical grip. The up side of less aerodynamic grip is less aerodynamic drag on the long straights. Our top speed on the Döttinger Höhe straight is in excess of 275 kmph! Being as quick, or quicker, than the fastest GT3 cars is cool!

Turning the car over to Tony for his first laps of the Nurburgring in almost two years gave me an opportunity to get my brain into gear. By the end of my second stint in testing, I was starting to come to grips with the **Vantage** and wanted more. The team called me to the pits for fuel with the plan of running another lap before giving the car back to Tony to finish the day. About a third of the way into my next lap, the car



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developed a significant vibration in the front suspension. I slowed to a conservative pace and brought the car back to the pits. Inspection revealed a large cut in the inner sidewall of the left front tire. The crew changed the tire and sent Tony out for his final lap. At about the same place where I had my tire issue, Tony experienced a failure in his right front tire. Obviously having two tire issues is concerning. A review of the in-car video failed to reveal a root cause. We discussed the issues with **Yokohama** and decided to increase the front tire pressure slightly to reduce the roll of the tires on the rims when cornering.

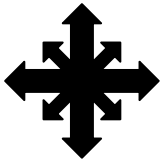


Saturday morning dawned cool and dry. The **Aston Martin** team decided Jurgen should run first in qualifying due to his experience with the **V12 Vantage** on the Nurburgring. After two laps, Jurgen turned the car over to Tony for his two laps of qualifying. Tony improved over 18 seconds between his first and second laps before handing the car off to me. My first lap was mostly clear of traffic and I recorded a 9:12 lap. With over 190 cars in the field, clear laps are hard to find, even

on a track as long as the Nurburgring. I spent most of my second lap fighting traffic. The traffic was so heavy I decided to abort the attempt and brought the car back to the pits only to discover I had run a 9:10.659 on my second lap, good enough for P6 in class. I have no idea where the speed came from, but I will take it!

After a short break following qualifying, we rolled out to the grid for the race. We nominated Tony to start the race with Jurgen running the middle stint and I volunteered to bring the **Vantage** to the checkered flag. At the drop of the green flag, Tony found himself in the middle of a field of Porsche Cup, GT4 and other SP8 class cars. By the end of his stint, Tony had the #144 **Vantage** fourth in class. Jurgen took over when Tony pitted for fuel and a new set of





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Yokohama tires. Unfortunately, a couple laps into his stint, Jurgen experienced another tire issue and pulled off track at Breidscheid. The **Aston Martin Test Centre** team ran two new tires down to Adenau and got the **Vantage** back on track.

With just over an hour left in the four hour race, I took over for Jurgen. On my second lap, I pitted to serve a 45 second stop-and-go penalty we had incurred early in the race for excess speed in a 60 kmph zone. The organizers use GPS to monitor the speed of all 190+ cars in the race. Given the time we had already lost with our tire issues, the penalty did not have a significant effect on our finishing position, but it was a good lesson to learn prior to the 24 hour. For the remainder of my stint, I put my head down and focused on working through the traffic as efficiently as I could. On lap 20, I ran the quickest lap in the **V12 Vantage**, a 9:03.634, and then took the checkered flag P7 in the SP8 class after 23 laps. My fast lap was the fourth quickest in SP8 and I am sure sub-nine minute laps are possible.

I certainly would have liked a better result in the DMV 4 Stunden Rennen, but my main goal for the weekend was to prepare for the 2017 ADAC Zurich Nurburgring 24 Hour. So, mission accomplished! I feel very confident with the **Aston Martin Test Centre** team and their awesome **V12 Vantage** looking forward to the 24 hour race May 25-28.

You can follow the progress of **THILENIUS GROUP** and the **Aston Martin V12 Vantage** on the official Nurburgring 24 Hour website at www.24h-rennen.de and on the English language live streaming on Radio LeMans at www.radiolemans.co. Alternately, you still have time to make plans to join the 200,000 racing fans from all over the world and see the race in person. I plan to be busy for the entire 24 hours this year, but I will gladly join you for a celebratory beer after the race!

About THILENIUS GROUP

THILENIUS GROUP, LLC based in California provides vehicle dynamics engineering, motorsports and sports marketing services. With over 30 years experience engineering vehicle dynamics at the OEM level, road racing motorsports and sports marketing, THILENIUS GROUP can help you reach your goals. Information about THILENIUS GROUP services is available at www.thileniusgroup.com. Latest updates available on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ThileniusGroup and Twitter at <https://twitter.com/ThileniusGroup>.