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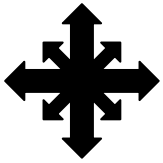
Thilenius, Chilton and Holland Victorious in the Nurburgring 24 Hour Qualifying Race



Hey! April 10 - 12 I returned to the Nurburgring for the first time since 2005 and finished my first race on the legendary Nordschleife. For this weekend, my co-driver, Tony Richards from New Zealand, and I had the same goal of qualifying for the 2015 ADAC Zurich 24 Hour Race at the Nurburgring. It was a busy weekend. For the 6 hour race, I drove 2 different cars to log the required 18 racing laps along with attending a classroom training session, completing a driving assessment on the Nordschleife and recording 2 qualifying laps in each racecar. In the Rotek Racing V5 class BMW Z4, Tony and I fought through mechanical issues in practice and the race to finish 5th in class. In the quicker Rotek Racing SP4T class Audi TTRS, I joined my co-drivers Tom Chilton from Great Britain and Robb Holland from the United States to win my debut race on the Nurburgring and finish 12th overall.

The weekend started off on Friday with a day of classroom training. Due to the unique nature of the track, racing at the Nurburgring is like nothing I have done before and they have rules which apply nowhere else in the world. At times the rules do not seem to make a lot of sense, but in typical German fashion, the training was well organized. Following the classroom session, we were given a bus tour of the Nordschleife and then jumped into street cars for a 16 lap driving assessment. I do not have many kind things to say about the rental Renault Clio RS I drove, but it held together and I received my training certificate.

My introduction to racing at the Nurburgring started on Saturday morning with a practice session on the 3.2 mile Grand Prix circuit. The 24 hour race is run on a combination of the Grand Prix circuit (without the Mercedes Arena section) and the Nordschleife. I ran 3 laps of the Grand Prix circuit in the Z4 before turning the car over to Tony and jumping into the TTRS for 5 laps. The V5 class BMW Z4 is a race



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prepared production car and I was comfortable in it immediately. The SP4T class Audi TTRS is a serious racecar built out of carbon fiber with significant aerodynamic down force, paddle shifting, traction control and massive anti-lock brakes. Any comfort I felt in the BMW disappeared the instant I sat in the Audi. For the rest of the day I felt like I was drinking from a fire hose! Robb, Tom, the Rotek Racing crew and an orientation to the myriad of switches in the TTRS helped me get somewhat more comfortable, so I was at least able to get the car around the track without hitting anything.

On Saturday afternoon, the first official practice was held on the combined track. I started in the BMW Z4 while Tom and Robb began work on chassis set-up in the TTRS. The BMW ran well until my second lap when I had a braking issue entering Bergwerk. The brake pedal dropped significantly, but I made the corner and was able to pump up the brakes to finish the rest of the lap. Upon inspection, it appears the left rear brake caliper failed which damaged the drive shaft. The Rotek Racing crew was able to fix the issue, but it cost some time and Tony did not get to drive the car in practice. After breaking the BMW, I jumped into the Audi. My fastest lap in the Audi, 9:37.780, was over 1 minute quicker than I had run in the BMW. I was nowhere near competitive with my teammates, but I was pleasantly surprised when their feedback to our race engineer, Nick Silvester, agreed with mine.

One of the requirements to qualify for the 24 hour race is drivers must log 2 laps of running in night qualifying. To satisfy this requirement, I started the night qualifying session in the TTRS. It really was not very dark when I ran my laps, but after taking some time to diagnose a fuel smell in the TTRS I fulfilled the requirement and found 2 more seconds on track. I did not drive the BMW Z4 in night qualifying. Unfortunately, by the time the car had been repaired it was extremely dark, foggy and raining. You can always rely on a Kiwi to get the job done and Tony did a brilliant job in extremely difficult conditions to log his 2 laps of night running and post a qualifying time for the Z4.

The second qualifying session was held Sunday morning under clear and much cooler conditions. In order to start the race, I still had to post a qualifying time in the Z4, so I took a conservative approach on a track that was still very wet in places. Tony took over for some dry running and posted a time which placed us 4th in the V5 class. In the TTRS, Tom ran a blistering lap to take pole position in SP4T, 21st overall.

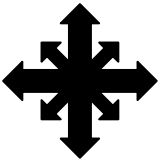
After a short break, the Rotek racing crew rolled the Audi TTRS and BMW Z4 out to the grid for the start of the 6 hour qualifying race. Both Tony and I had to record 18 laps during the race. The plan was for



Tony to start the Z4 and do a double stint to get a majority of his laps while Tom would start the TTRS and run a single stint before turning the car over to me for a single stint of 8 laps. Robb and Tom would finish the race in the TTRS while I would jump into the BMW for a full stint, do a fuel stop, run 2 more laps and then give the car back to Tony to run to the end. As they say, "A plan never survives first contact with the enemy."

Tom started the race in the TTRS and after falling back initially moved forward in the field. The Rotek Racing crew executed a terrific stop for tires and fuel while I got into the car for my first stint. My goal was to find speed

and insure I handed off the car to Robb in good condition. I kept the car in the top 20 overall with a my



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personal best lap of 9:12.428, over 25 seconds quicker than I had run in qualifying. Robb took over the TTRS and, when Tony completed his double stint, I headed out on track in the Z4. After driving the Audi, the BMW was very comfortable. I completed 2 laps and posted the fast time for the car at 10:15.914. Unfortunately, early in my third lap, the Z4's engine began to misfire. I ducked into the pits using the back entrance off the Grand Prix circuit. While the crew worked on the car, I realized if the BMW was broken, Tony and I were both at risk of not running the required laps to qualify for the 24 hour race. The Rotek Racing crew diagnosed the engine issue and had me run a few laps of the shorter Grand Prix circuit to determine if the problem was resolved. After I confirmed the engine problem was fixed Tony took over the BMW and brought the car home fifth in class. In the meantime, Robb and Tom had moved the TTRS into the top 15 overall. I took over the final stint in the TTRS with instructions to keep the #60 Porsche GT3 Cup car behind me. I was able to maintain the gap to the #60 car over the final 8 laps of the race and took the checkered flag 12th overall and first in SP4T.

In the end, it was "mission accomplished". Despite the weather and my best efforts to break the BMW, Tony and I managed to qualify to run the ADAC Zurich 24 Hour Race at the Nurburgring in May. Getting the win in the SP4T class was a terrific bonus. I cannot thank the entire Rotek Racing crew and my co-drivers Tony Richards, Tom Chilton and Robb Holland enough for their support this weekend in getting me up to speed in the TTRS on the most difficult racetrack in the world. I cannot wait to get back to Germany for the 24 hour race.

Here is a link to Rotek Racing's official press release: <http://www.race-the-ring.com/news/wtcc-drivers-prevail-nurburgring/>. Thanks also go out to Frozenspeed for the great photograph above of the TTRS getting a little airtime at Pflanzgarten.

The ADAC Zurich 24 Hour Race at the Nurburgring will take place May 13 - 17. Stay tuned for updates and check out the official race website at <http://www.24h-rennen.de/en/>. Of course, if you do not have anything better to do, you can jump on an airplane, get yourself to Germany and watch the race live. I hear it is quite a party!

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