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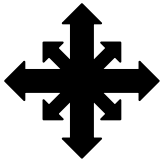
THILENIUS GROUP Fourth in First Running of 12 Stunden Nürburgring



Hey! Over the weekend of September 10-11, I returned to the Germany for the first ever 12-hour **Nürburgring Langstrecken Series** race. Following a competitive, but ultimately unsuccessful, run in the 2022 **ADAC TotalEnergies 24 Hour Nürburgring**, I was thrilled to be back with **SchnitzelAlm Racing** in their **BMW M240i**. This weekend I was joined by a truly international group of co-drivers with Juuso Puhakka and Konsta Lappalainen from Finland and Jaden Conwright from the United States. After 12 hours of racing in the unpredictable Eifel weather the #674 **BMW M240i** completed a **SchnitzelAlm Racing** 2-3-4 finish in fourth position.

Over the years the **Nürburgring Langstrecken Series (NLS)** has traditionally run races of four or six hours. In 2022 for the first time, the series added a race of 12 hours split into two segments of six hours each. After the first six hours on Saturday, the cars would be placed in parc fermé overnight where the teams would not be able work on the cars in any way. The race would be restarted on Sunday in the same order the cars finished on Saturday with the time gaps on track preserved.

I arrived in Germany a couple days early. I reconnected with friends, toured the Benedictine Abbey on the shores of Maria Laach, spent some time on the simulators at the **SchnitzelAlm Racing** shop and drove a couple laps of Touristenfahrten. When the Nürburgring is not being used for racing or vehicle development, the track is open to the



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public for Touristenfahrten as a one-way toll road. German traffic rules apply (e.g., passing only on the left). However, there is no speed limit and the sessions are filled with drivers testing the limits of their vehicles and driving talents as well as those out for a leisurely tour of the world's greatest race track. It is difficult to get meaningful work done during Touristenfahrten, but it was good to reacclimate myself to the Nordschleife.

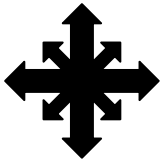
Despite all my German friends telling me this summer has been one of the driest they can remember; the weather gods must have known I was coming and arranged for rain in the Eifel as I rolled out onto the track on a set of used **Goodyear** rain tires. The track conditions for my three laps of practice were a mix of completely dry to soaking wet, typical for the Nürburgring! Despite a big "Code Brown" moment on the bridge at Breidscheid, I was happy with my laps and turned the car over to my teammates.

Normally, **NLS** rules require all the drivers in the car to set a time in qualifying in order to drive in the race. Due to the limited amount of time allocated to qualifying and the large number of drivers at the 12-hour event, the organizers decided only one driver had to log a time to set the grid for the race. More rain overnight meant the track conditions were perfect for my Finnish co-driver, Juuso Puhakka. After assuring the team he was going to be conservative, Juuso laid down a lap over 15 seconds ahead of the next car in our class! It was an epic lap, faster than many of the GT3 cars! The track conditions improved later in the session dropping our #674 **BMW M240i** to P4 in class behind the #650 from Adrenalin Motorsport and our **SchnitzelAlm Racing** teammates in the #665 and #666.

My teammates Jaden, Juuso and Konsta are all extremely quick drivers with international experience in GT3 cars. However, in order to race at the Nürburgring drivers must attend a school and log a certain number of laps in race conditions. I attained my coveted Nürburgring A-Permit in 2015 while my teammates needed laps in the 12-hour to get their A-Permits. Konsta needed the most laps, so we decided he would start the race, followed by Jaden, Juuso and then myself.



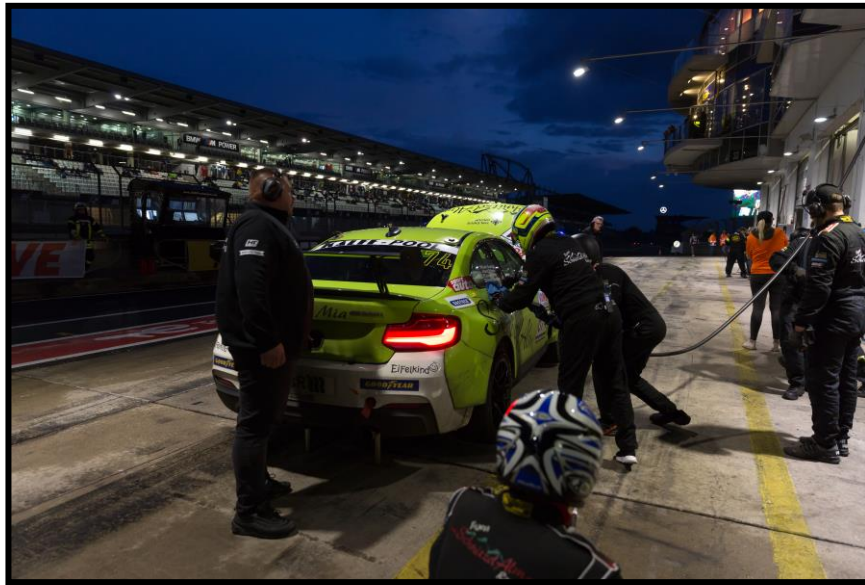
On the starting grid, the correct tire choice was not clear. Portions of the track were wet and weather radar predicted more rain after the start. We rolled to the grid on rain tires. Later, we made the choice to go to a set of **Goodyear** slicks for the start and all but one of our competitors followed suit. It was the wrong decision. Fully half of the field came



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to the pit lane to change to rain tires at the drop of the green flag. Konsta stayed on slicks hoping a dry racing line would develop, but ultimately, we were forced to pit for rain tires like the rest of the field. The correct tire choice was a constant gamble throughout Konsta's, Jaden's and Juuso's stints while the #674 **SchnitzelAlm Racing BMW M240i** battled for a position on the podium.

As the sun began to set, the track continued to dry. Juuso radioed the pit to let the team know it was time to go to slicks. Unfortunately, the message was not received. Our teammates in the #666 pitted immediately before us and went to slicks. I saw their tire change as I was getting ready for our pitstop, but thought staying on rain tires was a

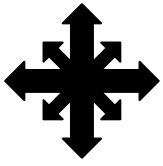


good gamble based on the fickle Eifel weather. Yet again, we made the wrong tire decision by staying on rain tires. There was a dry line around the entire track. Even the off-line sections of the track were too dry to offer much cooling for my **Goodyear** rain tires. After a couple laps, I pitted for slicks tires and then set the fast lap of the day in the #674. Darkness and a brief rain shower added some

excitement when the driver of an Audi GT3 overestimated the amount of grip in Galgenkopf and drove into my left door. Fortunately, the damage was minimal. We pitted one more time to meet our required minimum total pitstop time and topped up our fuel as the clock wound down on the first six hours of racing with the #674 P4 in class.

Sunday dawned warm and dry. The race was restarted with each car sent out of the pitlane in the order and with the time gaps from where they had finished the previous day. The field was limited to 60 kmph until all the cars were back on track.

When the green flag flew, the #674 had a time gap of about four minutes to the leading #650. Repeating our driving order from the previous day, Konsta started and turned in a great stint until he ran into fuel starvation on his last lap. He was able to get the car restarted, but the delay dropped us another minute off the leader. For the rest of the day the **SchnitzelAlm Racing BMW M240i** moved up and down the leader board. Jaden and Juuso traded fast laps in the #674. I ran my second stint taking over from Juuso; my fastest lap 11 seconds quicker than the time I had posted on Saturday. Konsta jumped back into the #674 to take the car to the finish. We were P2 going into the last lap, but were forced to make an extended pitstop to meet the minimum total pitstop time and fell to P4 at the finish.



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The **12 Stunden Nürburgring** was a difficult race. The constantly changing weather conditions on the first day and the frantic dry weather pace on the second day were huge challenges. Ultimately, our struggles to be on the right **Goodyear** tire at the right time and the fuel pickup issue kept us from improving our position. **SchnitzelAlm Racing** and my co-drivers did a great job all weekend. Konsta, Jaden and Juuso logged their laps to qualify for their A-Permits and I am much more comfortable with the **BMW M240i**. As a completely unexpected bonus, I managed to come home with a trophy from **Pagid Racing**. I am not completely clear on how I earned this honor, but I think it has something to do with being the highest finishing old guy in the class and not having a heart attack while on track. I am definitely looking forward to 2023!



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>.