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The Heat is on in Misano

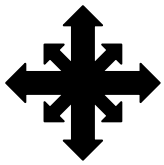
Hey! July 16-18 the **GT2 European Series Powered by Pirelli** headed to **Misano World Circuit Marco Simoncelli** on Italy's Adriatic coast. The **SR Motorsports by SchnitzelAlm** team overcame a field of strong competitors, sweltering heat, contact in qualifying and a drive-through penalty in race one to score a Pro-Am class win and overall podium finish in race two. It was a challenging event for **Jay Mo Härtling** and myself in our **Mercedes-AMG GT2**, but ultimately, we extended our championship lead.



Misano was another new circuit for me, so heading into the weekend I studied track video, ran laps on the sim and arrived early to walk the track. Misano has a great layout with a variety of challenging corners. It is primarily a motorcycle track with very low curbs and gravel traps. Therefore, I knew coming into the weekend the key to finding lap time in our **AMG GT2** would be pushing up to but not beyond the track limits.

Another factor was the weather of Italy's Adriatic coast. The entire weekend was hot and humid. Not so bad if you are sitting at the beach with a gelato, but brutal conditions in the racecar and definitely a test of the effectiveness of my hot weather training.

I was pleased to be much quicker in the Thursday test than I had been on the sim, but the first official practice on Friday did not go as smoothly. On my out lap after taking over from Jay Mo, I had a big snap of oversteer entering the flat out Turn 11 and just managed to keep the car out of the gravel before heading to the pits feeling something wrong in the left rear. My **SR Motorsports by SchnitzelAlm** team installed a new set of **Pirelli** tires and I returned to the track. I am not sure of the exact issue, but I suspect when I released the speed limiter exiting the pit lane, the massive torque of the **AMG**



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GT2 may have loosened the left rear wheel. I will be a bit more careful with the throttle when releasing the pit lane speed limiter going forward.

In the second practice, Jay Mo exhibited his stellar pace and I ran a 30-minute race stint simulation. I found better pace throughout, running my best laps when my **Pirelli** tires were well beyond their prime. Analysis of data and video identified additional areas for improvement, so I was fairly confident heading into qualifying.



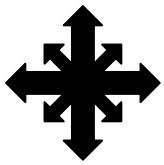
However, similar to practice, qualifying did not go smoothly. I found myself caught up in traffic early and while backing off to find a gap was harpooned in the right rear by the #119 KTM in Turn 14. The contact brought out a red flag stopping the session. The damage to the **SR Motorsports by SchnitzelAlm AMG GT2**, while expensive, was largely cosmetic. I recorded a 1:38.278 when the session

restarted and was working on an even better lap when a second red flag ended the session prematurely. Qualifying 16th for the second race in a row was not part of my master plan! In the second qualifying session, Jay Mo showed the true potential of our **AMG GT2** with Pole Position for race 2.

After qualifying I was called to the Race Stewards to answer for my part in the incident with the #119 KTM. The in-car and trackside video showed quite clearly the #119 braked too late for the corner and that I had turned in normally. Visits to the Stewards are never pleasant, but I was relieved to be exonerated. The driver of the #119 has pulled the same move a few times this season, so he is one to keep an eye on.

Given my poor starting position in race one, I knew I had to do my best to gain positions and was hoping for a full course caution or two to bring the field back together before handing the car off to Jay Mo. When the lights went green, I had a look down the inside heading into the first corner, but the #115 AMG, our closest championship rival, shut the door. Despite some shuffling around in the field, I found myself still in 16th position heading onto the long back straight for





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the first time. The **AMG GT2** is an absolute beast with more than 700 horsepower. I used all of that horsepower to force my way past the #27 Lamborghini before Turn 11 and then repeated the same move on the #85 Porsche and the #898 KTM on laps four and five to move up to 13th. 13th became 12th when the Pro-Am class leading #8

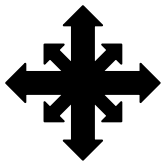


Maserati spun into the gravel on the next lap. I quickly closed down the gap to the battling #115 AMG and #7 Maserati. Before I had a chance to attack, the race was neutralized behind the safety car when the leading #6 Maserati had a huge accident and completely cleared the tire barrier and guardrail in Turn 10. The safety car period quickly transitioned into a race stoppage to give the

emergency crews the opportunity to recover the #6 and repair the guardrail. Prior to the red flag, I felt good. But I have to admit once the race was stopped, I did not mind getting out of the car to cool off. The ambient heat and humidity were brutal, especially when combined with a hot racecar and multiple layers of safety gear. Still, I was happy with my progress and the red flag played into our hand.

After more than an hour, the race restarted with the **SR Motorsports by SchnitzelAlm AMG GT2** in tenth position. On the restart, the #115 **AMG** seemed to have an issue and did not accelerate down the front straight. The #7 Maserati easily motored past the #115 and I followed suit as did the #898 KTM. Unfortunately, I completed the pass on the #115 before the Start / Finish line (as did the #7) and that is a violation of the restart rules. When Jay Mo took over the driving duties, we were looking good for a podium finish in Pro-Am until the Stewards gave us a drive-through penalty which relegated us to tenth overall and sixth in Pro-Am. On the bright side, our misfortune enabled our teammates **Willi Kühne** and **Mortiz Wiskirchen** to finish second in Pro-Am and third overall.





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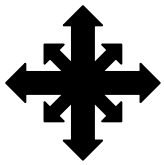
I understand the restart rule and the reason for it, but given the same situation in the future I am not sure I would do anything different. The #115 was so slow on the restart the only conclusion I could draw in the moment was it had a mechanical issue of some sort. Clearly, despite the facts that three cars passed the #115 on the restart and the #115 later grinding to a halt on the front straight, the Stewards did not share my conclusion. Further, I certainly do not agree with the severity of the penalty. A drive-through penalty is huge and seems entirely out of proportion to the violation. The #7 Maserati was given the same penalty for the same infraction, so I can at least acknowledge the Stewards are consistent in their rulings. Lesson learned.

Heading into the second race on Sunday morning Jay Mo and I were looking for retribution. **SR Motorsports by SchnitzelAlm** locked out the entire front row. Jay Mo led early in our #111 **AMG GT2** before swapping positions with Moritz in the #110 AMG



GT2. The #110 and #111 ran in lock step pulling away from the field until the #110 slowed suddenly with a fuel pump issue on lap seven. Moritz's problems left Jay Mo with a commanding lead over the #7 Maserati, a lead that grew to nearly 16 seconds by the time he pitted to turn the car over to me.

The **SR Motorsports by SchnitzelAlm** team executed a flawless pitstop extending our lead in the fight with the #7 Maserati for the top step of the Pro-Am podium. Jay Mo advised me our rear **Pirelli** tires were decidedly past their prime, so to ensure I did not ask too much from them too soon, I went more conservative with the traction control setting. My engineer, **Günni Aberer**, asked me for 20 minutes of quick laps and kept me abreast of our position in class and overall. A couple laps into my stint, a big accident with the #115 AMG threatened to bring out the safety car. Fortunately, the



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racing gods smiled on us and the race stayed green. Lapped traffic did little to help me hold onto the overall lead, but I maintained the gap to the #7 Maserati to the finish without too much drama.

Third overall in the **GT2 European Series Powered by Pirelli at Misano World Circuit** **Marco Simoncelli** with a win in the Pro-Am class felt good. Extending our lead in the **Pro-Am Cup Drivers' Championship** and Jay Mo's lead in the **SRO GT Academy Drivers' Championship** felt even better. Finishing a race where we did not have to meet with the Stewards, priceless!

"It was great. Jay Mo did such a good job at beginning. Got me such a good gap out there. He just put on a master class showing everybody how it is supposed to be done."
– David Thilenius

"It was a good start. We changed positions because we thought Moritz would be quite a bit faster. But he wasn't so we changed back and flew together to the driver change pit window. In the end we did a great job together and I think it is a very very good birthday present." – Jay Mo Härtling



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