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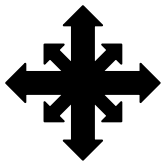
Podium Finish for THILENIUS GROUP at Zandvoort

Hey! After the summer break, the **GT2 European Series Powered by Pirelli** resumed racing with two races through the sand dunes at **MASCOT Circuit Zandvoort** September 19-20. This was my and **SR Motorsports by SchnitzelAlm**'s first visit to the undulating Dutch circuit. While the **Mercedes-AMG GT2** was not particularly well suited to the track, the team scored valuable points towards the Pro-Am class championship, highlighted by a podium finish in race one.



Circuit Zandvoort has long held a special appeal. I vividly remember watching Niki Lauda, my favorite Formula One driver, score the final win of his career at Zandvoort. While the track layout has changed over the years, the challenges of track remain with heavy braking into Turn 1 (Tarzan), a blind crest at Turn 6 (Slotenmakerbocht) followed by the fast downhill Turn 7 (Scheivlak) and newly added banking in Turns 3 and 14 (Hugenholtzbocht and Arie Luyendyk Bocht). And, if the variety of corners is not challenge enough, drivers must contend with the wind gusting off the North Sea depositing a fine layer of sand onto a track surface lined by unforgiving concrete walls and hungry gravel traps. Circuit Zandvoort is old school. I love it.

In the first practice my co-driver, **Jay Mo Härtling**, took to the track first. When it was my turn, I quickly discovered the combination of old tires and blowing sand resulted in very little front or rear grip. Not exactly confidence inspiring, but I found some pace



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throughout. After the session, a review of data and video revealed numerous areas for improvement. In particular, carrying more speed in Turn 3 and utilizing short shifts exiting many of the corners to help tame the 700+ horsepower of the **AMG GT2** on the slick track surface showed promise.

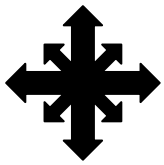
A new set of tires from **Pirelli** transformed the **AMG GT2** in the second practice. Both **SR Motorsports by SchnitzelAim** cars posted times in the top 5. The increased grip from the new tires definitely gave me more confidence and I found almost two seconds.



I was cautiously optimistic heading into qualifying on Saturday morning but spent a restless night listening to the wind and rain squalls. Ultimately, the track was dry for qualifying, but the GT2 European series cars were the first on track and it took many laps to clean the sand from the fast line and build heat in the tires. I found a good gap in traffic and put together a 1:40.219 to qualify 8th overall and 4th in the Pro-Am class, fastest **AMG GT2**. I had another good lap going as the session wound down, but lost pressure in the left front tire and was forced to abort.

Jay Mo was frustrated by a lack of rear grip in the second qualifying session. A red flag cost him a chance to improve, so his qualifying time meant we would start the Sunday race from 12th on the grid.

As the start time for the first race of the weekend approached, random rain showers and heavy winds continued. Despite some ominous clouds, the track was dry for the start. The #85 Maserati suffered a mechanical problem and was not able to make the start, leaving an open slot next to me on the grid. When the lights turned green, I got a decent start but soon found myself pinned to the outside of Tarzan by the #294 and #115 AMG's that had accelerated into the gap left by the missing Maserati. Outside of



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the first corner put me on the sandy side of Turn 2 resulting in a big snap of oversteer that slowed my progress towards Turn 3. A lack of momentum in Turn 3 cost me



another position to the #7 Maserati. I had done my best to build heat in the tires on the pace lap, but was clearly lacking in rear grip. I stabilized my position through the next few corners, but was hit in the door by an overzealous pass attempt into Turn 11 and dropped two more spots to the offending #898 KTM and the opportunistic #73 Ferrari. 8th at the start

became 12th at the end of the first lap. I repassed the #73 Ferrari on the front straight and set about redeeming myself and chasing down the #898 KTM. By lap four I had closed up on the #898 KTM and we both worked our way past the #7 Maserati. For the remainder of my stint, I hounded the #898 KTM, but despite having better overall pace

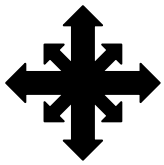


was never close enough to make a serious attempt. We did chase down the #115 AMG in 8th and all three cars entered the pitlane nose-to-tail when pit window opened.

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executed a perfect pit stop, perfect to the tenth of a second, and Jay Mo returned to the track exactly on our

required pit stop time. My struggles early in the race and the additional ten seconds compensation time we had to serve after our victory at Misano in the previous race meant Jay Mo had his work cut out for him. Jay Mo was more than up to the task, consistently slicing into the 11 second gap to the #115 AMG running 3rd in the Pro-Am class. However, while Jay Mo was moving forward, the #119 KTM was catching him at an even greater rate. Soon all three cars were in contact. An ill-advised lunge down



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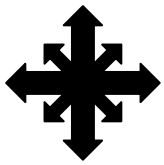
the inside of Turn 3 by the #119 KTM gave Jay Mo some respite. With one lap remaining Jay Mo caught the #115 AMG as rain began to fall in the final two corners. The #115 AMG overcooked the entry to Turn 11 and Jay Mo pounced on the run down to the penultimate corner. The #115 AMG fought back on the inside. The #119 KTM attacked on the outside but carried too much speed and ended up in the gravel. Jay Mo held on to bring our #111 **AMG GT2** home in 7th overall and more importantly 3rd in the Pro-Am class.

Based on our result in the first race, the **SR Motorsports by SchnitzelAlm** team had a positive outlook heading into the second race on Sunday. At the drop of the green our teammate Moritz Wiskirchen in the #110 **AMG GT2** challenged for the lead and Jay Mo moved from 12th to 8th with an aggressive run around the outside of

Tarzan. 8th became 7th by the end of the first lap with a pass on the #89 KTM and then 6th when Jay Mo out-braked the #1 Maserati into Tarzan at the start of the third lap. The race settled down a bit at this point with Moritz battling for a spot in the top three with the #3 Ginetta while Jay Mo cut into the gap to the #7 Maserati in 5th place. The #3 Ginetta and #7 Maserati swapped positions at the start of lap six and this allowed Jay Mo move up another place.

Unfortunately, 5th would effectively be the high-water mark for the #111 **AMG GT2**. Jay Mo held on until the pit stop, but an issue with low fuel pressure stalled his charge toward the front. I took over the driving duties for the second half of the race. Refueling during the stop did not alleviate the fuel pressure issue. All season, the biggest strength of the **AMG GT2** has been our straight-line speed, so losing power from the engine had a significant effect on our pace. I did my best to fend off the #115 AMG to hold briefly onto 4th in Pro-Am, but with a couple laps to go I dropped the spot to the #8 Maserati and finished 9th overall and 5th in Pro-Am.

MASCOT Circuit Zandvoort was not that friendly to the **SR Motorsports by SchnitzelAlm AMG GT2**, but we are still leading the **GT2 European Series Powered by Pirelli Pro-Am Cup Drivers' Championship** and Jay Mo has a firm grasp on the **SRO GT Academy Drivers' Championship** with two races remaining at **Autódromo Internacional do Algarve** in October. Bring it!



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"We knew Zandvoort was going to be a tough track for us. The Maseratis, Ginettas and KTM's are fast here, so we're just doing the best we can. Our focus is on the championship." – David Thilenius



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 on X at [@ThileniusGroup](https://twitter.com/ThileniusGroup) / X.