



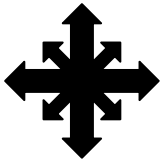
Crash Damage Takes THILENIUS GROUP Out of the 50th ADAC TotalEnergies 24 Hour Nürburgring



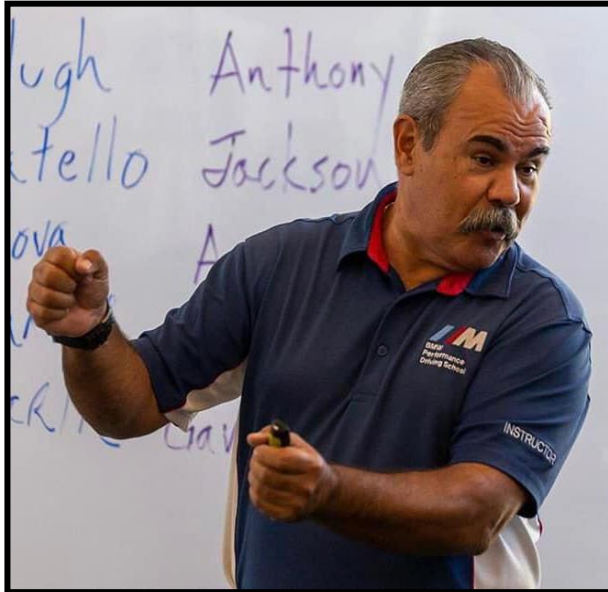
Hey! After a long and sometimes frustrating off season, I signed with **SchnitzelAlm Racing** to race in the 50th running of the **ADAC TotalEnergies 24 Hour Nürburgring**. The **SchnitzelAlm Racing BMW M240i** was fast in every session, but crash damage ended our challenge six hours into the race.

In the months leading up to the 2022 **ADAC TotalEnergies 24 Hour Nürburgring**, the process of lining up a competitive ride turned out to be more challenging than usual. Discussions with Walkenhorst Motorsport initially held promise, but as April turned into May I found myself without a ride. Fortunately, a contact from my time at Aston Martin was involved with **SchnitzelAlm Racing**. **SchnitzelAlm Racing** has been very successful with their **BMW M240i**'s at the Nürburgring over the past couple years, so I was excited to sign with them for this year's 24 hour.

Heading to Germany, I found myself with a heavy heart. Days before leaving California, my good friend and coworker Raul Moreno, passed away suddenly. Raul had just spent the day sharing his passion for performance driving with groups of enthusiastic drivers at the **BMW Performance Center** in California. I am glad I was with him to ease his transition. To honor Raul, I carried his name on my **SchnitzelAlm Racing BMW M240i**. I know he would want me to keep pushing and bring home a great result.



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After a day acclimating to Germany and reacquainting myself with friends in the paddock, I was looking forward to getting on track in the first qualifying session. My co-driver Fritz Kolb went out first to shakedown our #245 **BMW M240i**. After a few adjustments to the car, I got my chance. I was pleasantly surprised to be P1 in class with a 9:58.547! There was a lot more time in me and in the car, but considering I had not driven one of these cars since 2016 and we were running on used tires to conserve our new **Goodyear** racing slicks for the race, I could not have asked for more. My other co-drivers, Björn Grieseman and Marco Büsker finished the session logging their required laps.

Fritz had the most experience with the **BMW M240i** and the conditions were perfect, so for night qualifying the team bolted on a new set of **Goodyear** tires. Fritz laid down a 9:47.364 to keep us on the provisional pole. By the time I got my turn, it was getting dark. My first lap was spoiled by traffic and on the second lap the chassis felt quite unsettled over large bumps. I could not pin down the cause of the change. Since the handling seemed to be getting worse, I took a conservative approach and brought the car back to the pit lane. The crew could not find anything obviously wrong with the chassis, but after the session they discovered the seat mounting bracket had broken.

I got my first laps on new **Goodyear** tires in the final qualifying session on Friday morning. With a new seat bracket and new tires, the **SchnitzelAlm Racing BMW M240i** felt great. Debris on the track in Hatzenbach and Flugplatz prevented me from logging a quicker time. In the dying minutes of qualifying, the #240 BMW M240i managed a quick time and we slipped to P2 in class. Keeping the pole would have been nice, but we were confident our overall pace and race strategy would give us the advantage in the race.

Race day dawned clear and cool. After two years of COVID induced restrictions, the crowds were back at the Nürburgring! It felt like all of the 200,000 plus race fans were



on the starting grid. The team nominated Fritz to start the race. I would be second followed by Björn and Marco. Our strategy was for each driver to run double stints to enable more rest and recovery time for the other drivers. Due to a limited supply of tires for the race, we adjusted our chassis to be slightly harder on front tires and were planning on cycling tires from the front axle to the rear axle. Each driver would get new **Goodyear** front tires when they started their first stint.

At the drop of the green flag, Fritz held position into the first corner, sandwiched between the #240 and #241 **BMW M240i**'s from Adrenalin Motorsport. Fritz ran a great first stint, never more than a couple seconds behind the #240. After both leading cars made their first pit stop, it appeared our strategy was working perfectly. Fritz pulled away from the new driver in the #240, and at the end of the second hour of the race we had a lead of 35 seconds. Unfortunately, six laps into his second stint, Fritz made contact with another car, damaging the suspension of the #245 **SchnitzelAlm Racing BMW M240i**. The repair cost us two laps, a long distance at the Nürburgring.

I jumped in the #245 during the repair. There were over 20 hours to the finish. As I left the pit lane, I told the team, "We can still win this." I decided to make things a little more challenging by throwing the car into the gravel in the Dunlop Kurve on my out lap. It was a silly mistake on cold tires, but no real harm was done. I put my head down and dodged spinning Aston Martins, Toyotas and a flaming KTM, avoided the wrath of the stewards through multiple 60 kmph and 120 kmph zones, managed to not get punted into the barriers by the crazy-aggressive GT3 traffic and over the next 16 laps clawed back a minute and a half from the leader.

I turned the car over to Björn at the end of my second stint and was optimistic about our chances. With 18 hours left in the race, if we could maintain a good pace and limit our mistakes, we had a shot at the win. The car was running well and the handling balance with new **Goodyear** front tires and used rear tires was great.

Unfortunately, on his fourth lap, Björn lost the car exiting the Warsteiner Kurve and made heavy contact with the barrier. The **SchnitzelAlm Racing BMW** was returned to the pit lane, but the damage was too severe to continue.





The **ADAC TotalEnergies 24 Hour Nürburgring** is a tough race. The **SchnitzelAlm Racing** team had all the elements in place to win the race: an experienced crew, a solid driving lineup and a great handling car. Regrettably we were not able to stay out of trouble and that led to our demise. Fritz, Björn, Marco and the whole team were great to work with and made me feel welcome. Looks like it is time to start planning my next trip to the Nürburgring.



About THILENIUS GROUP

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