

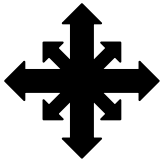
**THILENIUS GROUP and Aston Martin Second in
Rowe 6 Hour ADAC Ruhr – Pokal – Rennen**



Hey! August 18-19, I was back in Germany for the **Rowe 6 Hour ADAC Ruhr – Pokal – Rennen**. Leading up to the race, **Aston Martin** offered me the chance to drive their GT8, the car that won the SP8 class in the Nurburgring 24 hour. I jumped at the chance! With my experienced co-drivers, Alexander and Vincent Kolb, we overcame contact on the first lap that forced us to pit for repairs and constantly changing weather conditions to finish second in the SP8 class.

After watching the GT8 win the Nurburgring 24 hour in May, I knew driving the GT8 was going to be a challenge. The V12 Vantage I drove in the 24 hour had a lot of power and made a majority of its lap time on the straights. Lacking the power of the V12, the V8 GT8 makes its lap time with low weight and high cornering speeds, a very different approach. In the weeks leading up to the race, I reviewed video to prepare.

Unfortunately, when I arrived at the Nurburgring heavy rain added a new challenge to getting up to speed in the GT8. In testing, I focused on finding a wet line around the Nordschleife and worked through adjustments to the anti-lock braking and traction control systems (ABS and TCS). By the end of my second session, I was starting to build some confidence in the handling balance of the GT8 on our **Dunlop** rain tires.



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My training in the wet, paid off in qualifying. The rain had cleared up overnight, but with qualifying starting early in the morning, most of the track was wet. I ran two laps on rain tires before turning the car over to Alexander. My best time of 10:07.692 placed us 17th overall, but I knew the time would not hold up on the drying track. On **Dunlop** slicks, Alexander matched my times and then handed the car to Vincent. On a dry track, Vincent recorded a 9:14.894 to qualify us 3rd in SP8 and 55th overall out of 167 starters.

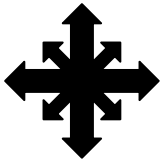
Vincent took the green flag for the **Rowe 6 Hour ADAC Ruhr – Pokal – Rennen** under sunny skies. Entering Eschbach on the first lap, the field checked up and Vincent made



heavy contact with the #924 KTM X-Bow. The KTM retired from the race and Vincent pitted for repairs. Fortunately, the damage to the GT8 was mostly cosmetic. Quick repairs by the **Aston Martin Test Centre** team got us back out on track, now down in 125th position. Over the remainder of his stint, Vincent worked through traffic brilliantly.

After nine laps, Vincent pitted the GT8 for tires, fuel and driver change. As I was buckling in, the rain started to fall. The team briefly discussed going to rain tires before deciding to stay on slicks and advising me to “be careful”. Staying on slicks turned out to be the right decision. Throughout my stint, I never had a completely dry track, but rain tires would not have lasted in the mostly dry conditions. In traffic, I chased down, passed and pulled away from the #136 Lexus IS-F to secure second position in class. Towards the end of my stint, the rain increased over portions of the track. I considered coming in for rain tires, but adjusting the ABS and TCS and changing my line helped me compensate for the conditions.

On my pit stop, Alexander assumed the driving duties and the team installed a set of **Dunlop** cut slicks. Cut slicks were the perfect choice for the track conditions until rain soaked the entire track and forced Alexander to pit again for full rain tires. The timing of Alexander’s stop was perfect and the **Aston Martin** GT8 consolidated its position in class and continued to move up in the overall standings. Our initial plan was for Vincent to take the next stint with me taking the car to the checkered flag, but our earlier additional pit stops and slower pace caused by the weather meant we could finish the race with one more stop.



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I took over the GT8 on our final stop, this time with a fresh set of **Dunlop** rain tires and a message to protect the tires to insure I could make it to the finish. For the duration of my stint, I was searching. Where it was wet, I was searching for grip. Where it was dry, I was searching for water to cool my tires. At no point could I relax. Every lap and every corner was something new. I felt more like a rally driver, making it up as I went along, than a road racer. After six



hours, I took the checkered flag 2nd in class SP8 behind the #139 Ferrari 458 and 36th overall. Of the 167 cars that started the race, only 113 made it to the finish!

What an awesome race with **Aston Martin** in the GT8! I am thrilled to pick up my first VLN series podium with such a great team and great co-drivers. The only downside to the weekend is I still have not had a chance to drive the GT8 on a fully dry track to see how my pace compares to the fast drivers that have driven the car before. I am left with only one option; I am heading back to the Nurburgring September 23 for the 57th running of the **ADAC Reinoldus Langstreckenrennen**. I hope the weather in the Eiffel will be more cooperative this time!

About THILENIUS GROUP

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