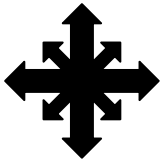




Hey! The 2015 ADAC Zurich Nurburgring 24 Hour was held May 16-17. This weekend in the **Racing4Research - Children's Tumor Foundation Rotek Racing Audi TTRS I** was joined by co-driver and **Rotek Racing** team principal Robb Holland, World Touring Car Championship driver Tom Chilton and Tony Richards from New Zealand. After winning the 6 hour qualification race at the Nurburgring in April, the team was optimistic about our chances for a class victory and a top 20 overall finish. Unfortunately, after fighting through many issues and getting a terrific start, we did not make it to the finish.

Since the previous race, the **Rotek Racing** crew had been extremely busy installing a new transmission, engine and livery on the SP4T class **Audi TTRS**. With preparations well in hand, I was looking forward to easing back into the car for practice and qualifying Thursday. Right from the start, things started to go sideways when Tony walked into the shop on crutches with a severely sprained ankle, the result of a fall at the Arc de Triomphe while playing tourist in Paris. Clearly being a tourist is much more dangerous than driving racecars. Tony was in good spirits, despite the loss of mobility getting in and out of the car.

Robb started the car in practice and immediately was on pace. I was hoping to pick up where I had left off in April when I got in the car, but never really felt comfortable during my two laps of practice. The plan was for Tony, in his first exposure to the TTRS, to run the remainder of the practice session. However, inspection of the car during the stop revealed a significant oil leak which sidelined the car for the rest of practice. To top off the day, Crew Chief Peter Lorg was injured when the front splitter dropped on his foot.



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The **Rotek Racing** crew did their best to address the oil leak and get the car ready for night qualifying. To add some additional drama, the constantly changing Eifel weather took a turn for the worse. In what is becoming a bit of a tradition, Tony's first laps in the TTRS were in the dark and in the rain. Despite the conditions and his ankle injury, Tony did a great job getting up to speed. As the track started to dry, Tom took the car out on **Yokohama** intermediate tires and set the fast qualifying time for the **Rotek Racing** TTRS, putting us on the provisional pole in the SP4T class. I stayed on intermediate tires and followed Tom to get my initiation to the Nurburgring in the dark. There was a mostly dry line on track, but it was still very wet off line and the shadows made it appear wetter than it actually was. Falling off the track at the Nurburgring has high consequences. I only had to run wide onto the wet a couple times before developing a high degree of respect for the varying grip levels on track.

After night qualifying, further inspection showed the oil leak was not fixed. The team took the car back to the **Rotek Racing** shop and pulled the engine to attempt a more permanent repair before the final qualifying session Friday morning. Robb woke up on Friday morning with the flu, but took the car out on a wet track to record his required two laps of qualifying. Tony drove the remainder of the session and got his first laps in the dry. Despite all our issues, Tom's lap from the first session held up and we secured the pole position for the SP4T class, 55<sup>th</sup> overall.

After qualifying, **Rotek Racing** made the difficult decision to buy and install a brand new engine in the car. The persistent oil leak had resisted all the team's repair efforts and it was too much of a risk to run the car for 24 hours in that condition. I am sure it was not an easy decision. I am impressed with the team's dedication and commitment to winning.

The ADAC Zurich Nurburgring 24 Hour started at 4:00 PM on Saturday. Robb was still decidedly under the weather, but took the first stint. Starting on the third row of the second starting group in the **Racing4Research - Children's Tumor Foundation Audi TTRS**, Robb stormed into the lead of the group and set to work distancing us from the other SP4T cars. After 8 laps, Robb pitted for gas, front tires and I got in for my first stint in the car. I soon found myself on an intermitently wet track on our **Yokohama** racing slicks. My race engineer, Nick Silvester, and I discussed pitting for rain tires. I wasn't exactly happy about it, but I made the call to stay out on slicks. Tony took over next and kept us in the lead in SP4T before handing off to Tom for a double stint. Half way into the second half of his double stint, while knocking on the door of the top 30 overall, Tom felt the engine tighten up on the





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long Döttinger Höhe straight. He coasted to a stop and jumped out of the car to escape a brief fire caused by engine oil on the exhaust.

When the engine failed 5:45 into the race, we had over an hour lead in SP4T. If the damage had been less severe, we could have returned to the race. Unfortunately, two holes in the engine block and what was left of a piston in the oil pan was beyond what the **Rotek Racing** team could repair. We made the best of the situation, had a few beers and headed out into the Eiffel Mountains to watch the race.

I enjoyed seeing the race from the other side of the guardrail, but cannot shake the feeling I have some unfinished business at the Nurburgring 24 Hour. I am also really disappointed I could not bring home some hardware for **Racing4Research - Children's Tumor Foundation** during NF awareness month. Not surprisingly, discussions have already started regarding the 2016 Nurburgring 24 Hour. I will be heading back to Germany later this summer to run a VLN race with **Rotek Racing** in preparation for next year. You should start making plans to head to Germany now. Next year's Nurburgring 24 Hour is less than 360 days away.

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