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Engine Failure Ends ADAC Total Nurburgring 24 Hour Race for Thilenius Group



Hey! So here is the problem, how do I write a race report for the 2019 ADAC Total Nurburgring 24 Hour race when I did not get to drive in the race? Going into the weekend, I was hoping for a strong finish in the SP8 class to put my crash in the 2018 race fully behind me. My co-drivers this year were Tony Richards from New Zealand and German drivers Jürgen Kroner and Marco Müller. Unfortunately, an engine failure in the **Aston Martin Racing GT8** ended our race almost before it began. Despite the disappointing result for the **GT8**, I enjoyed my time at the Nurburgring supporting my teammates' drive to victory in the SP8T class with the new **GT4 Vantage**.

The weekend started with a quick jaunt up the autobahn from Frankfurt. I checked into my hotel and headed over to the paddock to get reacquainted with the **GT8** and run my driving gear through scrutineering.

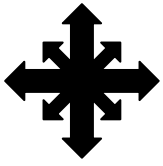
In order to stay awake as long as possible and acclimate to German time, I joined my co-drivers and the drivers of the two brand new SP8T **GT4 Vantages** at Adenau Racing Day. It was fun to represent **Aston Martin** and interact with fans before heading back to the Nurburgring for team photos.

Adenau Race Day



In practice on Thursday, rain started to fall as the session began. Tony ran two laps on a partially wet Nordschleife before turning the car over to me. The plan was to bed brake pad and rotors on the Grand Prix circuit before heading out on the Nordschleife. Unfortunately, the rain came down in earnest, ending our session and putting us behind on our race preparations.

The track dried for night qualifying. Marco began the session, followed by Jürgen and then Tony; therefore, it was quite dark by the time I headed out in the **GT8** to record my required two laps of qualifying. The loss of practice and the long layoff since my last laps at the Nurburgring showed. I struggled through my first lap, distracted by an issue with the transmission intermittently skipping gears on up shifts. The issue slowed the **GT8** dramatically, especially when the transmission skipped from fifth to seventh gear. I



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was more comfortable on my second lap, but had the transmission skip gears seven times. Additionally, a cooling issue and an off-center steering wheel did little to build my confidence; my 9:43 lap time was well off the pace.

With final qualifying on Friday, the **AMR Performance Centre** team set to work. They addressed the cooling issue and recalibrated the transmission. The crew installed a new set of **Dunlop** tires and I

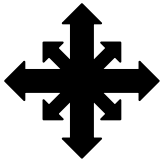
took to the track to assess the repairs. The recalibration helped, but did not completely eliminate, the shifting issue. The team let me run an additional qualifying lap where I posted a 9:29 to grid us fifth in class.

It was clear the shifting issue needed to be addressed. The crew replaced the **GT8** transmission in the workshop at the back of their home base at the **Aston Martin Racing Performance Centre**, located just down the road in Meuspath, while the drivers attended a wonderful reception in the front of the same building.

AMR Performance Centre



Following a good night of sleep, I rose early to run the final morning warm-up before the start. It is never a good when you “have” to run the warm-up, but we needed to know if



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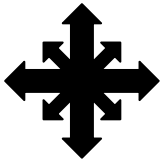
the transmission change had resolved the shifting issue. After five laps of the Grand Prix circuit, I was just about ready to pronounce the issue resolved when the transmission skipped gears accelerating out of the **Dunlop** curve. Hemi, my crew chief, called me in to the pits where they decided to change the transmission control module. Two more laps did not reveal any problems, but the crew called me called back into the pits after deciding to change the paddle mechanism on the steering column. Five laps later, I pronounced the **GT8** fixed. Hemi kept me out on the track for the remainder of the session. I took advantage of the track time to get comfortable with downhill run to the **Dunlop** curve and the Schumacher Esses, parts of the track not used in VLN races.

The drivers and the **Aston Martin Racing** team went to the grid confident. We nominated Tony to start the race, Marco would run second, Jürgen third and I would anchor the rotation. The grid for the ADAC Total Nurburgring 24 Hour race is an amazing experience with hordes of fans passionate about motorsports. Can you find



Dr. Ulrich Bez and Wolfgang Schuhbauer, two **Aston Martin** legends in the crowd?

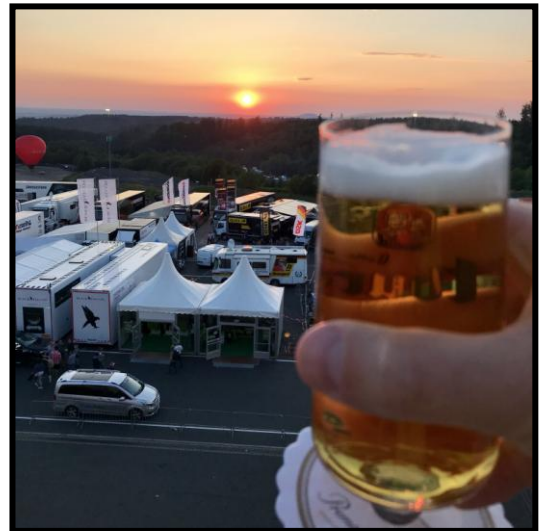
From the **Aston Martin** drivers' lounge, I watched Tony take the green flag. He did a brilliant job avoiding the predictable chaos in the first corner and quickly moved the **GT8** up the order in the SP8 class. Marco took over from Tony and showed a good



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pace before turning the car over to Jürgen. I dressed and headed down to the pits to be ready in case of emergency. The **GT8** was running flawlessly when the crew turned to me and told me to be ready in two laps. Moments later, the engine in the **GT8** had a catastrophic failure in Hatzenbach. And that, as they say, was that. Our race was over.

I have always said if you are going to blow up in a 24-hour race, do it early so you can get some sleep! It would have been easy to let the disappointment of the situation take over, but instead I decided to cheer on my teammates in the **GT4 Vantage** as they fought for victory in the SP8T class. From the comfort of the **Aston Martin** VIP lounge and the pit lane, I watched the #37 **GT4 Vantage** driven by Alex Brundle, Peter Cate and Jamie Chadwick drive to victory after recovering from a transmission issue which cost two laps early in the race. It is an honor to be part of **Aston Martin Racing**.



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, 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 Twitter at <https://twitter.com/ThileniusGroup>.