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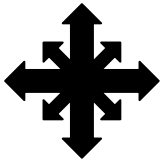
THILENIUS GROUP Finishes 12th in Rowe 6 Hour ADAC Ruhr – Pokal – Rennen



Hey! Early in September, I flew to Germany for the **Rowe 6 Hour ADAC Ruhr – Pokal – Rennen**, round seven of the Langstrecken Meisterschaft Nurburgring (VLN) series. In this race, I drove for **Adrenalin Motorsport** in a Cup 5 class **BMW M235i** with co-drivers Jon Miller, Lance Bergstein and Robert Van Husen. We recovered from qualifying P18 to run in the top ten and finished 12th after a late unscheduled pit stop.

After competing in the Nurburgring 24 hour race in May, I could not wait to get back to the Nordschleife. My friend and frequent co-driver Jon Miller raced with **Adrenalin** in a previous VLN, so when he asked me to join him, I jumped at the chance. Moving into the **BMW M235i** cup car is a big step forward from the V5 class **BMW Z4** I drove in the 24 hour. A well driven **M235i** is more than 30 seconds a lap faster than the **Z4**!

Getting up to speed in the **M235i** was my first priority, so I signed up for some additional practice on Friday with Lance. I had driven an **M235i** at the Nurburgring previously, but it was during the car's break-in period so I was limited to 5000 RPM and 80% throttle. The **M235i** is a completely different animal at full throttle and has mechanical grip galore. It took me a few laps of practice to get used to the high cornering speeds.



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Later in the day, I got my first experience with “taxi” laps at the Nurburgring. **Adrenalin Rentaxi** and many other teams racing in the VLN series offset their costs by offering people the opportunity to ride around the Nurburgring at speed in exchange for an armful of Euros. There is no way taxi laps could ever happen in North America! I paired up with a passenger for two laps and initially thought I would take it easy, but ultimately, I just went for it. My passenger was quiet the first lap, probably because he did not know what to expect. On the second lap, he screamed like a little girl when I launched the **M235i** airborne over Schwedenkreuz, but he was a trooper and kept giving me the thumbs up to push! I found a bit more speed despite the distraction.

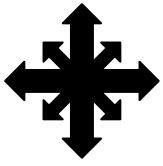
Based on my experience at the Nurburgring, the team decided I would run my required qualifying laps after Jon, Robert and Lance with the hope I could put the car near the front of the Cup 5 class. With over 150 cars on track, finding a clear lap was nearly impossible. I managed a 9:35 and a 9:31 on my first two laps. My third lap, a 9:27, was mostly clean except for traffic after Bergwerk and in Galgenkopf, probably the two worst places in a lap to lose momentum. 9:27 was the fastest qualifying lap we recorded in the **Adrenalin M235i** but was only good enough for 18th out of 22 Cup 5 class cars.



After a couple hours of rest, I rolled out for the pace lap to start the race. Starts at the Nurburgring are aggressive, so I made sure I was in the throttle well before I saw the green flag. On the run down to the first corner, it appeared most of the cars in front of me braked quite early. I had a fleeting thought I was vastly overestimating the grip from my tires, but found a gap on the inside and was able to pass a

handful of cars safely. Still on the Grand Prix circuit in the Mercedes Arena, contact amongst the leaders in Cup 5 resulted in a spin for one of the other **Adrenalin M235i** cars. I took advantage, swung around the outside of my teammate and in the melee picked up another handful of positions. By the time I entered the Nordschleife, I was in a comfortable gap between the lead pack and the cars I had passed.

Over the rest of my stint, I concentrated on consolidating my position. On the second lap, my teammate in the **M235i** that had spun on the first lap passed me on the long Döttinger Höhe straight. He had qualified well ahead of me, so I went to school and followed him closely until he pulled off with a transmission issue a lap later. For the remainder of my stint, I engaged in a top ten battle with the #672 **M235i**, trading the position back and forth on Döttinger Höhe each lap. The **M235i** punches a big hole in the air, so drafting by at over 250 kmph is quite easy. On my last lap, another **M235i** tried a dive bomb pass entering the first corner. He hit me on the left side, but then slid



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off into the gravel trap outside the corner. It was an overly optimistic move, especially early in a six hour race, but my car did not suffer any damage and I was able to pit at the end of the lap in P10.

Robert took over driving duties while the **Adrenalin Motorsport** crew refueled the car. Robert had good pace and kept us in P10 throughout his stint before turning the car

over to Lance next for his first race laps in the **M235i**. Despite numerous yellow flags, traffic and Code 60 zones, Lance turned in a solid stint, but fell back a few positions in the competitive Cup 5 class. Jon jumped in the car for the run to the finish and his pace moved us back up the order to P11.

In order to finish the race, we knew we would have to stop one more time for a splash of fuel. Our plan was for Jon to stay in the car because a driver change during the short fuel stop would cost us time, but I was ready in case Jon needed relief. Jon stayed in the car on the last stop, so I changed out of my driving gear and settled in the garage to watch the run to the checkered flag. With a lap to go, Jon suffered a severe cramp in his leg and pitted asking for relief. Unprepared, I dashed to the transporter to change back into my driving gear while the crew worked on Jon's leg. I returned in time to see Jon pull away, the cramp sufficiently worked out to enable him to drive the last lap. The extra stop ultimately cost us a two positions and we took the checkered flag 12th.

Overall, the race was a good introduction to **Adrenalin Motorsport** and the **BMW M235i** cup car. A top ten finish would have been nice, but I am satisfied with my pace. I ran the quickest laps in our car in qualifying and the race, but was still not on the pace of the front runners. There is more time in me and I would like to see some adjustments to the car to reduce understeer. Lastly, it seems I learn something every time I go out on track. Therefore, for the rest of my racing career, I will never change out of my driving gear before the end of the race. Lesson learned!



About THILENIUS GROUP

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