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THILENIUS GROUP and SR Motorsports by SchnitzelAlm Clinch GT2 European Series Powered by Pirelli Championship in Portimão

Hey! Heading into the final two races of the **GT2 European Series Powered by Pirelli** season at **Autódromo Internacional do Algarve** the **SR Motorsport by SchnitzelAlm** team held a small lead in the championship over the #62 Ginetta. It turned out to be a difficult weekend for both teams, but more so for the Ginetta. Two points finishes clinched **Pro-Am Cup Drivers' Championship** for **Jay Mo Härtling** and myself, the **SRO GT Academy Drivers' Championship** for Jay Mo and the **Pro-Am Cup Teams' Championship** for **SR Motorsport by SchnitzelAlm** in our **Mercedes-AMG GT2.**



My 2026 season started at Autodromo International Algarve in February with a win in the **GT Winter Series 6 Hours of Portimão**, so it seemed fitting to finish at the same track. I was fairly confident going into the weekend despite a series of travel misadventures on my way to Portugal. We shared the track on the official test day with Bronze rated GT3 cars and a setting sun that dramatically reduced visibility in a few corners making it difficult to get a clear lap. Running used **Pirelli** tires did little to build my confidence, but we did get some nice photos out of it.



In the first practice, the **SR Motorsport by SchnitzelAlm Mercedes-AMG GT2** was hooked up. Jay Mo set the fastest time of the day. I made progress on old tires pacing the #62 Ginetta through most of my stint before getting a brief taste of new **Pirelli** slicks. More laps on the new tires would have been nice, but a red flag ended the session prematurely.

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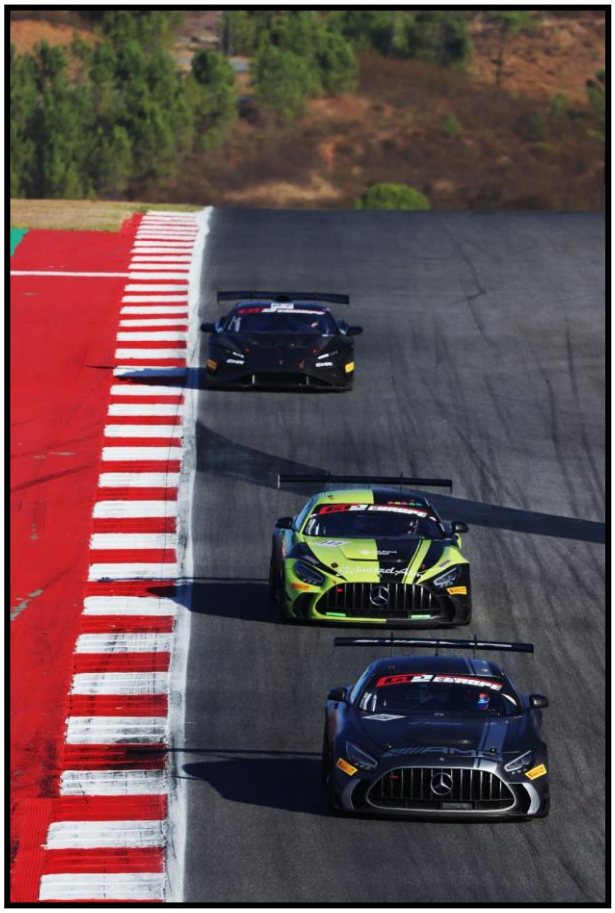
We were encouraged by the results on the first day heading into the practice and qualifying on Saturday. Back on used tires for the second practice, I focused on refining my line around the track. My qualifying session was interrupted by two red flags, one of which cost me my best lap and relegated me to 12th on the grid for the first race. Jay Mo had a more successful session qualifying 6th for race two.

Turns out, while we thought the undulating track through the Algarve hills was well suited to the **AMG GT2**, it was even better suited to the Maseratis that locked out the front row in both races. As a reward, Maserati earned a BOP (Balance of Performance) adjustment that helped to level the playing field heading into championship deciding races.



At the drop of the green flag in race one, I held position around the outside of the first three corners. Running the outside line pinned me to the inside of the #85 Maserati in Turn 4. I lost momentum down the following straight and the #115 AMG got a run on me into Turn 5 costing me a position. Perhaps I was a too conservative at the start, but with two races separated by only a few hours, I wanted to protect the car. The race soon settled down and I found myself sandwiched between the #115 AMG and the #27 Lamborghini. At this point, the #62 Ginetta was leading in Pro-Am. The #115 AMG and I were soon able to chase down

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the #7 Maserati and we both dove to the inside at the end of the long front straight. I set to work on passing the #115, while the #62 Ginetta, started to smoke in the corners. A lap later, I drafted the #115 AMG down the front straight and out-braked him into Turn 1, moving up to 5th in Pro-Am. 5th became 4th when at nearly the same moment, the smoke from the #62 Ginetta turned terminal and they ground to a halt at the exit of Turn 5.

SR Motorsports by SchnitzelAlm called me to the pit and I just managed to enter the pitlane before the safety car was announced. I turned the car over to Jay Mo, while our teammate **Willi Kühne** in the #110 **AMG GT2** stayed on track and worked his way into the overall race lead. I am unsure of how it all worked out, but once Willi turned the car over to his co-driver **Moritz Wiskirchen** and the safety car was withdrawn, Moritz was in the overall lead.

Jay Mo took the restart from 4th and Mortiz leapt out into a lead he would never relinquish. Jay Mo used the runoff on the exit of Turn 4 to build momentum and moved up to 3rd passing the #85 Maserati entering Turn 5. Unfortunately, the race stewards later decided Jay Mo had improved his position by driving off the racing surface and we were penalized 10 seconds at the checkered flag, dropping us to 5th in Pro-Am.



The finish brought a flurry of emotions. Obviously, I was disappointed with the stewards' ruling but absolutely stoked for Willi and Moritz to get their first win. I simultaneously felt sorry for the Ginetta team's misfortune while feeling great relief that the championship had been largely decided.

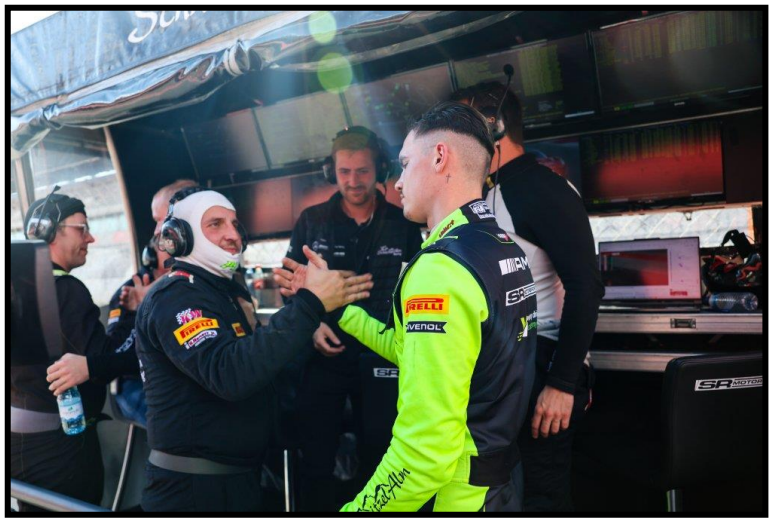
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Heading into the final race of the season, there was a mathematical chance for the #62 Ginetta to steal the championship, but they would have to win the race while we failed to finish. Despite that, everyone at **SR Motorsports by SchnitzelAlm** wanted a podium finish to end the season in style for ourselves and **Mercedes-AMG**. Jay Mo did his part at the start with an aggressive move up to 2nd from his 6th place starting position. Jay Mo consolidated his position chasing the #1 Maserati and holding off the #6 Maserati until he turned the car over to me when the pit window opened.



I returned to the track 2nd overall and 2nd in the Pro-Am class. With 12 minutes left in the race and the season, the #294 AMG made contact with the #898 KTM in Turn 5. The KTM was damaged and ended up in the gravel trap which brought out the safety car. While the stricken KTM was still being extracted from the gravel the race director decided the race would go green for one final lap. This is the point where total chaos broke out.

When the safety car accelerated out of sight the #1 Maserati hit the throttle leading the rest of the field into the last corner. As we exited the final corner, I discovered the safety car was still on the track! I checked up, unsuccessfully trying to stay behind the safety car until it reached the safety car line and bunched up the field. Some of the cars behind me improved their position before the start/finish line. Passing the safety car is a violation of the rules as is passing another car on a restart before start/finish. No penalties were ever doled out. Over the rest of the lap, I was still too conservative and dropped a few positions. Entering Turn 13, the #62 Ginetta got inside me. I left him space at the apex and got a good run heading into Turn 14. I made a lunge down the inside to attempt to retake the position, but unfortunately made contact with the #62 Ginetta. We both spun, but restarted and took the checkered flag.

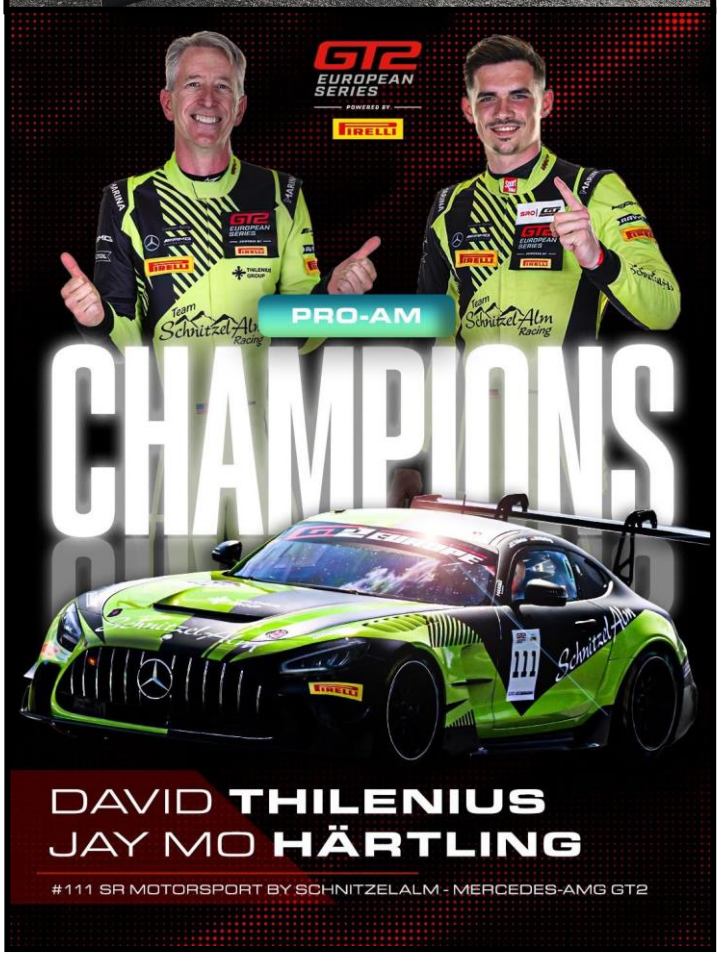


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The last lap certainly was not the way I wanted to end the season, but it does not take anything away from what **SR Motorsports by SchnitzelAlm** accomplished with our **Mercedes-AMG GT2**. Jay Mo and I secured the **GT2 European Series Powered by Pirelli Pro-Am Cup Drivers' Championship**, won three races, finished on the podium three other times and only finished outside the top five once. **SR Motorsports by SchnitzelAlm** took home the **GT2 European Series Powered by Pirelli Pro-Am Cup Teams' Championship.** To top it all off, Jay Mo won the **SRO GT Academy Drivers' Championship** and as a reward will be racing a full season of GT3 in 2027!



"It's incredible. I'm super happy. It was not the end we wanted. The season was good. We are Pro-Am champions and GT Academy champion." – Jay Mo Härtling



"I was a little confused on the restart. The cars in front of me passed the pace car which you're not supposed to do. I held off and then just got railroaded by a bunch of cars. I made some contact with the #62 car on the second to last corner. I feel really bad about that because they have raced us clean all year. But, hey, we're champions so we'll take it. I can't say enough about Jay Mo. There are a lot of good racecar drivers out there and Jay Mo is exceptional. He's fantastic. I may not be that fast, but I am good at picking co-drivers!" – David Thilenius

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