

**THILENIUS
GROUP**

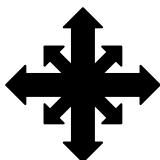
THILENIUS GROUP Returns to Competition in the Best Possible Way



Hey! After a COVID enforced absence of over a year and a half, May 8-9 I finally made it back to the Nurburgring for the **2021 ADAC 24 Hour Qualifikationsrennen**. My return to competition, along with co-drivers Charlie Postins and Lance Boicelli, ended in the best possible way with victory in the SP10 class!

The worldwide pandemic of 2020-21 forced many changes and my racing plans were not immune. After three seasons with Aston Martin Racing, the team from the Performance Centre in Meuspath decided to step away from racing in 2021 and I had to find a new team. My contacts put me in touch with **Walkenhorst Motorsports**, one of the best teams in the paddock. I jumped at the chance and quickly signed to race the **Walkenhorst BMW M4 GT4** in the qualifying race and the Nurburgring 24 hour.

After my extended sabbatical, getting back up to speed started with a warm-up session on the grand prix circuit and practice on the full track. Even though I had some prior experience with the **M4 GT4** through my involvement as a driving instructor with the **BMW Performance Center**, the warm-up was a great refresher, proved useful in working through some issues with my seating position and gave me a chance to evaluate different stability control settings. Stepping up to full track for practice, I focused on reacquainting myself with the Nordschleife. I certainly was not as relaxed as I should have been, but it felt great to be back on the greatest track in the world.



THILENIUS
GROUP



With practice behind us, Charlie, Lance and I prepared for the first qualifying session. Our **Walkenhorst** crew made a change to the rear damping that greatly improved the body motion control and Charlie laid down a lap that placed us third in class. We were not on the pace of the leading GT4 cars, but were still encouraged by our progress on our first new set of **Yokohama** tires.

After a good night's rest, I drove first in the second qualifying session early Sunday morning. A 60 kmph zone spoiled my first lap, but I found some clear track on my second lap and ran a 9:19.781 that ultimately qualified us fourth, three tenths of a second out of third.

Following qualifying it was clear our pace was off the leading BMW and Porsche in the SP10 class and our main battle was going to be with Aston Martin for third. We nominated Charlie to take the green flag. He quickly disposed of the Aston Martin under braking for the first corner and, by the end of his stint, was comfortably in third place about a minute behind the leading pair in SP10 and three minutes ahead of the Aston Martin in fourth.

Lance took over the driving duties at the first pit stop. Third place for the **Walkenhorst BMW M4 GT4** became second when the Porsche fell out eight laps into the race. Lance maintained our lead over the Aston Martin during his stint and kept us within striking distance of the leading BMW.



A little over two hours into the race, I finally got my chance. I belted into the car while our **Walkenhorst** crew flawlessly refueled the car and installed a brand new set of **Yokohama** tires. Working through traffic and slow zones caused by accidents, it took a while to settle into a rhythm. As a team, of course, we wanted a good result, but our



primary focus this weekend was to gain experience for the upcoming 24 hour race. The **M4 GT4** is approachable, but every racecar has quirks. Figuring out what it takes to be fast in a new racecar is a wonderful challenge. My race craft was a bit rusty after the long layoff, too. However, by the end of my stint, I started to feel like I could push the car and ran my quickest lap on the seventh of eight laps. I pitted from second place, on the same lap as the leading BMW and almost a full lap in front of the Aston Martin.

Charlie took over from me at the pit stop. I re-hydrated and then joined Lance in the pit box to watch the race unfold. A couple laps into the stint, live timing suddenly showed we were closing on the leading BMW and then in the lead when the leader stopped after 27 laps! We had been hoping for a place on the podium, so to be leading was beyond our expectations. Our race engineer, Enzo Scholz, relayed the good news to Charlie. Charlie consolidated our position until he had light contact with the barrier in Hatzenbach and started to feel a vibration in the rear suspension.

Erring on the side of caution, Charlie pitted after six laps to have our **Walkenhorst** crew inspect the **M4 GT4**'s suspension and hand driving duties over to Lance. The early pit stop meant Lance had to conserve fuel potentially to extend the final stint to nine laps. Fortunately, our track position relative to the overall race leader and our big lead over

the Aston Martin in second meant we were never threatened as Lance took the **Walkenhorst BMW M4 GT4** to the checkered flag.



There is simply no better way to return to competition than with a win! Charlie and Lance were great to work with all weekend and everyone at **Walkenhorst Motorsports** went out of their way to welcome us to the team. We need to find some pace in the **M4 GT4** to

be more competitive with the front runners in the SP10 class, but there is no way we can be anything but encouraged about our chances in the **2021 Nurburgring ADAC Total 24 Hour Rennen**, June 3-6. Fortunately, I do not have long to wait!

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, road racing 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>.