

2nd round of the GT4 European Series - Zandvoort

The second round of the GT4 European Series took place from 22.05 – 24.05 at Circuit Park Zandvoort in The Netherlands. The racetrack is located just next to the North Sea, in an area where weather conditions are changing from one minute to the next. Elevation changes, fast corners and bumpy asphalt makes Zandvoort quite a challenge for most drivers. Thomas had experience on the track from a race in the previous year, but with a much slower car than the Porsche 981 Cayman GT4.

Together with German team mate, Arno Klasen, Thomas started in the first free practice on Friday afternoon. For the race weekend, the team had brought some updates to the car, which was tested in the first session. A larger heck spoiler provided much more downforce, keeping the rear of the car stable in the fast corners. Some other set-up changes seemed to work as well, and both the team and the drivers were satisfied with the performance, even on very used tires.

The second free practice took place on Saturday morning, and the weather conditions had changed to rain. For Thomas it was the first time driving in wet conditions in the Porsche, but the lack of experience did not seem to have any effect. With top 3 lap-times during the whole session, driving on a wet track had proven to be a strong side from both the driver and the car.



For the qualifying session around noon, the track had dried up. The qualifying session is split into two qualifying's, one giving the starting position for Race 1 and the other for Race 2. Thomas was set to drive the first qualifying, and Arno would drive the second.

Thomas went out of the pit warming up the new set of slick tires, getting ready to push for a fast time on the next two complete laps. Unfortunately his fast laps were ruined by cars driving slow on their outlaps, not paying any attention in the mirror. Thomas went into the pit, waiting for the tires to cool down for a second attempt. In the second attempt to set a fast lap, Thomas ended on a disappointing 13th place. The grip of the new tires peak on the first 1-2 laps, making it very difficult to make a good lap time in the second attempt.

In the second qualifying, Arno could find a free gap on the track, setting a 7th fastest lap and a better starting position for race 2.

Saturday afternoon the first of the two 50 min races took place. From a 13th place out of the 17 cars grid, Thomas got a decent start holding his current position. After a half lap he could overtake the car in front of him in one of the sharp corners, which should prove to be a good corner for Thomas. With great performance, he could continue overtaking one car after the other in the same corner each lap. Suddenly Thomas found himself on a 2nd position in the AM class and 8th position overall, with a large gap to the followers behind. After 20 minutes of the race, the pit window opened, and the safety car went out on the track due to a minor incident. All the cars rushed into the pitlane to make the obligatory driver change. With a little trouble during the pit stop due to the many cars coming in pit at once, Arno rejoined the race losing one position. Continuing with good lap times he could take back the 2nd place which was also the position when the checkered flag dropped after 50 min of intense racing.

Thomas: *"I really enjoyed the race today, even though we started way back in the field. The car was driving perfectly and I was able to make many good overtakings after some tough and close racing. It's nice to finish on the podium once again, but I of course want to fight for the win. Today this was the maximum we could do, the guy who won driving the new KTM GT4 car was in another league. Our car is driving very well in the corners, but we are missing too much on the straights. This is something we will work on until the next race, hopefully we will be a bit closer to the horsepower to weight ratio of some of the other cars."*



Race 2 took place at 13:00 o'clock Sunday. The Pentecost weather showed it's good side with sun and mild temperatures. Starting from 7th position Arno made a brilliant start, moving up to 3rd overall and 1st in the class already in the first corner. The great performance lasted in another couple of laps, but the times quickly dropped when the tires started to overheat. Making an early pit stop Thomas jumped in the car and rejoined the race. Lying the most of the race in the 2nd position, Thomas was struggling with the car sliding on the overheated tires. He could keep the distance to the competitors, but with just a half lap to go, the gearbox got stuck in 4th gear and the car slowed down. He could barely continue but made it to the



THOMAS

checked flag, being passed by three competitors in the last couple of corners, finishing on a 5th place.

Thomas: *"I can not describe how disappointed it felt to lose my gearbox with just a half lap to go. I was struggling all race long and fighting to keep a decent pace on the overheated tires. Today I would have been satisfied with another 2nd place and a podium, but unfortunately it did not go that way. The team will fix the car to the next race and bring some upgrades to the engine, so now I am just looking forward and hopefully we will have better luck next time.*



Thomas next race will be in just under two weeks, when the GT4 Series will visit Red Bull Ring in Austria on the 05. – 07. of June.

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