

The opening round of the GT4 European Series 2016 - Monza

Thursday

With sunny weather and over 20 degrees, Thomas arrived at Autodromo Nazionale Monza already on Thursday before the race weekend, in order to make some early preparations with the team. The day was used on meetings with the engineers, practice of driver changes and in the end a walk around the circuit with the whole team. As this weekend would be the first time for Thomas to race on the legendary Formula 1 circuit, every information and previous experience from the team would come as a big help.



Friday

Friday morning, the first of the two 1-hour practice sessions took place. Thomas used the session to get familiar with the track, as well as doing some performance tests with the brand new car. He could already show some great speed by being the fastest of the 16 KTM drivers in the Reiter Young Stars.

For the second practice session in the afternoon, a couple of set-up changes had been done in order to optimize the performance of the car. The balance had been improved significantly, but Thomas experienced some problems with the gearbox when downshifting.

The very important qualifying session took place in the evening, with all 27 cars in the field battling for front-row positions. Unfortunately, the problem with Thomas gearbox had not been solved, and he was struggling to shift down in the hard braking zones. In the 15-minute qualifying session, he managed to put the car on an overall 17th place, which would be the starting position for Race 1.





Saturday

Through the night the mechanics and engineers worked on finding the problem with the gearbox, and some vital mechanical parts was replaced. Thomas started race 1 as 17th, right in the middle of the action down to the first chicane. Without any contact, Thomas made it through the first corner and started to advance some positions through the field. The problem with the gearbox seemed to be gone, as Thomas made one overtaking after another, suddenly finding himself on an 8th position after the first 25 minutes of the race. He then handed over the wheel to team mate Rebecca Jackson in a well-timed pit stop, who brought the car home on a 12th place after a long safety-car period. The 12th place was later replaced with a 10th place, after two competitors had been given time penalties.

Thomas: *"I had a lot of good fights and overtaking manoeuvres in the race today, I am happy that we sorted the problem with the gearbox, which really costed us a good qualifying position yesterday. With a lap time of 1.59,5 I did the fastest single lap of all 16 KTM drivers in the race, which is very promising. The point system in the Reiter Young Stars championship works by taking the average of the 5 best lap times during your stint. I finished on a 3rd place in the RYS championship today, as my average was compromised by the many battles and overtaking manoeuvres. Unfortunately, I only had 3 free laps without any traffic, which comes down to our bad qualifying. Besides my 3rd place, I am happy to celebrate my 23rd birthday today here at Monza."*



Sunday

For Race 2, Rebecca Jackson was at the wheel of the KTM GT4 for the first 20 min of the race, before coming in to the pit for a quick driver change. Thomas came out straight in traffic, having to pass a Maserati and a defensive driving BMW. After a couple of laps, the safety car came out, collecting the field after a smaller incident. When the race was restarted, Thomas was fighting with five other cars coming down to the first corner. His race unfortunately ended here, as a competitor crashed into his left rear wheel, breaking the wishbone.

Thomas: *"I feel really disappointed about the second race. My aim was to win the RYS cup, after showing great potential in the race yesterday. Luckily, I ended on a 4th place and collected some points, as the race was red flagged and stopped shortly after I was hit by the other car. I did not manage to drive any good laps before I was out of the race. I will take the positives with me for the next race, I know we can do better than this"*



Thomas currently sits on an overall 3rd place in the Reiter Young Stars championship, before the next round of the GT4 European Series at the French street circuit, Pau.

Next up

Thomas will be racing in VLN 2 on Nürburgring Nordschleife this weekend, teaming up with PROsport Performance in their Porsche Cayman V5.

Places to follow in 2016



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