

Racing in the streets of Pau

This weekend, Thomas Krebs took part in the second round of the GT4 European Series at Pau street circuit in southern France. It was the 75th edition of the Grand Prix de Pau, which takes place once a year on a track built in the centre of the historic city. Cold temperatures and rain ruled throughout the weekend.

Friday

The first free practice took place on Friday morning, where Thomas got 30 minutes in the car. Even though it was his first time on the narrow street circuit, he was quickly on the pace and did the fastest lap time of all 16 Reiter Young Stars drivers.

For the second free practice in the evening, the team had made some set-up changes to the car, trying to find more grip in the wet conditions. Everything seemed to go in the right direction, as Thomas once again could perform some strong lap times.



Saturday

The two qualifying sessions took place on Saturday morning. Teammate Rebecca Jackson did the first session, putting the car on 17th position of the 23 cars in the field. The first qualifying session would set the starting position for Race 1, whereas the second session would set the starting position for Race 2. Thomas did an overall 5th fastest time in his qualifying, best of the KTM cars.

Thomas: *"I was struggling a bit to find a gap among the other cars in the qualifying. With 23 cars on the 2,76 km long street circuit, it is difficult to get a free lap. I did my fastest time on my last lap, where the rain started to increase. If I would have had a free lap earlier in the qualifying, I believe I could have done even better. Nevertheless I am happy that I did the fastest time of the KTM cars, which is the most important thing."*

The first race of the weekend would be a night race, starting on Saturday evening at 20:50 just before the sun went down. The circuit had dried up, and for the first time this weekend, the teams could fit slick tires on their cars. Rebecca started the race, and managed to avoid any crashes in the opening laps. After the first half of the race the pit stop window opened, and at the exact same time the rain started to pour down once again. During the driver change the team had to make a fast decision and switched to rain tyres. Thomas went out on the track in difficult conditions, trying to set the fastest lap times possible to score points in the Reiter Young Stars championship. During his stint, he had to avoid a big crash at the end of the straight, when a competitor blocked an overtaking in the last second. He had to use the escape route, and turn around 180 degrees. Fortunately, nothing happened to the car, and he could re-join the race. In the end, Thomas ended on an overall 13th position in the GT4 field and 4th in the Reiter Young Stars Championship.



Thomas: *"What a thrilling and difficult race. Driving in the dark on a narrow and wet street circuit is a huge challenge. You really have to keep a high concentration level in order to avoid hitting the wall. We had a good pace throughout the race, as I was the fastest KTM driver on rain tires. Unfortunately, I was only able to finish 4th in the Reiter Young Stars, as the 3 drivers in front of me were driving their stint on a dry track with slicks. Therefore, this was the maximum we could achieve today, and we still collected some good points for the championship."*

Sunday

Sunday morning the race track was still wet, but the rain had stopped. Only moments before the start of Race 2, the sun started to dry out the track, and all teams rushed to fit on slick tires to their cars. With half wet half dry conditions, the scene was set for a challenging race.

Thomas made an unfortunate start to the race, as he spun on the formation lap and hit the barriers with both the front and rear of the car. He was able to continue to the starting grid, and the team had just a few

minutes to repair the car. With a lot of tape to hold the bodywork together, as well as a new rear wheel, Thomas was able to continue as the green light was given to start the race.

Thomas lost one position in the start, but was able to keep up with the front of the field on 6th position. The track improved from lap to lap, and Thomas showed great pace. Unable to make a move and overtake the cars in front, he focussed on driving consistent and fast lap times, improving his chances in the Reiter Young Stars Championship. After 30 minutes he handed over the car to Rebecca in the pit stop, who brought the car home on an overall 6th place after a long safety car period. By doing the fastest lap times of the race, Thomas achieved his first win in the Reiter Young Stars. He is currently leading the championship by 5 points.



Thomas: *"I'm not sure whether I should be happy or angry. I'm extremely gutted because of my accident in the formation lap, I normally never do mistakes like this. I was focussing on getting some heat in the cold slick tires, and suddenly I made too much wheel spin and lost the car completely on the wet surface. Fortunately, I could continue and the team was able to fix the car just before the start. The damages will have to be completely fixed back in the workshop, which will cost a lot of money. I hope we are able to find some more sponsors in the next couple of weeks, so that we can continue for the rest of the season. On the positive side, I won the Reiter Young Stars today by being the fastest of all 16 drivers. I showed great pace the whole weekend and collected enough points to go from 3rd to 1st place in the championship. It was nearly impossible to make any regular overtaking on the narrow street circuit, and I focussed on driving fast lap times which payed off in the end."*

Places to follow in 2016



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