

Racing Report 12H BRNO & Creventic 2015

Our ultimate goal for the 12H BRNO was unanimously agreed: the overall team championship for Hofor-Küpper Racing and overall driver championship for me. We had already had secured the Ladies' Cup during the previous round at Barcelona.

Having been granted International Series status by the FIA at the end of 2014, Dutch agency CREVENTIC, promoters and organizers of the 24H SERIES powered by Hankook were able to award points for their races for the first time this year.

My uncle Martin Kroll and my father Michael Kroll evaluated the different scoring scenarios and we quickly realized that achieving our goals would not be easy and that we were in need of professional support for the team. The reigning ADAC GT Masters Champion Sebastian Asch agreed to join the SLS team and Michel Schaap completed the drivers on 'Bob', the name given to Küpper Racing's BMW. All we needed was a bit of luck on our side ... or tough luck for our competitors!

So let's take a look at the full Creventic season to learn how we did when it came to winning the Ladies Cup, the driver's championship and the A5 class team championship.

24H DUBAI

We had already decided to participate in the 24H Dubai with the SLS car and Bob. The cars were already on their way to Dubai, when the FIA decision was made public. Following discussions with my father I decided to only drive Bob as the GT3 competition seemed to be very strong and the number of cars on the rather short track seemed plenty.

Roland Rehfeld joined the SLS team as 5th driver together with Michael Kroll, Roland Eggimann, Kenneth Heyer and Christiaan Frankenhout. In hindsight my decision not to start on the SLS was as good as the SLS already dropped out within the first hour.

Bob's team with Bernd, Martin and myself was complete with Sarah Toniutti and Hal Prewitt. Hal contacted us because his usual hosting team, Cor Euser Racing, would not be travelling to Dubai. Bob finished its race when Martin crossed the finish line on P1. The first 30 points for Hofor-Küpper Racing, Martin, Bernd, Hal, Sarah and I!

12H MUGELLO

We started Mugello with two SLS cars and Bob. Michael, Roland, Kenneth, Christiaan and I were listed on the two SLS cars. Bernd and Martin were supported by Lars Zander on Bob. I consciously decided to drive on both SLS. Before I had only competed in one race (24H BARCELONA 2014) and wanted to concentrate on and gain more experience with the gullwing.

One SLS was placed in the A6 PRO rating and the other one in the A6 Amateur rating, although the Amateur ranking would result in less points. And this is exactly what happened. We won first place with the 'Amateur SLS' and received only 16 instead of the full 20 points for P1. The second SLS in the PRO class won P3 and thus also 16 points. It was rather fun to learn that if necessary my father fits into Christiaan's seat shell although getting out is much less elegant.

The race was very exciting for Bob. During the race all A5 cars had difficulties and there was only an overall gap of two to three laps. Lars and the car in third position went overboard into gravel and lost precious time while waiting for the pizza courier to clear the way in the rescue lane (no joke!) Our competitors faced further difficulties and so we were able to cross the finish line first! But sadly Bob got a time penalty for using the short cut to the box and therefore officially finished on P2 (18 points).

12H ZANDVOORT

We chose the same setting for our race in the Netherlands – same cars, same drivers. A novelty, however, was the strategic support by Wim and Esmée from Wim Mechanical Support. Based on tactics I decided to list myself not on the two SLS cars, but instead only on one SLS (#9 in A6 AM) and Bob. With winning the Ladies Cup in mind, I calculated that driving in two different classes could result in higher chances of collecting points.

The first part of the race- three hours - on Friday went by quickly and without difficulties for Bob and the #10 SLS. However, things were not so easy for the #9 SLS: Roli spun in the rain and was lucky not to crash and afterwards Christiaan got pushed into the gravel by another vehicle. After three difficult hours the car crossed the finish line on P41.

The next morning it was my turn to do the restart in the #9. At first I was nervous but could focus and then enjoyed myself. The car felt good and I was able to keep up with the other SLS before me. The last half hour of the race was very exciting. #10 was fighting to stay upfront, closely followed by the Ram Racing SLS. Ram Racing lost time at the gas station and could not catch up again with Christiaan. Overall victory!

Bob was also in battle for the class victory. We were glued to the screens watching the car's live stream and the live timing as Bernd was trying to catch up with the leading Peugeot Altran. Bernd was 36 seconds behind and drove like hell. Each round he gained time! Unfortunately, for him the checkered flag waved a few laps too early, so Bob finished shortly after the Peugeot on P2 (18 points). I am happy to cite from my race report: Bernd that was awesome!

With the points from Zandvoort, Martin and Bernd were almost leading the overall driver standing with me right behind them. In addition I was leading the Ladies Cup but with a stale taste to it as my main rival, Liesette Braams, could not compete in the series anymore due to a cancer diagnosis. Once more, "Liesette, I wish you a lot of strength and energy to fight the cancer and I'm looking forward to the promised hug in Dubai and our future battles on the track!"

24H PAUL RICARD

For the 24 hour race in France we listed one SLS and Bob. Küpper Racing had brought the BMW 'Olli' as t-car for Bob and we decided to list it for the race as well, to increase our chances. Unfortunately, we had to take Olli out of the race after a couple of hours.

Based on our tactical calculations, we saw a possibility for overall victory with the SLS listed in the class A6 AM. As A6 AM the cars are allowed 50kg less of weight and to refuel 120 liter during the race, however you have to stick to minimum lap times of 2:13.000 min. Additionally during the free practice we observed that no one was able to go much faster with all cars on the track. Christiaan started from P12 and moved up to P5 when some of the opponents had an earl stop. In the next stint Kenneth reached P1. But then the "Fuel Low" sign flashed. Based on our calculations he was supposed to have fuel for 15 minutes more so he continued the race. But, the "Fuel Low" sign was correct, and the car stopped without fuel only 35m before the pit entry. In the next stint the car stuttered already after 105-107 liters, so there was definitely a bug in the fuel system. Our benefits were gone. The A6 AM strategy did not work out for us and in addition we lost the ABS and got hit by another car. After 24h the SLS finished only on a disappointing P13.

Luckily my dual car strategy enabled me to collect points with Bob. And with Bob we were clearly more successful despite several repairs! Together with our guest drivers Sergei Paulavets and Fabrice Reicher, Bernd, Martin and myself finished P1: 30 points :-)!

24H BARCELONA

In Spain we attacked with one SLS and Bob. This time we had ensured that the fuel system worked and decided to list again in the A6 AM class with the minimum lap time of 1:55.000 min. Due to heavy traffic the other GT3 could not go faster and there were a lot of code 60 phases that fit perfectly into our strategy. With this setting and without bigger incidents Christiaan, Kenneth, Michael, Roli and I were able to finish as overall second (27 points), very close to P1...

This time, Bob ran out of luck. In the rollout on Thursday the engine failed after 8 laps. Marco Mostert (Küpper Racing) had planned to come by plane. The situation required a fast change of plans. He organized a bus, loaded a new engine, picked up Ron, our electronics guy, and drove overnight to Barcelona! 2.5 hours after the engine arrived, the Küpper team had installed the new engine and tuned electronics. So Bob was back on track for the free practice at 16:30pm. A couple of minor configurations were required and Bernd qualified for P3. Night practice and the race start went well and Bernd, Martin, Ronny, Sergei and myself drove our laps. But then trouble started with several hits and long tow and repair times. With a mad race to catch up, we finally gained P4 (21 points).

These 21 points secured the team championship for Hofo-Küpper Racing in the A5 class! And increased our chances in the overall team standing, as well.

The points for P2 with the SLS were higher than for P4 with Bob, thus I not only secured the Ladies Cup but suddenly I was also leading in the overall driver championship! High time for tactical simulations and scenario modelling....

12H BRNO

For Brno I was again listed on two cars in two classes: on the SLS #10 together with Christiaan, Kenneth, Sebastian and my father Michael, and on Bob together with Martin, Bernd and Michel. Hofo Racing also listed the second SLS, #9 with Roli as 5th driver instead of me. Frederick Vrancken filled in for Wim who was busy with car testing in the US and joined us on Saturday

One of my main competitors in the overall driver championship was Hal Prewitt (Yes, the guy who earned his first 30 points with us in the 24h DUBAI!)

When Hal realized his chances to win the championship title, he upgraded both Cor Euser Racing vehicles with fast drivers. Our calculations showed, if he achieved a class victory and a 1st and 2nd place, Hal would win the title. As usual, Cor Euser Racing was our box neighbor so there was a lot of teasing going on. Throughout the whole Creventic season, our teams had shared adjacent pit boxes and kitchens and became friends. Several times Hal came over saying nervously that everything was possible for both of us.

The race went almost without a hitch. There were very few yellow flags or code 60 phases. The leading cars performed incredibly consistent and fast lap times. At the end the #10 SLS missed the podium with P4 and the #9 finished on P9.

Bob also had strong competition. Starting from P4 we gained P2. The leading car from Duck Racing Car had almost the same lap times and it was difficult to get closer. Then, suddenly and only about 20 minutes before the end of the race, the came in for repairs. We were only three laps behind! How long would they be in the box? Hopes raised, however our competitor got back on the track still one lap ahead... so P2 for us. With P2 Hofo-Küpper Racing lost the overall team championship to another team. The disappointment was huge!

With my points for P2 only one other person could challenge my overall championship – Hal. His two cars were really, really fast and my chances dwindled. But then both his cars had problems and needed several pit stops and repairing. After 6 hours a class victory for Cor Euser seemed out of reach. But they continued their fight and were catching up, lap after lap. However, overall they had lost too much time.

The Championship

In the last race, I had won the overall driver title in the 2015 24H SERIES powered by Hankook!!!!

This title was not my achievement alone! My co-drivers, Küpper Racing, Widberg Motorsport and WIM Mechanical Support heavily contributed to make this happen! Without all of you, I would never have come so far! I thank you all for your support in various ways such as: Incredible lap times, inspiring coaching, encouragement, smooth pit stops, preparing and repairing the vehicles, brilliant strategies, fast refueling in sun and rain, providing wheels, safe transport of the cars, setting up and maintaining the boxes and other facilities, cooking, massaging, making me laugh, 'Kicking my butt' from time to time and everything else necessary!

I thank my boyfriend, my family, and my friends, all our fans that wished us luck and sent their congratulations or encouragements and our sponsors! Thanks to race-media.tv for great summaries and Klaus Kuhne and Dirk for the splendid photos!

But above all, I thank my father Michael and Uncle Martin. My father for introducing me to racetracks about 10 years ago and infecting me with the race bug. And my uncle for launching the adventure Hoфор Racing with us! I enjoy this shared hobby with you and wouldn't want to miss a single second of it! (Well ... except maybe a couple of crashes ... those we could have done without ;-)) And thanks to my mother and Martin's wife Claudine for giving us their license to drive!

I'm looking forward to our end of season party!

Ganz liebe Grüsse
Chantal

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Thanks to my father Michael Krolls, my uncle Martin, Bernd Küpper, Kenneth Heyer, Christiaan Frankenhout, Roland Eggimann, Sebastian Asch, Lars Zander, Sergej Paulavets, Ronny Tobler, Hal Prewitt, Michel Schaap, Fabrice Reicher, Sarah Toniutti, Carmen Groß und Anni, Kevin Kuepper, Chiara Küpper, Manuel Kabelitz, Marcin Patan, Patrick Weiser, Marco Mostert, Stefan Mostert, Mark Latta, Burkhard Strauß, Harald Poth, Stefan Hannes, Laura Brönnner, Bruno Gerber, Roland Zbinden, Gaby Zumstein, Rene Zumstein, Anthony Schermesser, Etienne Grütter, Jane Rau, Marco Maggi, Francesca Maggi, Domenico Russo, Mattia Di Caprio, Remo Kaufmann, Phippu Marti, Sandra Zuber, Kevin Mathys, Claudio Marti, Nicola Maggi, Steffen Wutke, Pascal Meili, Kurt Stampfli, Sarah Ruetsch, John Kristof, Hanspeter Stern, Wim Everaerts, Esmée van Zijl, Frederick Vrancken, Thomas Diefenhardt, Heike Thümmeler, Klaus Kuhne, Dirk Schmidt

