

PRESS RELEASE

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Janis McDavid: No arms, no legs – with Space Drive to the racing license

Joystick racer Janis passed the "National A" racing license at the Hockenheimring with flying colors and is now ready for the next step as a racing driver thanks to the innovative drive-by-wire system Space Drive and 4-way joystick.

- » Passed the exam for the "National A" racing license, as the first driver with the Space Drive driving and steering system and a 4-way joystick
- » Janis McDavid: "That was a special moment for me, to stand here now and know, hey I have the racing license!"
- » Important contribution to the promotion of inclusion in motorsport and at the same time motivation for others



Janis McDavid has done it! First theory, then practice, on a track together with DTM title aspirant Sheldon van der Linde. Photo: PARAVAN

"It was a great feeling to drive into the pit lane and be presented with the racing license by the examiner," reports Janis McDavid, who has been participating in road traffic with his own car for over ten years completely without arms or legs, after the exam drive at the Hockenheimring "It was a special moment to finally hold the racing license in my hands after all the excitement and training of the last few days."

It was the successful conclusion of a very eventful day that ended for Janis McDavid with the presentation of the certificate for passing the "National A" racing license exam. "Here's your proof of passing the exam, which you can now use to apply to the DMSB for your license," said Christopher Bartz of the Motorsport Academy. "You learn very quickly and can implement things directly on the race track. One or two more training sessions to work on your line, then you'll be ready to enter motorsport."

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Janis McDavid has been on the road with his Mercedes Sprinter since 2010 and with a V-Class for just over a year. The 31-year-old world explorer, motivator and author, who was born without arms and legs, actually wanted to become a motorcycle policeman. The dream of independent mobility became reality thanks to PARAVAN. In the meantime, McDavid has covered well over 400,000 kilometers. He can drive with the help of Space Drive with a 4-way joystick that is mounted so that he can control it with his armpit. "But a Sprinter isn't really such a sports car," says Janis McDavid at the time.

Nearly three years ago, he came to PARAVAN and saw the GT cars equipped with Space Drive and a Force Feedback steering wheel standing in the production hall and said to Roland Arnold, "To drive around the racetrack in a car like that once, that would be it." The PARAVAN founder hesitated only briefly and shortly thereafter gave the go-ahead for a unique project. A BMW E46 M3 was individually converted for Janis, and an extra seat shell was adapted. Janis needs an extremely firm grip so that his body is always securely fixed to the joystick, even during the fast turns on the race track.

"The adaptation was a big challenge, that he can act in the car like a race driver. Janis drives everything completely via a 4-way joystick, i.e. for steering, accelerator and brake. We also installed controls for the secondary functions, which he can use to steer the car safely," says Roland Arnold, who invented the Space Drive system, which is still unique today, 20 years ago. Since 2019, the Steer-by-Wire system has been tested on the race track and further developed under extreme conditions.

The joystick racer made his first driving tests on the ideal line with his new company car under the guidance of 5-time DTM winner Bernd Schneider at the Hockenheimring. He was immediately impressed by how quickly Janis McDavid was able to implement what he had learned on the race track. "It was super exciting, I was highly concentrated and nervous. I didn't really feel the fun factor at the time," Janis McDavid recalls. "Hitting the racing line was a big challenge for me at first." In 2022, a presentation drive followed as part of the DTM in Zolder, Belgium. "Driving in front of an audience - a professional audience - for the first time was exciting. It was incredibly fun to drive along the grandstand and be cheered on and realize for myself - what a project together with PARAVAN. Who would have thought it was possible without arms and legs. An indescribable feeling!"

The experienced driver was nevertheless excited for his test drive: Are my driving skills sufficient? How is it with other drivers together on the track? Will I get out of the car fast enough? Can I remember all the flags and signs? There were a lot of things going through Janis McDavid's mind the day before the test, and he handled the task brilliantly. "Driving with the examiner was very challenging. Some tricky situations on the track really made me sweat," he says, visibly relieved and also a little proud after his exam drive.

In the morning, the theory test was on the agenda, which he passed with flying colors. Then it was off to the 4,574-meter-long Grand Prix circuit in Hockenheim with its 17 curves. What was new: He was not alone on the track, but with experienced drivers right up to DTM title aspirant Sheldon van der Linde, who was doing his last laps before the season finale. At first, instructor Christopher Bartz drove in front and set the racing line. After a good ten minutes, there was first a red flag, because another vehicle had broken down on the track and the track had to be closed briefly.

The race coach used the time of the unscheduled pit stop to sit next to Janis McDavid in the car and take the test directly. "Two corners were particularly challenging, I had to get my head around those," Janis McDavid reports. "About the other faster cars, at the same time with me on the track, I was a little worried at the beginning, after all, I do not like to be overtaken..." After just under an hour, Janis McDavid had his license in his pocket.

"He's able to implement everything he's learned extremely quickly," Bartz reports. "Especially the safety, in the implementation with faster traffic. You have to say, when there's a DTM car like that passing him, those are speed differences, they're gigantic. Janis was also able to adapt very quickly in a very short time, and let the car pass on the safe side."

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For Janis McDavid, passing his racing license was an important next step and seeing what's to come. "I'm hoping there's an opportunity to use my racing license as well and we can find a racing series where that's possible." But first he wants to keep training and get even more confidence on the track, for example at trackdays with others on the track. "It's important to set an example that also encourages others," he says.

For Christopher Bartz, Janis was the first driver with a handicap. "I think that's great that something like this is possible with the appropriate safety regulations. It was actually like it always is, maybe a little spacy when the steering wheel turns on its own. But as long as he moves safely on the track and the safety regulations are followed, I would ask why not?" For Roland Arnold, it is very important to show that people with handicaps can also participate in such competitions on the race track. "For us, it's about showing that this is also technically possible - thanks to our Space Drive system."



Done, now Janis McDavid can apply for his racing license at the DMSB. Another important step towards equal inclusive motorsport. Photo: PARAVAN



Final instructions. Race instructor and instructor Christopher Bartz from the Motorsport Academy with a final briefing before license acceptance. Photo: PARAVAN

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Space Drive calibrated, everyone properly strapped in, radio communication established - last check before the big moment. Photo: Marko Tarrach



Mr. Steer-by-Wire - himself driving the race car on the track - also gives Janis McDavid final tips. Photo: Marko Tarrach



Janis McDavid mastered the course on the 4,574-meter-long traditional track with its 17 curves with flying colors., Photo: Marko Tarrach

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About Paravan GmbH:

Paravan GmbH is the world market leader for highly customized vehicle solutions for the disabled. Around 180 employees develop and produce individually adapted automobile conversions, power wheelchairs. Paravan pursues a holistic approach with the "all-in-one concept". The technological highlight is Space Drive, an intelligent digital control system based on the drive-by-wire principle. Thanks to the active redundancy of the servo motors, it is completely fail-safe and the first in the world to be approved for road use. With the help of this innovation, severely disabled people, some without arms or legs, can drive independently and safely. It is not possible for these drivers to simply intervene in the steering wheel. Worldwide, Space Drive has proven itself on over one billion road kilometers in the last 18 years and is used by numerous industrial customers for test vehicles in the field of autonomous driving. The system is available as a retrofit kit with an open interface for all known vehicle types. www.paravan.de