



Media Information
America's Cup
20th April 2017

Motorsport legend Alessandro Zanardi taking different tracks: BMW works driver describes his experience on board of ORACLE TEAM USA's America's Cup yacht "17" as "breath-taking".

- **BMW works driver Alessandro Zanardi visits the America's Cup Defender ORACLE TEAM USA (OTUSA).**
- **Zanardi enthused about his trip on the "AC-50" yacht: "That was one of the most breath-taking experiences of my life."**
- **BMW Motorsport engineers developed special steering wheel for the ORACLE TEAM USA catamaran for the America's Cup – using their know-how from their work with Zanardi.**

Hamilton (Bermuda). With preparations for the 35th America's Cup in full swing, ORACLE TEAM USA and skipper Jimmy Spithill received a visit from a big name from the world of motorsport: BMW works driver Alessandro Zanardi visited the team base in Bermuda. The Italian experienced the "flight over water" of the OTUSA "AC-50" high-tech yacht "17" as it completed a high-speed training session off the coast of Bermuda.

"Whilst you may refer to this yacht as a 'boat', I see it more as a plane – this yacht can really fly. The day on this race yacht was a fantastic experience, and I am very grateful to Jimmy and his crew for accepting me into their ranks," said Zanardi. "That was one of the most breath-taking experiences of my life, and I have experienced quite a lot. I would like to thank BMW for this unique opportunity! To spend a day as a member of ORACLE TEAM USA was something very special for me. Jimmy Spithill is a true legend and I have always been a big fan of what these sailing teams are doing. It demands maximum physical effort from every single crew member – as intensive as an athlete at the Olympic Games. I am very impressed. You can feel the same dedication and attention to even the finest details as in motorsport."



“It was great fun having Alex on board as a crew member today. His reaction was just pure delight. He loved it,” said skipper Jimmy Spithill. “Although we compete in different sports, we still have a lot in common. Technology, innovation and precision – they are the key in motorsport and competitive sailing. It was very interesting to chat to him about the similarities between our sports. Alex is a true inspiration to any athlete. What I admire most about him is what he achieved after his crash. It did not mean the end of his career, but instead took it to a new level. Not only did he continue as a racing driver after the crash, but he also became a Paralympic champion. I don’t think anybody else has achieved that. He is living proof that you can achieve anything if you have the determination, enthusiasm and, above all, passion. That is precisely our approach to the America’s Cup.”

The innovative steering wheel on the ORACLE TEAM USA catamaran, “17”, was developed by engineers at BMW Motorsport who also design the steering wheels for Zanardi’s BMW racing cars. The Italian had both legs amputated following a serious crash during a race in 2001. His BMW race cars are adapted to his particular needs using special modifications. For example, the BMW Motorsport engineers have developed technically sophisticated steering wheels, which allow Zanardi to control the cars predominantly using his hands. As a result, when it comes to handling, speed and performance, he need not settle for anything less than his fully able-bodied competitors. The expertise of the BMW Motorsport engineers in the development of this and other race steering wheels has now been incorporated in the design of the steering wheel on the OTUSA catamaran, “17”.

BMW Brand Ambassador Zanardi is an inspiration and idol to his fans around the world. Despite having had both legs amputated, he has not only enjoyed success in motor racing, but also as a para-athlete. He currently has no fewer than four Paralympic gold medals and has won eight world championship titles on his handbike. He is also passionate about water sports: Zanardi has a yachtmaster ocean licence and often takes to the water.

The 35th America’s Cup regattas take place from 16th May to 27th June 2017 on the “Great Sound”, a natural sailing stadium off the coast of Bermuda.



When Legends Meet: Zanardi's visit to ORACLE TEAM USA on video.

You can find a film with impressive footage of Zanardi's trip with ORACLE TEAM USA on the America's Cup catamaran, "17", at the following link:

<https://youtu.be/CyKNnaYe7U0>

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