



Media Information
24h Spa-Francorchamps
29th July 2017

After four hours: ROWE Racing team in the top 10 at the 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps.

- **Number 98 is the best-placed BMW M6 GT3.**
- **Last year's winners Maxime Martin, Philipp Eng and Alexander Sims suffer defect.**
- **Strong catch-up by Markus Palttala.**

Spa-Francorchamps. Four hours have passed at the "Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps" (BEL), and the ROWE Racing team had a scary moment in the opening stage. A defect with the #99 BMW M6 GT3 forced Alexander Sims (GBR) to stop for repairs, which saw last year's winning team lose several laps to the front-runners. This makes the number 98 sister car the best-placed BMW race car after 93 laps of the "Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps". Tom Blomqvist (GBR), Bruno Spengler (CAN) and Nick Catsburg (NED) are in seventh place after four hours of racing.

Like in their 2016 victory race, Sims, Maxime Martin (BEL) and Philipp Eng (AUT) started the 69th edition of the Ardennes marathon from 11th on the grid. Martin, who drove the opening laps like last year, delivered a flawless performance in his first stint. Before the race, the DTM driver completed a demo lap in the new BMW M4 GT4. The car will be with customer teams for race action in the 2018 season.

After just a few laps of the "Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps", Martin in the number 99 BMW M6 GT3 established himself in the top 10. After an hour, he made a scheduled pit stop. Sims took over before his wheel fastening broke on the first lap after the stop.

In the sister car, Catsburg started from 42nd on the grid. Before he handed the number 98 BMW M6 GT3 over to Spengler on lap 24, the 2015 Spa winner made up a total of 14 positions. The first two yellow and safety car phases then came during Spengler's first stint. The 2012 DTM champion made up further



places. Blomqvist followed at the wheel and worked his way up into seventh place.

Markus Palttala (FIN) also put in a strong driving performance. He started the race from 41st on the grid in the number 35 BMW M6 GT3. With great determination and fantastic overtaking manoeuvres, he made up 20 positions in the first hour, before handing the car over to Matias Henkola (FIN) in 21st place on lap 25. After Christian Krognæs (NOR), it was BMW Motorsport Junior Nico Menzel (GER) who took to the track and completed his first race kilometres on his Spa debut. The fourth BMW M6 GT3 in the field, whose cockpit is shared by Henry Walkenhorst (GER), Stef van Campenhoudt (BEL), David Schiwietz (GER) and Ralf Oeverhaus (GER), was in 48th place after four hours.

Quotes after four hours:

Alexander Sims (#99 BMW M6 GT3, ROWE Racing): “Halfway down the Camel Straight it was clear that something was not quite right with the car. It was going sideways slightly and then in braking it did it again. Within two corners, the wheel was loose. I just nursed it back to the garage to try to not damage the car. The guys did a good job fixing the car fairly quickly. I guess we lost about ten minutes. It is a real shame to have something like that so early in the race but you’ve got to keep going and see how the race evolves.”

Nick Catsburg (#98 BMW M6 GT3, ROWE Racing): “It was very difficult to start from 42, to be honest. We did not even gain many places in traffic at the beginning. The temperatures were very high, I think higher than the whole weekend, and so we were struggling with the tyres a bit. I just tried to stay out of trouble, to have no contacts, to take no silly risks. Now we have moved up pretty well through the field and we just need to keep on going like this.”

Markus Palttala (#35 BMW M6 GT3, Walkenhorst Motorsport): “We started from 41st position, with 40 cars in front and 20 cars behind, so it was pretty busy. I was side by side with Nick Catsburg through the first corner, Eau Rouge and after that there were some good battles. Actually it flowed pretty well. I overtook some cars and soon made it into the top 30. It was a good first stint, clean, no mistakes and I gained a few positions. The car is good, and the stint was good to get into the rhythm for the race.”



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