



Media Information  
24h Spa-Francorchamps  
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## **Walkenhorst on sensational victory with the BMW M6 GT3: “This win means an awful lot to every one of us.”**

- **Spa win the greatest success in the history of BMW customer racing team Walkenhorst Motorsport.**
- **In an interview, team owner Henry Walkenhorst discusses his emotions and the key to success.**
- **Perfect collaboration between team, BMW works drivers and BMW Motorsport.**

**Munich. The biggest success in the history of Walkenhorst Motorsport so far is the sensational victory at the iconic Spa-Francorchamps (BEL) 24 Hours. After 24 hours and 511 laps of racing, the BMW customer racing team from Melle near Osnabrück (GER) came home ahead of all the high-class teams from other manufacturers. The #34 BMW M6 GT3, driven by BMW works drivers Philipp Eng (AUT) and Tom Blomqvist (GBR) together with their team-mate Christian Krognæs (NOR), crossed the finish line in first place. The BMW success was rounded off by a fine second place for the ROWE Racing #99 BMW M6 GT3 which, like Walkenhorst Motorsport, is a customer team supported by BMW Motorsport.**

The owner of the Walkenhorst Motorsport team is Henry Walkenhorst (GER). He is a racing driver himself and was also in action at Spa. Walkenhorst and his team-mates Ralf Oeverhaus (GER), Anders Buchardt (NOR) and Immanuel Vinke (GER) finished fifth in the AM-Cup and 38<sup>th</sup> overall. In an interview, Walkenhorst speaks about his team's victory, his emotions as success was secured, and the factors behind a result of this magnitude.

### **Mr. Walkenhorst, a sensational victory in a thrilling race. How did you feel in the closing minutes?**

Henry Walkenhorst: “It was obviously very exciting. We had actually planned for me to do the final stint in our second BMW M6 GT3. However, I gave that a miss, as I was really very tense. When you are on the cusp of achieving such a big success, I think that everyone in the team feels the same. Like me, every one of us was



trembling with excitement. I was very, very nervous and was pacing up and down. I could not sit still during the final stages.”

### **Has what your team achieved with the BMW M6 GT3 at Spa-Francorchamps sunk in now?**

Walkenhorst: “I have comprehended what we achieved, but it still feels really sweet. It sometimes takes a little longer to sink in. It is definitely a very nice feeling. I am already looking ahead. As team principal, it is my job to already be thinking about the upcoming races and perhaps even the seasons ahead. You have to strike while the iron is hot. This win means an awful lot to every one of us in the team.”

### **This was your first appearance in the PRO class as a private team, and you beat the other manufacturers’ works teams at the first attempt. How did you pull that off?**

Walkenhorst: “I don’t think you can sum that up in one sentence. The decisive thing is simply not to make any mistakes and to have a good strategy. It is standard procedure for everyone to line up with a well-prepared car. I think the combination we had this year was crucial. BMW Motorsport gave us great support, we had superb drivers, all of whom were flawless. We had perfectly-prepared cars and a different strategy to what many would perhaps have expected from us. We were progressive and repeatedly opened up a gap of 10 to 15 seconds. However, we were also aware that that could be wiped out by a relatively large number of safety car periods. In the end, we came away with this fantastic result.”

### **At what point in the race did it dawn on you that the win was a distinct possibility?**

Walkenhorst: “You obviously start hoping relatively early in the race, then you spend the rest of it biting your fingernails. We are VLN specialists and, unfortunately, have also had results over the past three, four or five years, in which one or other of the cars has had to retire on the final or penultimate lap, there has been a technical issue, and so on. You really get your hopes up in the last two hours, and then it gets closer and closer. After the final pit stop it was clear to us that we had a very good chance of winning, provided the technology held up. And it did.”

### **You mentioned the support you received from BMW. What form did that support take, and how important was it?**



Walkenhorst: “You cannot put it into percentages. We have enjoyed a close relationship with BMW for years. Over the past eight years, we have consistently built up our little team. We have had a bit of bad luck on a few occasions in the past. The support was taken to a new level when we entered the GT3 racing scene. That started with the BMW Z4 GT3. We ran that car for three years. We are now in our third year with the BMW M6 GT3. This is top-class sport and you obviously need a good engineering back-up, which we receive from BMW. In this case, the superb driver line-up obviously also helped. The interaction and trust in each other are important. You don’t just get given someone like Philipp Eng or Tom Blomqvist. I think BMW knows which teams they are going to allocate certain drivers to. You have to have a very decent and trustworthy partnership to be given that kind of opportunity.”

### **Philipp Eng, Tom Blomqvist and Christian Krognés: How would you describe your three winning drivers?**

Walkenhorst: “Christian has always tended to hide his light under a bushel. That is simply because he is yet to record the kind of results at such special races as the one at Spa-Francorchamps or the Nürburgring 24 Hours, which would attract a lot of media attention. That aside, Christian Krognés is the record hold with our BMW M6 GT3 on the Nordschleife. He set the lap record in 2016. He is one of the very best drivers – very level-headed and very focussed, but also a privateer, who is obviously not able to take his place in the car for races and practice sessions every week or fortnight. With that in mind, his performance here must certainly be rated just as highly as the absolute top performances delivered by Tom Blomqvist and Philipp Eng. For those three days, they spoke about nothing else. They exchanged ideas, brooded over data and were focussed. It is this down-to-earth attitude and commitment that make Tom and Philipp so special. We already knew we could expect that from Christian.”

### **You are team principal and racing driver. However, you are also a BMW dealer. What does this victory mean to your everyday job?**

Walkenhorst: “My main job is obviously a BMW dealer. With everything going on, you cannot forget that. Our idea, years ago, was to combine professional racing with our business, so that more people would buy sporty BMW cars from us. Refined models with M Performance parts. Forming this link is important to me, not just as a team principal but also as a BMW dealer. And it is working very well. The customers say: If Walkenhorst is actively involved in motorsport, and is doing well, then he is probably better than others. That is, to a certain degree, our approach. It has worked well in



recent years. We have been able to convince our customers that we can be successful in motorsport. As a result, we have seen an increase in sales of M cars, such as the M240, M3, M4 and M5. This win will obviously allow us to play this card to an even greater extent.”

### **What next for your team?**

Walkenhorst: “This weekend, we are straight back to business at the hillclimb here in Borgloh – one of the biggest hillclimbs, which is being staged for the 51<sup>st</sup> time this year. This is our home race, right on our doorstep, just three kilometres from the team headquarters. We will compete in the individual classes there with the BMW M6 GT3, BMW M4 GT4 and the BMW M235i Racing. We are also providing the Race Taxi. We have modified a BMW Z4 GT3 and fitted a passenger seat for that purpose. That is obviously fully booked and we are raffling off places. Our guys returned home on Monday night, reassembled the cars on Tuesday, then we head to the hillclimb on Thursday. The two races are on Saturday and Sunday. After that, in mid-August, we have the next VLN race, at which we will field a full team and two BMW M6 GT3s, a BMW Z4 GT3, a BMW M4 GT4 and two BMW M235i Racings.”

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