



Media Information

DTM

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### **Victories, titles and spine-tingling moments: the personal highlights of the BMW DTM drivers since the comeback in 2012.**

- **The realignment of the platform marks the end of BMW's nine-year works involvement in the DTM.**
- **BMW DTM drivers past and present recall their own 'Best Moments'.**
- **Emotional moments, from the first tests to the most recent past in the 2020 season.**

**Munich. Last weekend's finale to the 2020 DTM season at Hockenheim (GER) saw BMW Motorsport contest the last races in a unique era stretching back nine years. BMW returned to the DTM with a works programme in 2012, but the realignment of the platform has brought this works involvement to an end - sufficient reason to look back on the greatest successes, highlights and emotions from the past nine years.**

The 'old DTM' was closely associated with BMW. It all began in 1984 with the very first DTM race and victory for Harald Grohs (GER) in a BMW 635 CSi at Zolder (BEL). In the 1980s and at the start of the 1990s, BMW had a works presence in the DTM. During that time, the Bavarian manufacturer claimed the Driver title three times with Volker Strycek (GER), Eric van de Poele (BEL) and Roberto Ravaglia (ITA). BMW also won the Manufacturers Championship seven times between 1984 and 1990. To this day, the BMW M3 remains the most successful touring car ever.

BMW returned to the DTM with a works programme in 2012. The statistics for the past nine years: 140 races, 40 victories, 124 podium finishes, three Driver titles and three Manufacturer titles. However, far more important than the bare figures are the memories behind them. With this in mind, BMW DTM drivers past and present cast their mind back over their most emotional moments in the series.

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### **The initial tests: when it all began.**

BMW drivers were experiencing emotional moments long before the start of the 2012 season. “There were obviously a lot of special moments, but the first test was certainly one that stands out. I was the main test driver and was involved in preparing for the return to the DTM,” recalled Augusto Farfus (BRA), who competed for BMW in the DTM from 2012 to 2018. For very personal reasons, Farfus also associates these first tests with emotional memories as at the very same time as he was in Europe working on the BMW M3 DTM with BMW, his daughter was born in Brazil. “That was a very important time in my life,” he stressed.

Bruno Spengler (CAN) also has fond memories of the winter of 2011/12. “My very first DTM test with BMW was definitely a highlight for me,” he confirmed. “It was very exciting to get behind the wheel of a BMW DTM car for the first time. The entire development period was a super time when we all did a great job as a team and developed a winning car.”

### **2012: Title treble in comeback year.**

A winning car – the BMW M3 DTM was precisely that. The comeback season in 2012 was a sensational year, ending in a title treble. Spengler was champion driver, BMW Team Schnitzer won the Team title, and BMW triumphed in the Manufacturers Championship. No wonder Spengler has so many fond memories of that special year.

“One stand-out memory is the Lausitzring, where we claimed the first victory for BMW since returning to the series, together with BMW Team Schnitzer. It was a great team, in which I always felt like part of a family. That first win for BMW was very, very emotional and special for me,” said Spengler. Joining him on the podium was Farfus, who also lists this as one of his finest moments: “Bruno’s victory and my third place were an important milestone for BMW and for me personally.” A little later, Farfus climbed onto the top step of the podium himself. He not only took his maiden DTM victory at Valencia (ESP), but also secured pole position and set the fastest lap of the race: “At the time, I think it was rather unique for a rookie to come into the series, to be competitive from the word go, and to be so successful in the first year.”

However, the biggest highlight of 2012 was still to come: Spengler’s victory at the finale at Hockenheim (GER), and the ensuing titles for him, his team and BMW. Even today, the Canadian still gets goosebumps when he thinks about that day: “I had to win the race to win the championship. For us then to win all three titles was a very

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emotional moment. I remember driving into Parc Fermé and how I was given such a great reception by all the mechanics and engineers who had worked so hard. That was very special.”

Spengler’s team-mate back then was Martin Tomczyk (GER), who also looks back on 2012 as “one of the best years”. “Partly because Bruno, with whom I had battled for the title the previous year, was now my team-mate. We were both in a promising position – for me, it was about defending my title. For him, it was an opportunity to win his first title.” However, instead of rivalry, what developed was a strong team spirit. “We valued and respected each other. Together, we actively helped BMW find its feet so quickly and successfully in the DTM era. It was a very formative year for me, and obviously a successful year for BMW. Generally speaking, the team spirit we have within BMW is outstanding. That is not only the case in the DTM, but that solidarity runs throughout the entire BMW Motorsport family and all of BMW’s activities.”

### **From top rookie to two-time champion.**

Marco Wittmann (GER) made his DTM debut in 2013, and the young German immediately showed that he was one to watch out for. He secured his first pole position, claimed his first podium finish, and ended the season as the best rookie. In the following season, 2014, the BMW M3 DTM was replaced by the BMW M4 DTM, and Wittmann really hit the ground running. He took his maiden DTM victory and the first win for the new car at the season-opener at Hockenheim. Further successes were to follow before he wrapped up his first DTM title at the Lausitzring (GER) in race eight of the ten-race season.

“The first title in 2014 was obviously the ultimate highlight. It was extremely emotional and to this day remains the greatest success of my motorsport career,” said Wittmann. Two years later, in 2016, he was crowned DTM champion for the second time. “That title was far more difficult than in 2014, as it went right down to the final race of the season. However, we still had a really good season. We did not make a single mistake, neither the team nor me, and that is ultimately what won us the title. It is extremely difficult to make it through a full season without making any mistakes. And becoming the champion for the second time was obviously a nice confirmation that the first title was not just a flash in the pan. That was also very special and very emotional.”

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However, even the two titles are not top of Wittmann's personal highlights list. "There is one moment that, from an emotional point of view, I would actually rank even higher: winning my home race at the Norisring in 2018," said Wittmann. "It was just such a special feeling to win my home race in front of my home crowd, then to run down the start/finish straight and celebrate the victory with all the fans, my family and friends. Standing on the top step of the podium afterwards was also a very special moment. That is something I will remember for the rest of my life."

Speaking of the Norisring, Spengler also associates a special and very important moment with the narrow street circuit: "That was in 2019, when I celebrated my fifth victory at that racetrack. That made me the DTM record winner at the Norisring, and was also a very special and emotional moment."

### **Hockenheim 2018: The edge-of-your-seat duel.**

One race that will probably go down in motorsport history books for eternity was the Sunday race at the opening round of the 2018 season at Hockenheim. The battle between Timo Glock (GER) and Gary Paffett (GBR) is still regarded as an absolutely epic duel, and no review of the DTM would be complete without it. The scrap between Glock in the BMW M4 DTM and the Mercedes driver lasted eleven nerve-racking laps, or 50 kilometres, with the lead changing hands no fewer than six times. All in all, Glock and Paffett spent 119 seconds wheel-to-wheel. That is a distance of roughly six kilometres – and at a top speed of 271 km/h. With five minutes of the race remaining, Glock finally emerged triumphant and went on to win the race.

It should come as no surprise that Glock lists this battle as "probably by far the best moment" of his DTM career. Even today, he is emotional when describing the scenes. "As far as driving is concerned, that was an absolute highlight for me. I was under constant pressure for 20 long minutes. As a DTM driver, you always have high adrenalin levels, but I think these 20 minutes surpassed everything. It was very, very intense. As a racing driver, it is simply fantastic to go up against someone who is on a par with you. You feel like two knights facing off, battling it out with a sword – but letting the other person live."

That is what made that duel so special, even through all the wheel-to-wheel action, it was all done fairly. "There were obviously certain moments when there was contact and a little aggression, and I thought to myself: 'Hey, he is crashing into me. What's that all about?' However, in the same breath, I knew that I had done exactly the same

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thing. There were so many emotional factors that all came together to make it so special. We have all been involved in races, in which we have had battles like that for tenth place, but not for the win. To come out on top in the end was an absolute highlight for me, and one I enjoy looking back on.”

### **The Class 1 turbo era and dreams come true of a first victory.**

In 2019, the DTM introduced Class 1 regulations with turbo engines – exactly 50 years after the first BMW turbo made motorsport history by winning the European Touring Car Championship in 1969. The BMW M4 DTM now lined up in the DTM with a turbo engine, and Wittmann promptly presented the new race car with its first pole position and maiden victory at the season-opener at Hockenheim.

The second race weekend of the season at Zolder (BEL) saw another BMW driver climb onto the top step of the podium after the Saturday race: Philipp Eng (AUT). The Austrian, a works driver since 2016, had previously won the 24-hour races at Spa-Francorchamps (BEL) and Daytona (USA) with BMW – now here he was on the top of the DTM podium in his second DTM season. “When I crossed the finish line, all I could do was scream,” Eng recalled. “That was a huge weight off my shoulders. Ever since I started out as a racing driver, I had always wanted to win a DTM race. It was a huge relief for me personally. Not because I was put under pressure by anyone or anything else, but because I really, really wanted it. One thing is certain, I will never forget my first DTM win.”

One year later, in 2020, his younger team-mate Sheldon van der Linde (RSA) followed in his footsteps: The 21-year-old claimed his first DTM victory at Assen (NED) – from the very back of the grid. This was undoubtedly the highlight of van der Linde’s career so far. “I will never forget it. I was so emotional when I climbed out of the car. Especially as I had started from last on the grid – victory was the last thing we reckoned with. On the day, everything played out exactly as we needed it to. I am proud that I can now say I am a DTM winner. When I joined the DTM, my two main objectives were to finish on the podium and to win races, and I have achieved both those goals this season. Under the circumstances we were faced with this year, including the fact that Audi was stronger than us, I think this was a very special success and one that I will always be proud of.”

Van der Linde is also proud that he was part of the Class 1 era in the DTM. Like many of his BMW DTM colleagues, he said: “These cars are so impressive to drive.



Pushing them to the limit at full throttle is something really special. Not many things will live up to that. I will really miss my BMW M4 DTM.”

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