



24h Spa-Francorchamps

**Strong opening phase for BMW Sports Trophy Teams at Spa-Francorchamps 24 Hours.**

Spa-Francorchamps (BE), 27<sup>th</sup> July 2013. A hot opener at Spa-Francorchamps (BE): In the first part of the 24-hour race held at the Belgian circuit, four BMW Z4 GT3s successfully settled into the group of front-runners, securing promising positions for the remainder of the endurance classic.

Marc VDS Racing's number 3 and number 4 cars led the race during the first four and a half hours, with temperatures reaching up to 30 degrees Celsius. After two safety-car periods and several incidents, Markus Palttala (FI) in the no. 4 BMW Z4 GT3 is running in second. Earlier on, his team-mates Nicky Catsburg (NL) and Henri Moser (CH) had also been on driving duty. Bas Leinders (BE) is at the wheel of the fourth-placed number 3 car, alternating with Maxime Martin (BE) and Yelmer Buurman (NL).

It is not only the Marc VDS Racing cars that are running strongly in the Ardennes: The same goes for those of Vita4One Racing and TDS Racing. Frank Kechele (DE), Greg Franchi (BE) and Stefano Colombo (IT) hold seventh with their number 26 BMW Z4 GT3. TDS drivers Henry Hassid (FR), Ludovic Badey (FR), Pierre Thiriet (FR) and Mathias Beche (CZ) are currently placed ninth.

Dirk Müller (DE), last year's winner, Andrea Piccini (IT), and Jens Klingmann (DE), however, suffered a dose of bad luck. After Piccini had put the number 14 Marc VDS Racing BMW Z4 GT3 back into the top ten during his opening stint, Klingmann had to retire shortly after the driver change due to a drivetrain problem. The number 43 ROAL Motorsport BMW Z4 GT3 is running in 37<sup>th</sup>.

Up to now, the safety-car was deployed on two occasions following accidents at the "Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps".

**Maxime Martin (Marc VDS Racing, #3 BMW Z4 GT3):**

"Our pace is okay, and we are running in a promising position. However, there's still a very long way to go. Anything can happen – and this is what a 24-hour race is all about. It has been really hot in the cockpit, but this wasn't a major problem."

**Markus Palttala (Marc VDS Racing, #4 BMW Z4 GT3):**

"The race has been running quite okay for us so far. Shortly after the start we were lucky, when a car spun in front of our car and Nicky Catsburg narrowly avoided a crash. We are trying to keep our speed up, but without taking too many risks. That's the key to being successful in a 24-hour race. Many, many kilometres are in front of us. So it wouldn't be wise to risk too much when lapping or overtaking."

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