



BMW Motorsport

Alessandro Zanardi shines in his return to Brands Hatch.

Brands Hatch (GB), 18th May 2014. BMW works driver Alessandro Zanardi (IT) made a successful return to Brands Hatch, but this time in his BMW Z4 GT3 entered by ROAL Motorsport. The scene of his handbike wins in the Paralympics witnessed him finish fifth overall in the circuit's main race of the second round of the 2014 Blancpain Sprint Series. What made this result even more spectacular was that he had started from 17th after finishing the earlier qualifying race in this position.

However, Zanardi did not only have to beat the other competitors, but also had to battle to keep himself cool, something made very difficult due to wearing prosthetic legs. A jubilant but hot and tired Italian said: "Man it was tough. At least with the handbike I could breath. It was literally like a pan fire. At the beginning of the race it wasn't that bad because I had my cooling stuff, which was working, but then 25 minutes into the race it was arrivederci, so I just had to fight in the car. It was one of the toughest things I have done on wheels, either three or four. But we can make it better because there is a bigger bag available for cooling. Even if the car goes up five kilos that will turn into bigger tenths for us if I can cool my body down. One funny thing about the result is I hate number 17. In Italy it is the unlucky number. I even like number 13, but I guess at 47 years of age it is about time to get rid of this type of superstition."

The two hour-long races were held in perfect weather conditions and a start from sixth on the grid for the qualifying race gave the Italian hope for a good result. However, contact on the first lap and then a spin put paid to his hopes. As the pit stop window opened, which is from 25 to 35 minutes into the race, he was eighth and setting fast lap times. His stop went according to plan, however, on lap 22 a spin on the outside of Clark Curve not only saw him beached in the gravel, but also brought out the Safety Car. He made a couple of pit stops to deal with lose bodywork and eventually finished in 17th and four laps down.

His explanation of what happened in the qualifying race was: "I managed to stay out of trouble in turn one, but then in turn two I was on the outside and I think somebody hit the Ferrari and threw it up against me. It was a racing accident, typical first or second turn. I happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Other than that the car was still good and I was doing my race. The performance was there, especially when we corrected the tyre pressures at the pit stop. But unfortunately on that lap I was close behind the Lamborghini and I thought the corner was over, but I just understeered a little wider onto the marbles and it was just everything happened in the blink of an eye. Basically the car understeered over the marbles, I checked the throttle, lost the back and hell broke loose. You don't get any points by being fast, You get points by finishing in the top ten."

The honour of being the highest placed BMW car went to the BMW Z4 GT3 of BMW Sports Trophy Team Brazil of Sergio Jimenez and Caca Bueno (both BR) who finished third in both races. The two races were also both won by Hari Proczyk (AT) and Jeroen Bleekemolen (NL). Usually two drivers share each car, but the regulations allow handicapped drivers like Zanardi, who had both his legs amputated, or category Bronze drivers over the age of 30 to compete by themselves.

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