



24h Spa-Francorchamps

BMW Teams lying in wait after the top 20 qualifying – Four BMW Z4 GT3s in the fight for the Superpole.

Spa-Francorchamps (BE), 25th July 2014. The BMW teams are ready for the 24-hour race in Spa-Francorchamps (BE). In qualifying and the subsequent Superpole, the six BMW Z4 GT3s secured promising starting positions for the classic in the Ardennes. In the individual time trials for the top 20 on Friday, four BMW Z4 GT3s finished in ninth, 11th, 14th and 15th. Laurens Vanthoor (BE, Audi) secured pole position with a time of 2:18.710 minutes.

The best BMW driver was Nick Catsburg (NL) of Team TDS Racing. He lapped the 7004-kilometre track in 2:19.334 minutes on his fastest of two qualifying laps and, with his team-mates Jens Klingmann (DE), Henry Hassid (FR) and Pierre Thiriet (FR), will start the race from the fifth row of the grid. The second-best BMW driver was Maxime Martin (BE) of BMW Sports Trophy Team Marc VDS in the number 66 BMW Z4 GT3. The Belgian achieved a time of 2:19.497 minutes at his home race on the Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps, a track steeped in tradition. This sees Martin, who recently celebrated his first DTM victory in Moscow (RU), along with team-mates Augusto Farfus (BR) and Jörg Müller (DE), start from row six of the grid in the endurance classic.

The other BMW drivers also rose to the first challenge of the weekend. Dirk Werner (DE), Lucas Luhr (DE) and Markus Paltalla (FI) finished 14th in the number 77 BMW Z4 GT3 of BMW Sports Trophy Team Marc VDS. They were followed by Alexander Sims, Oliver Bryant, Andrew Smith and Alasdair McCaig (all GB) in the BMW Z4 GT3 of Ecurie Ecosse. The quartet from Great Britain secured 15th on the grid in the Superpole.

A few places behind came the BMW Z4 GT3 of ROAL Motorsport, whose team manager is Roberto Ravaglia (IT). Car number 43, shared by Stefano Comandini, Eugenio Amos, Stefano Colombo and Michela Cerruti (all IT), will start the race from 35th. The French quartet of Eric Clément, Benjamin Lariche, Nicolas Armindo and Olivier Pla in the second Team TDS Racing car finished qualifying 46th.

While BMW Sports Trophy Team Marc VDS is in the Pro Cup category, the BMW Z3 GT3s of TDS Racing, Ecurie Ecosse and ROAL Motorsport are all in the Pro-Am Cup. The marathon in the Ardennes, which is part of the Blancpain Endurance Series, gets underway on Saturday at 16:30 CEST.

Nick Catsburg (TDS Racing, Number 12 BMW Z4 GT3, 9th):

"It's great to have made it into the top ten and to be the best BMW. In our Pro-Am class we are even starting in second place. I didn't think this would be possible after we had a few problems in practice. But our engineers made a few great improvements that paid off. The car felt good in qualifying. Many thanks to the entire team. Now we go into the race with the aim of winning the Pro-Am class."



Maxime Martin (BMW Sports Trophy Team Marc VDS, Number 66 BMW Z4 GT3, 11th):

“Overall my qualifying lap was ok. The car felt good. On a quick lap we are beatable, but over the whole distance we are definitely in with a chance. In the second sector, with its many bends, we are the fastest in the field, which is very reassuring, and that's where we can attack. Eleventh is a good grid position for tomorrow. The grid position isn't decisive in a 24-hour race. What's important is moving up through the field, and if we manage that we can aim for a top result. I'm very confident about the race on Saturday.”

Dirk Werner (BMW Sports Trophy Team Marc VDS, Number 77 BMW Z4 GT3, 14th):

“That definitely wasn't the result I was hoping for. I couldn't quite manage the same time as yesterday, so that's why I'm a little bit disappointed. We need to work out the reason for this. Nevertheless we are well prepared for the race. Starting from 14th, Lucas Luhr, as our first driver, will have to keep out of the many duels that will take place at the start and make it safely through the fray. If we drive a clean race we are in with a good chance. This grid position for the 24 Hours of Spa is ok. We'll have to wait and see what the weather has in store. After the first stints tomorrow we will see how good our chances are.”

Alexander Sims (Ecurie Ecosse, Number 79 BMW Z4 GT3, 15th):

“We will have to battle with a slightly nervous rear throughout the weekend. However, 15th on the starting grid is a very good result. We might have been able to be a bit quicker, but this grid position for such a long race is ok. In the tightly packed midfield it will be important to make it through the first laps without any incidents.”

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