



BMW Motorsport

A new challenge: BMW works driver Alessandro Zanardi to compete in the classic 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps.

Munich (DE), 17th March 2015. In 2015, Alessandro Zanardi (IT) and BMW Motorsport will tackle a new exciting adventure together: The BMW works driver will compete in the 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps, the classic endurance race in the Ardennes mountains. This was announced in Munich (DE) today, on the eve of the 2015 BMW Group Annual Accounts Press Conference. The event in the Double Cone building at BMW Welt, which was attended by members of the board of BMW AG and about 150 invited representatives from the financial and economic media, saw BMW Brand Ambassador Zanardi present an insight into the projects he will be undertaking with BMW this year.

The 67th edition of the famous race at the “Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps”, with a long tradition dating back to 1924, will be held from 25th to 26th July 2015. It will be the first appearance in a 24-hour race for Zanardi, who had lost both of his legs in a severe accident in 2001. From 2003 to 2009 he successfully competed in the FIA European Touring Car Championship (FIA ETCC) and the FIA World Touring Car Championship (FIA WTCC) with BMW Motorsport. After a break of four years he returned to racing in 2014 as a BMW works driver and competed in the Blancpain Sprint Series in a BMW Z4 GT3 modified to his special needs.

The participation in the top category of the 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps, however, will mark a new challenge for Zanardi and BMW Motorsport: for the first time ever, Zanardi will share the cockpit with other, non-disabled drivers. The task for the technicians at BMW Motorsport was to find solutions to modify the BMW Z4 GT3 in a way that allows driver changes within a very short time. During the pit stops, the car must be adapted to the different needs of a driver with legs and a driver without legs as fast as possible. For this reason, BMW Motorsport is developing special components for accelerating, braking and changing gears. Zanardi’s team and team-mates will be announced at a later date.

“We are really excited to take on this great new adventure with Alex”, said BMW Motorsport Director Jens Marquardt. “In his 2014 comeback season with the modified BMW Z4 GT3 he once more demonstrated that everything is possible if you bring determination and technical know-how together. To participate together in the 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps is the next milestone in our long and close partnership. For sure, it is not an easy task to develop the modifications which are required when Alex shares the cockpit with other drivers. But is a great challenge for our engineers at BMW Motorsport which we face with a lot of enthusiasm. We can’t wait to see Alex lining up on the grid of this prestigious race in our BMW Z4 GT3.”

“To compete in the 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps will definitely be the next highlight in my career”, commented Zanardi. “I have been dreaming of racing in an endurance classic like this for a long time, and it is great that Jens Marquardt and BMW Motorsport turn this dream into a reality. If you first look at it, it seems impossible that a guy with no legs like me lines up together with ‘normal’ drivers in such a highly competitive, tough and prestigious event. But I know that my friends at



BMW Motorsport have all the technical expertise and innovative ideas to master this challenge. I really want to thank them for all their efforts and am looking forward to this new adventure of our BMW family.”

To prepare for the endurance race, the BMW works driver will participate in the Paul Ricard round of the Blancpain Endurance Series on 19th and 20th June in Le Castellet (FR) and will join the official test for the 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps on 24th June. Further race participations are planned but still have to be confirmed.

2015 will be another busy year for Zanardi, as the BMW Brand Ambassador again combines his activities as a racing driver and a para-athlete. He will take part in the Para-Cycling World Cup and only one week after racing in the 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps, he will compete in the Para-Cycling World Championships, which are held in Nottwil in Switzerland from 28th July to 2nd August. Zanardi has so far won four world championship titles, two in 2013 and two in 2014. This year, he is aiming to continue his winning streak with his hand-bike.

In October, he wants to head to Hawaii (US) again and compete in the famous long-distance triathlon for the second time. Last year, he successfully debuted at this ultimate challenge in endurance sports. Zanardi completed the overall distance of 226.255 kilometres in a time of 9:47:14 hours. He was 272nd overall among the 2,187 athletes to reach the finish. In his age group M45-49 he finished 19th out of 247.

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