



24 Hours of Spa

**Five BMWs in action in the battle for Superpole – Marc VDS Racing will start the 24-hour race in Spa from 8<sup>th</sup> on the grid.**

Spa-Francorchamps (BE), 24<sup>th</sup> July 2015. The BMW Sports Trophy teams finished in promising positions in the qualifying sessions and the concluding Superpole competition for the 24-hour race in Spa-Francorchamps (BE). Nick Catsburg (NL) of BMW Sports Trophy Team Marc VDS in the number 46 BMW Z4 GT3 was the fastest BMW driver in the deciding top 20 qualifying session on Friday. In temperatures of 23 degrees Celsius with light cloud, he put in a time of 2:18.451 minutes on the legendary 'Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps'. This sees Catsburg and his team-mates Lucas Luhr (DE) and Markus Palttala (FI) start from 8<sup>th</sup> place in the 67<sup>th</sup> running of the endurance classic on Saturday. Pole position went to Audi driver Frank Stippler (DE), who took 2:18.130 minutes to complete the fastest of his two flying laps. Catsburg missed pole position by only 0.321 seconds.

In addition to the trio in the number 46 car, the other BMW drivers also passed the first challenge of the weekend. The second car in action for BMW Sports Trophy Team Marc VDS with Maxime Martin (BE), Augusto Farfus (BR) and Dirk Werner (DE) will start the race on the 7.004-kilometre track from 12<sup>th</sup> on the grid. Alessandro Zanardi (IT), Timo Glock (DE) and Bruno Spengler (CA) in the number 9 BMW Z4 GT3 from ROAL Motorsport qualified in 13<sup>th</sup>. Ecurie Ecosse and TDS Racing secured their spots in the Superpole competition with outstanding performances in the night qualifying session: The number 12 BMW Z4 GT3 of TDS Racing, whose shares the cockpit with Eric Dermont (FR), Henry Hassid (FR), Franck Perera (FR) and Mathias Beche (FR) qualified in 17<sup>th</sup>. Alasdair McCaig (GB), Devon Modell (GB), Oliver Bryant (GB) and Alexander Sims (GB) from the Ecurie Ecosse will contest the marathon in the Belgian Ardennes from 20<sup>th</sup> on the grid.

Slightly further down the field in the number 78 BMW Z4 GT3 from Team Russia by Barwell are Leonid Machitski (RU), Jon Minshaw (GB), Jonathan Cocker (GB) and Phil Keen (GB), who couldn't improve on 31<sup>st</sup> place in qualifying. Joe Osborne (GB), Ryan Ratcliffe (GB), Lee Mowle (GB) and Dirk Müller (DE) from Team Triple Eight Racing will line up 39<sup>th</sup> on the grid. Sergio Jiménez (BR), Felipe Fraga (BR) and Cacá Bueno (BR) from BMW Sports Trophy Team Brasil claimed the 42<sup>nd</sup> spot on the grid. However, the history of the 24 Hours of Spa shows that even cars that start from the middle of the field can end up in the top spots.

The Team Boutsen Ginion number 15 BMW Z4 GT3, in which Karim Ojjeh (SA), Olivier Grotz (LU), Jordan Grogor (AE) and Ralf Oeverhaus (DE) will take turns at the wheel, finished 47<sup>th</sup> in the qualifying sessions for the 24-hour race. The number 30 BMW Z4 GT3 from Classic & Modern Racing, with Jean-Luc Blanchemain (FR), Pierre Hirschi (CH), Christian Kelders (BE) and Frederic Bouvy (BE), will line up in 54<sup>th</sup> on the starting grid. Right behind them are 'Marc VDS & Friends Racing Against Cancer': Pascal Witmeur, Jean-Michel Martin, Marc Duez and Eric van de Poele is a quartet of Belgian drivers who have celebrated great success with BMW in the past in this race. They are taking part in four 24 minute stints on behalf of the Belgian cancer aid foundation.



The marathon in the Ardennes, which is part of the Blancpain Endurance Series once again this year, gets underway at 4:30 p.m. local time on Saturday. The winners will be known 24 hours later.

**Quotes after the Superpole competition:**

**Nick Catsburg (#46 BMW Z4 GT3, BMW Sports Trophy Team Marc VDS, 8<sup>th</sup> place):** "I am reasonably happy, and the car was really good. We made some changes just for qualifying and they worked out – our BMW Z4 GT3 felt really good. On the first lap I had much grip, so I pushed even a little bit more on the second lap. We are the best placed BMW and eighth on the grid, so we can be satisfied with that. It is a long race and this is a good position to start from. Now I am looking forward to the race, because I am convinced that we have a really strong car."

**Maxime Martin (#45 BMW Z4 GT3, BMW Sports Trophy Team Marc VDS, 12<sup>th</sup> place):** "Superpole was okay. Our car is very well prepared in race trim which is good and very important in a 24-hour race. This is what we were working for – to best prepare the car for the race distance. In such an endurance race it does not make a big difference if you start from P5 or P12. Overall, I think we can be confident for the race. We have a very strong BMW Z4 GT3. So now we are ready to go!"

**Bruno Spengler (#9 BMW Z4 GT3, ROAL Motorsport, 13<sup>th</sup> place):** "I really like this qualifying format. Unfortunately I had wished or expected for a little bit more because we have a really good car. Anyway, it is still okay as it is 24 hours and qualifying I guess doesn't make a huge difference. Today more wasn't possible. It is quite close together for such a big track and there are no big gaps. We have to see what the race brings as it is going to be a tough one with rain at the beginning. I am really enjoying the adventure up to now, the team is doing a great job."

**Franck Perera (#12 BMW Z4 GT3, TDS Racing, 17<sup>th</sup> place):** "I have mixed emotions. I am happy because it is always great to be in the top 20. This year the level is very high and it is difficult to get into Superpole. We did not test very much here, but we can be satisfied because today we made enormous improvements to the set-up of our BMW Z4 GT3. The race is really long and our target for sure is to fight for the podium in the Pro-Am class."

**Alexander Sims (#79 BMW Z4 GT3, Ecurie Ecosse, 20<sup>th</sup> place):** "We had a bit of a technical problem and this limited our straight line speed somewhat. The car felt nice in the corners. We need to try and understand what the issue is for the race. Race pace wise I think we are really strong, but it is just a shame not to be able to capitalise on Superpole. But it doesn't really matter what happens in qualifying. We just try to have a good race."



**BMW qualifying results.**

#46 BMW Z4 GT3, BMW Sports Trophy Team Marc VDS  
Lucas Luhr (DE), Markus Palttala (FI), Nick Catsburg (NL)  
2:18.451 minutes – 8<sup>th</sup> place

#45 BMW Z4 GT3, BMW Sports Trophy Team Marc VDS  
Augusto Farfus (BR), Maxime Martin (BE), Dirk Werner (DE)  
2:18.711 minutes – 12<sup>th</sup> place

#9 BMW Z4 GT3, ROAL Motorsport  
Alessandro Zanardi (IT), Timo Glock (DE), Bruno Spengler (CA)  
2:18.744 minutes – 13<sup>th</sup> place

#12 BMW Z4 GT3, TDS Racing  
Eric Dermont (FR), Henry Hassid (FR), Franck Perera (FR), Mathias Beche (FR)  
2:19.196 minutes – 17<sup>th</sup> place

#79 BMW Z4 GT3, Ecurie Ecosse  
Alasdair McCaig (GB), Devon Modell (GB), Oliver Bryant (GB), Alexander Sims (GB)  
2:20.645 minutes – 20<sup>th</sup> place

#78 BMW Z4 GT3, Team Russia by Barwell  
Leonid Machitski (RU), Jon Minshaw (GB), Jonathan Cocker (GB), Phil Keen (GB)  
2:19.773 minutes – 31<sup>st</sup> place

#888 BMW Z4 GT3, Triple Eight Racing  
Joe Osborne (GB), Ryan Ratcliffe (GB), Lee Mowle (GB), Dirk Müller (DE)  
2:20.148 minutes – 39<sup>th</sup> place

#77 BMW Z4 GT3, BMW Sports Trophy Team Brasil  
Sergio Jimenez (BR), Felipe Fraga (BR), Caca Bueno (BR)  
2:20.370 minutes – 42<sup>nd</sup> place

#15 BMW Z4 GT3, Boutsen Ginion  
Karim Ojjeh (SA), Olivier Grotz (LU), Jordan Grogor (AE), Ralf Oeverhaus (DE)  
2:21.414 minutes – 47<sup>th</sup> place

#30 BMW Z4 GT3, Classic & Modern Racing  
Jean-Luc Blanchemain (FR), Pierre Hirschi (CH), Christian Kelders (BE), Frederic Bouvy (BE)  
2:23.335 minutes – 54<sup>th</sup> place

#240 BMW Z4 GT3 „Marc VDS & Friends Racing Against Cancer“  
Pascal Witmeur (BE), Jean-Michel Martin (BE), Eric van de Poele (BE),  
Marc Duez (BE)  
2:23.563 minutes – 55<sup>th</sup> place



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