



**It is gold again for Alessandro Zanardi: Italian national handbike team wins the team relay at the Rio de Janeiro Paralympic Games\*.**

Rio de Janeiro (BR), 16<sup>th</sup> September 2016. Alessandro Zanardi (IT) added another gold medal to his collection of para-cycling successes: On Friday, he won the handbike team-relay at the Rio de Janeiro Paralympic Games\* (BR) with the Italian national team. Zanardi and his team-mates, Vittorio Podesta (IT) and Luca Mazzone (IT), took an early lead and after 32 minutes and 34 seconds Zanardi crossed the finish line – already celebrating in the final metres. He had a clear advantage of 47 seconds over the US team, who secured the silver medal, despite the fact that on his last lap he had to overcome an unexpected obstacle – a dog. Bronze went to Belgium.

For Zanardi, the team-relay marked a brilliant finish to successful days in Rio. Three races in three days, two gold medals and one silver medal: this is his haul. On Wednesday, the 49-year old won the time trial in the handbike H5 category, on Thursday he finished second in the road race in this category, and now he has triumphed with the national team in the team relay. In total, Zanardi has now won six Paralympic\* medals: four gold and two silver.

“Today was the last day of my Brazilian Paralympic journey and to end it that way with my team, with my mates, was very special. Because sharing makes the joy even greater,” said Zanardi. “We had an amazing performance, all three of us, and we literally dominated the team relay, beating the United States with a big advantage. The race started really well with Vittorio pulling out a gap immediately and then Luca extended that gap even further. Then it was my turn, and I had so much will to do well with it being the last day of our journey. I did a very good performance and extended our advantage to over 40 seconds. But then on my final lap I encountered the biggest risk of our day: A big dog crossed the road just round a corner, which was quite blind. I did not hit the dog, but I had to slap it with one of my hands to get it out of the way. It was pretty funny because that would have been the only way we could have lost it, strong as we were.”

“To bring home another gold medal is very special and we are going to celebrate tonight,” Zanardi added. “We are very proud of our win and I am personally very proud of the two gold medals and the silver medal I am taking home. Because of this, I equalled the result I had four years ago in London. Being able to be in this position in spite of my age is something very special. I have to admit that I was a bit lucky to win the time trial by only two seconds. You can’t say that I was clearly better – but I was a bit luckier, and at my age that was quite an achievement. Looking back on the road race: in another situation I could have won it, but I have to say that maybe I was not completely the Zanardi I have been on other days. But I managed to finish second and to beat fantastic athletes, very determined and much younger than me. In the team relay we put together a very solid performance, as together as a team we were in a dominant form. To win another gold medal is the very best way to finish this exciting Brazilian adventure for the three of us. I am going home very happy and am really grateful to everyone who supported me on this journey.”

Zanardi is one of the most successful para-cyclists worldwide. In addition to his six



Paralympic\* medals he has also won eight world championship titles.

**\*Note:**

BMW is not a sponsor or partner of the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.

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