



Media Information
24h Spa-Francorchamps
30th July 2017

ROWE Racing finishes the 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps in the top 10.

- **The #98 BMW M6 GT3 led the race for a while.**
- **Bad luck prevents top result at the Ardennes classic.**
- **Podium position for Walkenhorst Motorsport in the Am Cup.**

Spa-Francorchamps. After the two victories in 2015 and 2016, the BMW teams were missing the racing luck required to be able to fight for the win this time at the 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps (BEL). Technical issues with both the ROWE Racing cars, which were both in promising positions, ended any hopes of another top result. The best-placed BMW M6 GT3 after 24 hours on the “Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps” was the number 98 in tenth place. Bruno Spengler (CAN), Tom Blomqvist (GBR) and Nick Catsburg (NED) took it in turns at the wheel of the car with the trio were at the front of the field for a while. The win after 546 laps went to the number 25 Audi.

Starting from 42nd on the grid, Spengler, Blomqvist and Catsburg initially made it through the endurance marathon without incident and had made their way up into the top 10 after a few hours. During the night, which was characterised by numerous accidents, rain and full course yellow and safety car periods, the trio and the team kept cool heads and showed their driving class. The team also opted for the perfect strategy in extremely difficult conditions. In the early hours of the morning, Blomqvist was on track to finish in the top 5, the DTM driver then taking the lead for the first time on the 365th lap. As the race went on, the trio consistently kept the number 98 on track for the podium before Spengler was forced to return to the pit with a technical defect four hours and thirty minutes before the end of the race. Consequently, the number 98 dropped out of the top 10 but Spengler, Blomqvist and Catsburg battled back and finished the race in tenth place.



Last year's winners Maxime Martin (BEL), Philipp Eng (AUT) and Alexander Sims (GBR) were unlucky on their second joint appearance at Spa-Francorchamps. They started the race from eleventh on the grid and soon established themselves in the top 10. Shortly after start driver Martin handed the wheel over to Sims, his team-mate was forced to return to the pit for the mechanics to repair a broken wheel fastening. The number 99 BMW M6 GT3 lost valuable time however, Martin, Eng and Sims showed fighting spirit and worked their way up the field lap by lap. Due to another technical issue they had to retire one and a half hours before the end of the race.

BMW Motorsport Junior Nico Menzel (GER) made a strong appearance on his Spa debut. He was fast and flawless in the number 35 Walkenhorst Motorsport team BMW M6 GT3 on the demanding "Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps". At the start, his team-mate Markus Palttala (FIN) caused a stir with an incredible catch-up performance. He started from 41st on the grid and handed the wheel over to Matias Henkola (FIN) in 21st place after an hour. The number 35 lost valuable time during the night after a collision with another car, which damaged the front of the car but Menzel, Palttala, Henkola and Christian Krognæs (NOR) were able to keep racing ultimately crossing the finish line in 20th place overall, without further incident. This saw them narrowly miss out on the podium in the fiercely contested Pro Am Cup with fifth place.

However, the fourth BMW M6 GT3 made it onto the podium in the Am Cup. After 24 hours, Henry Walkenhorst (GER), Stef van Campenhoudt (BEL), David Schiwietz (GER) and Ralf Oeverhaus (GER) celebrated third place in their class and finished the race in 26th place overall.

Quotes after the 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps:

Jens Marquardt (BMW Motorsport Director): "Once again this year, the 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps was another festival of GT racing. The fans experienced another extremely thrilling race – from the first to the final lap. We were unlucky this year after the two wins in 2015 and 2016. ROWE Racing did a fantastic job yet again. Unfortunately, technical problems prevented another top result. Bruno Spengler, Tom Blomqvist and Nick Catsburg, as well as Maxime Martin, Philipp Eng and Alexander Sims refused to give up at any point despite various setbacks, and battled to the flag. It's a shame that they weren't rewarded for it. The fact that the number 98 made it into the top ten shows what our team



and drivers are made of. The entire team at Walkenhorst Motorsport also delivered a fantastic performance and deserved third place in the Am Cup. I'm impressed by the performance of our BMW Motorsport Junior Nico Menzel in the second Walkenhorst car. He did incredibly well on his debut alongside Markus Palttala, Matias Henkola and Christian Krognes. Congratulations also to the winning Audi trio."

Bruno Spengler (#98 BMW M6 GT3, ROWE Racing): "That was a brilliant battle until this morning. The car performed fantastically during the night and in the early hours of the morning in particular, and the team did a great job with the strategy. That was how we moved so far through the field. We could have made it onto the podium with our performance today. After starting from 42nd on the grid – who would have thought that yesterday? Then it all changed unfortunately. A defect cost us a lot of time. It's a little bit sad since we all fought so hard."

Tom Blomqvist (#98 BMW M6 GT3, ROWE Racing): "We'll be kicking ourselves a little bit because the pace was there to get a podium. We stayed out of trouble, avoided penalties and ran well, so it was a big shame to have a mechanical issue cost us time. I'm happy with my performance at least, and enjoyed my first 24 Hours of Spa experience a lot. I want to come back next year and challenge for victory again!"

Nick Catsburg (#98 BMW M6 GT3, ROWE Racing): "The team did everything right, in terms of strategy and tyre choice. I was on slicks in the wet in the middle of the night. An unusual decision, but one that enabled us to make up a lot of time and fight for first place in the morning. Unfortunately, we had a technical problem that cost us a few laps. These things happen, but it goes without saying that we are disappointed."

Maxime Martin (#99 BMW M6 GT3, ROWE Racing): "When you have a defect in the first hour of the race and lose as many laps as we did, the remaining 23 hours are an eternity. We refused to give up and tried to make up as much ground on the front-runners as possible. We were one of the fastest cars in the field, and without the defect we would no doubt have had a good chance of battling for the win. But that's racing; sometimes things go well, other times they don't."



Hans-Peter Naundorf (Team principal ROWE Racing): “Naturally, we are a bit disappointed as we had the performance, but couldn’t convert it. We were unable to show our full potential, and this is necessary at an event like this if you want to finish at the top. Our drivers took on the far from easy task that we set them flawlessly, with a lot of ambition, great motivation and extraordinary willpower. I’d like to give very special praise and thanks to everyone involved in our team; to the mechanics and engineers at ROWE Racing, but also to BMW guys, who gave us the best support, and last but not least, our first-class drivers. It’s fun working with this crew that has meshed well over the last two years.”

Nico Menzel (#35 BMW M6 GT3, Walkenhorst Motorsport): “The race in Spa was an interesting experience for me. It was a lot of fun driving here in the BMW M6 GT3. We were unlucky during the night when, through no fault of our own, we made contact with another car, which lost us a lot of time. If it hadn’t been for that, we might even have made it onto the podium. I learned a lot from my first appearance here in Spa, drove my first real night stint – and the double stint into the morning - one of the most beautiful. It was a real privilege. Thanks to the whole team. Our speed was good so I’m really happy with my Spa debut. Congratulations to my teammates on the podium success in the Am Cup.”

Henry Walkenhorst (Team principal Walkenhorst Motorsport): “It’s simply sensational. I am very proud of the fact that we brought home such a dream result with the podium position in the Am Cup. It was a fantastic team performance. We didn’t make any mistakes, and drove well. We had a minor accident during the night with the Pro Am car, through no fault of our own but we overcame even that. We are very pleased. Thanks to BMW Motorsport for the support. And the Junior in our team, Nico Menzel, had a flawless drive. He has a lot of talent and has integrated into the team extremely well.”

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