



Media Information
BMW Motorsport
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40 years of BMW Motorsport talent promotion: A meeting of generations at the anniversary event.

- **Jochen Neerpasch, Eddie Cheever and Marc Surer meet BMW Motorsport Director Jens Marquardt and the current Juniors.**
- **Photo shoot with the BMW 320 Group 5, BMW M6 GT3 and BMW M4 GT4 in Maisach.**
- **Big-name graduates from the BMW talent promotion, including Sebastian Vettel and Timo Glock, send their congratulations.**

Maisach. The big meeting of generations was the highlight of Monday's celebrations to mark the 40th anniversary of BMW Motorsport talent promotion. The BMW and MINI Driving Experience in Maisach (GER), that had turned 40 years in 2017 as well, was the venue for the anniversary event, at which the heroes from the early days met BMW Motorsport Director Jens Marquardt (GER), as well as graduates and the current crop of drivers on the BMW Motorsport Junior Programme. The guests included Jochen Neerpasch (GER), the first managing director of BMW Motorsport GmbH and founder of the first BMW Junior Team in 1977, as well as Eddie Cheever (USA) and Marc Surer (SUI), two of the BMW Motorsport Juniors from that time. It was the first time in German automobile racing that a manufacturer had put together a team consisting solely of juniors. This long tradition makes BMW stand out from other manufacturers involved in motorsport. Ever since the pioneering efforts of Jochen Neerpasch, the promotion of young drivers has been one of the central pillars of the BMW Motorsport philosophy, and is now more important than ever.



The day began with a round of discussions, during which the different generations chatted about their personal experience of BMW Motorsport talent promotion. Neerpasch, Cheever and Surer spoke of their time in the BMW Junior Team and what made the “Wilder Reiter GmbH” so special. They also listened carefully to today’s Juniors, and offered valuable advice.

Among those present was Jesse Krohn (FIN), who successfully graduated from the programme as “BMW Motorsport Junior of the Year 2014” and is now a permanent fixture in the BMW GT driver line-up. He was joined by this year’s BMW Motorsport Juniors, Beitske Visser (NED), Ricky Collard (GBR), Mikkel Jensen (DEN), Dennis Marschall (GER) and Nico Menzel (GER). Joel Eriksson (SWE) was unable to take part, as he was in action at the famous Formula 3 Grand Prix in Macau.

As well as interviews and video recordings, the anniversary event focussed primarily on a photo shoot with the historic BMW 320 Group 5, with which the first BMW Junior Team caused such a stir in 1977, as well as the BMW M6 GT3 and the BMW M4 GT4 – the two cars the current BMW Motorsport Juniors are racing with. Surer also completed a number of drift laps in a BMW M car with the current Juniors.

Over the course of the past four decades, the BMW concept for promoting youngsters has produced numerous successful racing drivers, who have won races and titles in a wide range of series around the world. They include well-known drivers such as four-time Formula 1 champion Sebastian Vettel (GER), as well as current BMW works drivers Timo Glock (GER) and Martin Tomczyk (GER).

Quotes on the BMW Motorsport talent promotion anniversary event.

Jens Marquardt, BMW Motorsport Director:

“40 years of BMW Motorsport talent promotion – this anniversary is a very special one for all of us at BMW Motorsport. With his idea, Jochen Neerpasch laid the



foundations for something that has accompanied us ever since and proven itself right through to today. When you look around the international motorsport scene, you find numerous drivers who came into contact with BMW Motorsport's talent promotion programme in the early stages of their career. This shows that the path we embarked upon back in 1977 was successful and remains both the right path and important. The aspects that were fundamental when the BMW Junior Team was founded 40 years ago still apply to the way we train our young drivers today. We prepare our talented youngsters technically, physically and mentally for the challenges they face in motor racing. Our goal is to be able to use them in our cars within our diverse motor racing programme. This promotion is paying dividends today, just as it did 40 years ago."

Jochen Neerpasch, first managing director of BMW Motorsport GmbH and founder of the BMW Junior Team:

"I was delighted to see Eddie Cheever and Marc Surer again, and to meet the current Juniors. I was impressed by how mature they are already, despite still being so young, and how professionally they are being prepared for their future careers. BMW Motorsport deserves a big compliment for that. I founded the Junior Team back then, because even Formula 1 drivers were not well prepared physically for the challenges they faced in a racing car. It is nice to see what an outstanding junior programme has developed from that idea."

Eddie Cheever, BMW Motorsport Junior 1977:

"I find it fantastic that BMW Motorsport has continued along the same path we took for the first time back in 1977, in terms of the way they train young drivers. The new generation, who we had the pleasure of meeting today, really impressed me. Compared to us, they have completely different means of preparing for their careers. However, I can feel the same passion we had 40 years ago. As we were back then, the current crop of Juniors is very proud to be part of the BMW family."



Marc Surer, BMW Motorsport Junior 1977:

“My appearances for BMW Group Classic mean I am still regularly in touch with Jochen Neerpasch, and I am often reminded of that period of my life. However, this is the first time I have seen Eddie Cheever for many years – and I am really pleased to have met up again. It was also fascinating to meet today’s class of Juniors at this event. They are all already far more mature than we were back then. They are very fortunate to be supported by a company like BMW. Nothing is more important to a young racing driver than being able to develop in a professional environment and in sophisticated racing cars.”

Sebastian Vettel, four-time Formula 1 world champion:

“Congratulations to BMW on this anniversary! When I was a young racing driver, I was fortunate enough to be supported by BMW and Red Bull. Without that support, I would possibly never have made it into Formula 1. I am very grateful for that time, and look back fondly upon it. I will also never forget my first Formula 1 race for the BMW Sauber F1 Team. When I look around the Formula 1 paddock today, a number of the other drivers also started out in Formula BMW, just as I did.”

Timo Glock, BMW DTM driver:

“I was lucky to benefit from BMW Motorsport’s talent promotion programme. As such, BMW was instrumental in the way my motorsport career panned out. It is incredible to see how many big names the programme has produced over the decades. Thank you very much to BMW Motorsport for their fantastic commitment to the BMW Motorsport talent promotion. Hopefully it will continue for another 40 years.”

Timo Scheider, BMW works driver:

“Firstly, I would obviously like to congratulate BMW on the 40th anniversary of its talent promotion programme. Without this kind of support, it is very difficult for youngsters to find their feet in motorsport – for many reasons, including financial ones. I also benefitted from the comprehensive support I received in 1998 as a BMW Junior. Part of the training programme was for us to help out in the engine



department in Munich, to assemble the racing engines and, in doing so, to gain valuable experience. I still remember well how I helped to build the engine with which Jockel Winkelhock raced at Le Mans. I am very happy that I was able to gain that kind of experience at such a young age, thanks to BMW. I am still benefitting from it today.”

Martin Tomczyk, BMW works driver:

“I experienced for myself just how important the promotion of talented youngsters has always been to BMW when I was 16 years old and competed in the BMW Formula ADAC Junior Cup. It was during that period that I laid the foundations for my future career. I now enjoy using my experience to support the next generation of BMW Juniors whenever I get the opportunity.”

Philipp Eng, BMW works driver:

“I have nothing but fond memories of my time on the BMW Motorsport talent promotion programme. I was part of the programme in 2006, and it gave me the opportunity to show what I was capable of. I won the Formula BMW World Final in 2007, and received a test in a BMW Sauber F1 Team car as my prize. That was obviously a major highlight in my career. I can only congratulate BMW on its promotion of young drivers, and thank them for it.”

Jesse Krohn, BMW Motorsport Junior of the Year 2014:

“It was fantastic to meet the people who, 40 years ago, went down the same road as we are doing today. Hopefully I will be able to attend a similar event in 40 years, and can tell a new generation of talented youngsters about my career. I had almost given up on my dream of a career in motorsport when BMW Motorsport gave me the opportunity to be a part of the realigned Junior Programme in 2014. Since then, I have been living my dream.”

Beitske Visser, BMW Motorsport Junior 2017:

“This day is a great end to my first year on the BMW Motorsport Junior Programme. It was fun to meet the former Juniors, and to find out more about racing back then. Personally, I am happy with my season. I gained my licence for



the Nürburgring-Nordschleife and won my first race in the BMW M4 GT4. That was fantastic.”

Ricky Collard, BMW Motorsport Junior 2017:

“Thank you very much to BMW Motorsport for allowing me to be part of this programme, and this anniversary event. It was fantastic to meet up with the current Juniors and chat with the legends from past years. I think we all share the same passion for motorsport. It was also awesome to see the BMW 320 Group 5 up close and personal. I love vintage cars.”

Mikkel Jensen, BMW Motorsport Junior 2017:

“I found it fascinating to see how BMW Motorsport’s talent promotion has developed over the past 40 years. Motorsport has changed dramatically, and the programme has adapted to it. For me, making it onto the BMW Junior programme was a big step. It is now up to me to show what I am capable of.”

Dennis Marschall, BMW Motorsport Junior 2017:

“Today was brilliant. I really enjoyed listening to Eddie Cheever and Marc Surer tell their stories about racing in the BMW 320 Group 5. I also had the feeling that they were interested in how we prepare for our races nowadays. I am incredibly grateful to be part of the BMW Motorsport Junior Programme.”

Nico Menzel, BMW Motorsport Junior 2017:

“I know from my father about the fascination of racing in the past. It was very cool to meet the first generation of BMW Juniors and to be able to chat to such big names as Jochen Neerpasch, Eddie Cheever and Marc Surer. I have been lucky enough to drive the historic BMW M3 from the 1980s twice during my season as a BMW Motorsport Junior. I am fascinated by race cars from that era.”



Press contact.

BMW Sports Communication
Jörg Kottmeier
Phone: 0170 – 566 6112
E-Mail: joerg.kottmeier@bmw.de

Ingo Lehbrink
Phone: 0176 – 203 40224
E-Mail: ingo.lehbrink@bmw.de

Daniela Maier
Phone: 0151 – 601 24545
E-Mail: daniela.maier@bmw.de

Media Website.

www.press.bmwgroup.com/global

BMW Motorsport online.

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