



Media Information
BMW Junior Team
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GT3 premiere at Nürburgring 24 Hours: BMW Junior Team 'passed master's exam' despite retirement.

- **Dan Harper, Max Hesse and Neil Verhagen unrewarded for strong performance alongside Augusto Farfus after technical issues.**
- **Jochen Neerpasch: "I still think that the BMW Junior Team passed the master's exam with their performance."**
- **Augusto Farfus: "BMW M Motorsport has made a fantastic selection with Dan, Max and Neil."**

Munich. After the 2020 class win in the BMW M4 GT4, the BMW Junior Team made a strong debut in the BMW M6 GT3 at the 2021 edition of the Nürburgring 24 Hours (GER). Alongside Augusto Farfus (BRA), Dan Harper (GBR), Max Hesse (GER) and Neil Verhagen (USA) showed strong speed and fighting spirit in the race, but were not rewarded with a good result. Despite the disappointment over the wrong tyre selection at the start and the retirement due to a technical defect shortly before the end of the race, the general conclusion of everyone involved is positive.

"We went into this race with very ambitious goals and definitely wanted to get a top-ten result with the BMW Junior Team. For a while it looked like we might even improve on that goal. A top-five result was within reach but unfortunately the course of the race ended up writing a different story," summed up mentor Jochen Neerpasch. "I still think that the BMW Junior Team passed the master's exam with their performance."

It was a weekend of firsts. Hesse experienced the first of these in top qualifying when, after Farfus' perfect groundwork in putting the #77 BMW M6 GT3 in the pole position shootout, he completed his first GT3 laps in the rain on the Nordschleife. He mastered this challenge flawlessly and secured tenth on the grid ahead of many Nürburgring experts with significantly more experience. "We started the weekend well and got ourselves a good starting position," said Hesse.





Strong recovery performance after unlucky start.

In light of the extremely difficult track conditions, at the start of the race BMW Team RMG and starting driver Farfus opted for the wrong tyres for their 24-hours debut with the BMW M6 GT3. Farfus pitted right after the formation lap and was given wet tyres – a 50/50 decision since some sections of the track were wet and some were dry. Unfortunately heavier rain didn't start until so much later that Farfus was unable to keep using his wet tyres and make up the time he lost due to the pit stop. "It was really difficult to gauge the weather conditions at the start, and unfortunately we opted for the wrong tyres," said team principal Stefan Reinhold.

After that, things went very well until the race was red-flagged on Saturday evening due to fog, and again after the restart on Sunday. Flawless stints saw Farfus, Hesse and Harper move up the field. "Up until the red flag and again after the restart our strategy was aimed at making up as much ground as possible which we managed," explained Reinhold. Verhagen experienced his first at the restart; he had never done a flying start in the GT3 car before. He did a great job, and showed strong speed and courageous overtaking manoeuvres in his ensuing stint.

Up until 30 minutes before the end of the race, the BMW Junior Team had fought its way back into the top ten, and if they hadn't been awarded a time penalty for Verhagen coming into contact with another car, they would have even made it into the top five. But then a technical defect and a subsequent collision forced the #77 BMW M6 GT3 out the race. "Augusto suddenly no longer had any propulsion in a fast sector, which meant that he was in the way of the cars behind him," said Reinhold, summarising: "Obviously, we envisaged our first appearance at the Nürburgring a little differently. We learned a lot of lessons in this race, which hopefully we will be able to build on soon."

Juniors draw positive conclusions.

With all the disappointment immediately after the retirement, the Juniors also ended up drawing positive conclusions. "This race was a roller coaster ride for us. Obviously, the final result is disappointing, but our race pace was very strong," said Harper. Hesse added: "Even though we didn't achieve anything measurable in the end, we can be pleased with our 24-hour debut in the GT3





car. After our wrong tyre selection at the start, BMW Team RMG did a magnificent job in terms of pit stops and strategy, and got us to the front of the field again. Having Augusto in the team was fantastic for us Juniors."

On behalf of the whole BMW Junior Team, Verhagen said: "Many thanks to everyone who made this race possible. Above all, thanks to BMW Team RMG, who took on this huge challenge with us and did an outstanding job during the preparation already. An equally big thank you goes to Augusto, who was incredibly helpful at making us really fast on the Nordschleife. This event was an amazing experience. We learned a great deal and will hopefully come back even stronger."

Farfus: "I really enjoyed the collaboration."

Farfus, who has worked closely with the BMW Junior Team throughout the season, sees the project as very positive: "It's a real shame that we were unable to bring home the race result that we deserved, but all in all the teamwork with the BMW Junior Team and BMW Team RMG was fantastic. BMW M Motorsport has made a fantastic selection with Dan, Max and Neil. They are all incredibly fast. When it comes to speed they don't really need my help, but I think I was able to help them a lot in other areas, such as processes during the race, preparation, set-up of the car and handling the traffic on the Nordschleife. I really enjoyed the collaboration."

For Harper, Hesse and Verhagen, the Nordschleife season continues on 26th June with the fourth race of the Nürburgring Endurance Series season.

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