

## CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

Media Information

BMW Motorrad Motorsport

21st April 2022

### **BMW Motorrad Motorsport Director Marc Bongers: passion for motor racing has roots at Assen.**

- **The WorldSBK races at Assen are a home event for BMW Motorrad Motorsport Director Marc Bongers – including some culinary specialities.**
- **From young racing driver to engineer, in this interview the Dutchman talks about his early enthusiasm for motor racing and his decades of experience in a wide range of areas.**
- **The development of BMW Motorrad Motorsport with close links between works involvements and customer racing.**

**Assen. The second round of the FIM Superbike World Championship (WorldSBK) season will take place this weekend at Assen in the Netherlands. This is a very special event for BMW Motorrad Motorsport Director Marc Bongers. Assen is the home race for the Dutchman and the circuit played an important role during his childhood. In a wide-ranging interview, Bongers talks about his early enthusiasm for motor racing, his own active involvement in the Netherlands, his career, the development of BMW Motorrad Motorsport – as well as providing some special insights into Dutch cuisine.**

**An interview with Marc Bongers.**

**Marc, Assen is your home race. What does motor racing in Assen mean for you as a Dutchman?**

Marc Bongers: "Assen is always special for me, and not just because I am from the Netherlands. It is also because the atmosphere there is always superb. There are always loads of fans, as it's a popular track and you can feel the enthusiasm. And I always take the time to pick up a few specialities from the chippy. These include Pommes Oorlog, which is made with fries, mayonnaise, peanut sauce and onions. And I normally also get a Broodje Frikadel."

**How old were you when you first noticed the motor racing at Assen?**

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Bongers: "I think that was when I was about ten years old. Bennie Streuer is now part of the sidecar team for Bonovo action, and I can clearly remember seeing his father racing at Assen when I was there with my father. I always loved motor racing, whether it was on two, three or four wheels. I was always out on Mofas or mopeds as an adolescent, and when I was 17 or 18 I competed in four-hour races in the Dutch 50cc championship - sometimes at Assen. I don't know my exact lap times any more, but if they'd been good then I might have a different job now (laughs). We did a lot ourselves. Together with a friend of mine, I worked on moped tuning and setup in the garage. I had already started my technical studies back then, which stirred my passion for engineering. We tried to think of ways to improve the motorbike. We were already hitting 160 km/h on the straights even then. That's not bad for 50cc."

### **When did you realise that you wanted to make a career out of motor racing?**

Bongers: "I'd say that was when I was 15 years old. I had realised that before my vocational training but that doesn't come from my family. My family and my environment had nothing to do with motor racing. Of course, my job now means that there is a level of interest there, but I realised it early on and friends of mine shared this passion, some of whom are involved in motor racing too."

### **Where has your career taken you thus far?**

Bongers: "I studied at the technical university for automotive technology in the Netherlands. I then spent some time at Hartge BMW, a BMW tuning company in the Saarland region. Then I moved to England to work for Ascari for two years. My next stop was Lotus, where I worked for several years. I really liked it there but I wasn't involved in motor racing. Then I got a call from a former trainee in Switzerland, to let me know that Sauber were looking for people to work in their Formula 1 team, which was then Sauber-Ferrari. I had always dreamed of getting into Formula 1, so I upped sticks at Lotus and said to myself that this was a chance I had to take. That was in 2000. Since then, I have remained involved in motor racing and haven't left. At Sauber, I also made my first experiences with professional motorcycle racing as the development of the first 4-stroke GP engines of the new era has been partly done there. In 2005, I made the move to BMW Williams in Munich. One year later, that team became the BMW Sauber F1 Team - meaning that I was working with my old Swiss colleagues once more. When BMW withdrew from Formula 1 at the end of 2009, I realised that I really liked working at BMW and living in Bavaria, and from a personal point of view, I was happy there with my then girlfriend - who is now my wife - and the family. Bavaria really has become my new home. I then had

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the opportunity to move to BMW Motorrad, jumping right into what was then the World Superbike project."

### **You also had some different roles at BMW Motorrad...**

Bongers: "That's right. I was initially working as an engineer in the Superbike World Championship. I was then in charge of customer racing in 2012 and 2013. In 2016, I became Technical Director of BMW Motorrad Motorsport. When Dr. Markus Schramm arrived to become the new Head of BMW Motorrad and made the decision to bring back the works involvement in the Superbike World Championship with BMW M, I then assumed overall responsibility for BMW Motorrad Motorsport. It really is a dream job. I love doing it, except for when we endure some difficult race weekends of course. But that is part of the job and I believe that is what makes motor racing so attractive. The emotions, these ups and downs, and that it takes no time at all to see the results of your work."

**Recently, BMW Motorrad Motorsport has experienced extensive growth. The focus was on customer racing between 2014 and 2018. There are now four works motorbikes competing for two teams in the Superbike World Championship WorldSBK, and the works team is one of the real top teams in the FIM EWC Endurance Championship. There are also customer teams racing successfully around the world. What is your assessment of the development of BMW Motorrad Motorsport in recent years?**

Bongers: "My assessment is entirely positive. The field of activity has got much bigger. It is lovely to see how much more awareness there is for the public image with BMW M. Of course, the road to success is a long one and the Superbike World Championship field is very tough, but it also was a great experience to get the endurance project up and running. BMW Motorrad Motorsport is growing and the results in these areas of involvement also mean that customer racing is growing. You can also see the high level of interest in our product, the BMW M 1000 RR, which has the project lead in our motorsport department. Personally, I take a lot of pride in that. It is fantastic to see it grow as time passes. I firmly believe that this growth will continue."

### **How important is the customer racing that accompanies the works involvement?**

Bongers: "Of course, works involvement is the pinnacle and there are also many people observing the successes chalked up in customer racing. These successes form the basis for customers deciding whether or not to participate with BMW. That is a classic pyramid and, of course, customer racing is extremely important for the domestic markets. For some

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time, we did lose grid share. However, since we started to operate on a works basis and provide the relevant products, you can see rapid growth for our grid share in national championships and in amateur racing. These privateer riders and teams are all brand ambassadors for us - which is what keeps it all running. At BMW Motorrad Motorsport, we support the private teams with a wide range of support services in many areas."

### **Your career has introduced you to many circuits around the world – which ones are your favourite racetracks?**

Bongers: "The involvement on four wheels and on two have taken me to many circuits. I am delighted that Phillip Island is back on the WorldSBK calendar. It's always a brilliant event with a superb atmosphere. However – and not just because I am from the Netherlands – Assen is definitely right up there in the list."

### **Assen is coming up next weekend, meaning that we have come full circle. You started off by mentioning Pommes Oorlog and Broodje Frikadel. What other Dutch specialities get you excited?**

Bongers: "We don't necessarily have what you could term classic Dutch cuisine, but there are a few specialities that my mother always makes. These include an oven dish with layers of bacon, mince, sauerkraut, bananas and mashed potatoes. That is a piece of home for me."

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