



Media Information  
BMW M Motorsport  
2nd May 2026

## **The BMW Group and BMW M Motorsport mourn the passing of Alessandro Zanardi.**

**Munich. The BMW Group and BMW M Motorsport mourn the passing of Alessandro Zanardi. The racing driver, long-standing works driver and corporate ambassador passed away unexpectedly in Italy on 1st May, as confirmed by his family. "Alex" Zanardi was 59 years old. In these difficult hours, the thoughts of the BMW Group are with his wife Daniela, his son Niccolò, and all his relatives and friends. "Alex" was a wonderful human being, an unwavering optimist and an inspiration to many people around the world. The company has lost a compelling humanitarian and representative; BMW M Motorsport has lost an ambitious and successful athlete from the family of its works drivers.**

Franciscus van Meel, CEO of BMW M GmbH, said: "Alex Zanardi was one of the most extraordinary people I have ever had the privilege of meeting. His courage, his zest for life, his positive energy and his passion for motorsport deeply impressed and touched all of us at BMW M. Alex was far more than an outstanding athlete and ambassador for our brand. He was a true member of our BMW M Motorsport family. Together with BMW M Motorsport, Alex wrote a very special story. He showed what is possible when talent, determination, trust and technical expertise come together. His achievements in the race car were impressive, but the impact he had as a person was even greater. With his unwavering attitude and optimism, he inspired people all over the world. We are losing a wonderful human being, a great fighter and a friend. Our thoughts are with his wife Daniela, his son Niccolò and his family. We will miss Alex very much, and at BMW M we will always keep a special place for him in our history and in our hearts."

Zanardi was born in Bologna on 23rd October 1966. After competing in Formula 1, where he contested 41 Grands Prix, he moved to the American CART series and became Champ Car champion in 1997 and 1998. In a dramatic racing accident at the Lausitzring on 15th September 2001, he lost both legs and had



to be resuscitated several times. But Zanardi never gave up and, in 2005, made his comeback as a BMW Motorsport works driver in the World Touring Car Championship (WTCC) as a double amputee – a comeback he crowned with victory at Oschersleben on 29th August 2005. He also contested several 24-hour races for BMW Motorsport, competed in the Blancpain Sprint Series in 2014, and made guest appearances in the DTM.

Alongside his motor racing career, Zanardi also began a new sporting career and once again demonstrated what is possible in life with dedication, willpower and ambition. In handcycling, he won two gold medals at the 2012 Paralympic Games in London. Four years later, at the Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, he again won two gold medals and one silver medal in handcycling. He also completed several long-distance triathlons, including the legendary Ironman in Hawaii. In 2007, he finished fourth in the New York Marathon. Through his "Bimbingamba" foundation, Zanardi supported children and young people who had suffered amputations and did not have access to adequate care. Through "Obiettivo 3", he helped to involve athletes with disabilities being introduced to sport.

After another serious accident during a handcycling competition near Pienza on 19th June 2020, Alex Zanardi withdrew from the public eye. Lovingly cared for by his family, he moved between hospital, rehabilitation and his home in Padua. Alex Zanardi once said: "You want to climb the mountain because it's there and you know you can do it." Now, the ultimate survivor has embarked on his final journey. Ciao, Alex!

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