

BEYOND THE FINISH LINE: AHMAD AL HARTHY'S JOURNEY OF PRIDE AND PASSION AT LE MANS



As the world turns its eyes to the Circuit de la Sarthe this weekend on 14-15 June, Oman's very own Ahmad Al Harthy returns to the legendary 24 Hours of Le Mans for a third time - this year behind the wheel of the BMW M4 GT3 with Team WRT. With a Le Mans podium already under his belt and growing support from BMW Oman, BMW Middle East, and national partners, Ahmad continues to fly the Omani flag high on the global motorsport stage. BMW Group Middle East caught up with him ahead of this year's race to talk preparation, passion, and national pride.

"Ahmad, you're returning to Le Mans for the third time. What does this race mean to you personally, and how does it feel to represent Oman on one of motorsport's biggest stages?"

First of all, coming back here for the third time is very emotional. To be able to race and represent Oman, the GCC, and everyone from the Arab world is a very proud moment for me. Le Mans is something I've been following since childhood. To me, it's the greatest 24-hour race on the planet. More importantly, it's a place where I truly enjoy racing and driving around, and I'm looking forward to this third experience.

"From your first Le Mans podium in 2023 to now racing in the ultra-competitive LMGT3 category with BMW, how have you evolved as a driver - technically, physically and mentally?"

Absolutely. It couldn't have started any better for me. Finishing on the podium in my first-ever 24-hour race was unbelievable, and I still get goosebumps when I think about it. The race was filled with so much emotion. Coming into 2024, my first race with BMW here was going well, but unfortunately, the weather affected us. We feel we have unfinished business, which makes us even more determined and hungry.

As a driver, every time you compete in these events, you mature and gain a deeper understanding. I've had quite a few 24-hour race experiences, but Le Mans is always different. When you ask if I'm ready, physically, yes; mentally, it's the challenging part. Le Mans is a demanding circuit because the speeds are very high for extended periods. We are also racing alongside Hypercars and sharing the circuit with that level of speed always pushes your concentration to the limit. I believe that every year we come back, we are slightly stronger. We must take all the positives and learn from every single lap, every single turn.

"Ahmad, what is the first thing you think of when you sit behind the wheel of your BMW M4 LMGT3, especially at Le Mans?"

That's a tough question. The first thing is realizing how blessed I am to share the track with some truly iconic names in motorsport. I often reflect on my early days in motorsport, and it fills me with emotions. I also get excited by the speed because it presents a massive challenge. You hear sounds and see things that you don't experience at any other racetrack in the world. I have certain spiritual rituals that I perform for all race weekends, and it's the same in that sense.

This is my third 24-hour race, but I have competed at the "Road to Le Mans" in 2017 and 2019, and I was fortunate enough to stand on the podium three out of four attempts. I feel that this race has been very kind to me, and I hope to continue that streak in 2025.

"Endurance racing is a team sport, what has the chemistry been like with your WRT teammates, including Valentino Rossi and Kelvin Van Der Linde, heading into this year's race?"

You mentioned a very important point: teamwork. For us to win and achieve great results at any endurance weekend, it's all about teamwork. It's not just about the three drivers; it involves everything from the pit crew to the engineering and support teams. Everyone must be on the same page. The harmony we share at Team WRT is something unique compared to many other teams on the grid.

We spend a lot of time together; we are like a family away from home. It's not just about seeing each other in the race car; it's what happens behind the scenes. This closeness allows us to operate at a much higher level. Endurance racing is a long journey, and while it may feel like a sprint, you don't always need the fastest drivers to achieve the best results. You need drivers who can work together. We complement each other and focus on making the car the fastest, rather than just one driver.

"You've had strong backing from BMW Oman throughout your journey. How important has that local support been in helping you compete at the highest level of endurance racing?"

When we first announced our move to BMW, it was an exciting partnership. BMW's support on and off the racetrack means a lot to me. I'm proud to be an ambassador for the brand, and I've been a fan since I was young. Having a manufacturer support you from your home country in the Middle East is something I take great pride in.

Now, over a year and a half into the BMW family, I'm starting to speak the same language. It's exciting to share my experiences with customers and M Clubs members, as well as M enthusiasts, discussing not

just racing but also car performance and the emotional connection we have with the cars. I believe it's important for them to truly enjoy their cars in a controlled environment, like a racetrack.

“What message would you like to share with young Arab and Omani athletes watching your journey — especially those dreaming of competing internationally?”

The main message is that in motorsports, there are no shortcuts. We would love to see more Arab drivers coming through the ranks. We have some of the best circuits in the world, and it's time to develop these drivers correctly without taking shortcuts. To reach Le Mans, you must come through the ranks, and I hope my presence here creates a path for that.

I want to motivate the younger generation to believe that they can be here and achieve their dreams. It takes time, and we need to understand that these things cannot be accomplished overnight. It's a tricky formula, but it's worth it.

“You're inspiring a lot of people. We know it wasn't an easy journey for you to reach where you are now, and we appreciate that. We are so proud of you and wish you all the best of luck.”

Thank you! I give it everything I have. I want to use this opportunity to thank my family for believing in me and supporting me. It takes a family to support your dreams and to go through all the ups and downs over the years. I also want to thank everyone who has supported me, including BMW Oman, BMW Middle East, all my sponsors, and government organizations. Even those who may not be with us now played a crucial role in planting the seeds for this journey. I'm grateful for all the support.

With the hopes of a nation behind him and the experience of two Le Mans appearances already in his toolkit, Ahmad Al Harthy stands ready to write the next chapter in his remarkable racing journey. Whether you're watching from the grandstands or cheering from Oman, one thing is clear - Al Harthy is racing for much more than the finish line!

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