



Media Information  
IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship  
24<sup>th</sup> January 2017

**BMW Team RLL kicks off 2017 season in Daytona – The 19<sup>th</sup> BMW Art Car will feature in the 55<sup>th</sup> Rolex 24.**

- **New IMSA season traditionally gets underway in Daytona.**
- **Tomczyk, Sims and Catsburg debut for BMW Team RLL.**
- **BMW M6 GTLM Art Car #19 by John Baldessari will have its competitive outing.**

**Munich.** The 2017 motor racing season will shift up a gear, when BMW Motorsport, BMW Team RLL and BMW of North America launch their 2017 IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship (IWSC) campaign on 28<sup>th</sup>/29<sup>th</sup> January at the classic Daytona International Speedway. At the biggest 24-hour race in North America, BMW Team RLL will have the rare honour of racing a BMW Art Car, only the ninth of the 19-car BMW Art Car Collection to race since the programme's start in 1975. John Baldessari (USA), one of the world's most respected conceptual artists, joins luminaries such as Alexander Calder (1975), Andy Warhol (1979) and Jeff Koons (2010) as an Art Car creator.

The BMW M6 continues as the foundation of BMW's effort in international sports car racing in 2017, and BMW Team RLL will continue to race two BMW M6 GTLM specification cars in the IWSC. The line-up of the number 19 BMW M6 GTLM Art Car features veteran Bill Auberlen (USA) and BMW works driver Alexander Sims (GBR). Sims was part of the winning ROWE Racing team with the BMW M6 GT3 at last year's 24-hour race in Spa-Francorchamps (BEL). The regular drivers will be supported by DTM stars Augusto Farfus (BRA) and Bruno Spengler (CAN). Both Farfus and Spengler raced the BMW M6 GTLM at Daytona last year with Auberlen and Dirk Werner (GER), finishing fifth in the debut race for the car. For Auberlen, the 48-year-old Californian, the honour of racing a BMW Art Car falls on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his first win for BMW at the Rolex 24 At Daytona in 1997.

John Edwards (USA) and Martin Tomczyk (GER) will anchor the number 24 BMW M6 GTLM this season. Edwards, who begins his fifth season racing for BMW, will be joined by BMW works driver Tomczyk, now focusing on GT competition after 16 successful seasons in the DTM. As he did last season, Kuno Wittmer (CAN) will race the number 24 BMW M6 GTLM in the four endurance rounds (Daytona, Sebring, Watkins Glen and Petit Le Mans). At Daytona, Nicky Catsburg (NLD) will be the fourth driver. Catsburg co-drove to a second-place GTD finish in last year's Rolex 24.

In its eight seasons of North American sports car competition, BMW Team RLL has posted 13 victories among 60 podium finishes, winning the American Le Mans Series Manufacturer and Team championships in 2010 and repeating the feat and adding the driver title in 2011. Beginning with the BMW M3 GT2 in





2009, the team successfully introduced the BMW Z4 GTLM in 2013 and the BMW M6 GTLM in 2016.

**Jens Marquardt (BMW Motorsport Director):** “This year’s 24-hour race at Daytona will be special in many ways. Of course, racing a BMW Art Car is always unique. The interest for the number 19 BMW M6 GTLM designed by John Baldessari will be high, so I’m excited to see where we will be able to put the car in the final results. In addition, we brought some new drivers in for 2017. I’m sure that both Alexander Sims and Martin Tomczyk will cope well with their new challenge. The experience of Bobby Rahal’s BMW Team RLL and of the other drivers, Bill Auberlen and Edwards, surely make it easier for the two European drivers to come to terms with sports car racing in North America. After last year’s debut season of the BMW M6 GTLM our clear aim is to score our maiden win with this car in the IMSA series. Achieving this in such a tough race as the Rolex 24 will be extremely difficult. But, as usual, we will give it all to score a great result in the first race of the season. Reliability will be crucial – and I’m also confident in this respect.”

**John Baldessari (Artist, BMW Art Car #19):** “When I look at the BMW Art Car series and all of the artists that came before me, I see them as competition. Just the same as racing – which is why I’ll cheer for the drivers of my Art Car. I want them to win. I spoke to Bill Auberlen and the best thing he told me was that he sees it as an honour and a highlight of his amazing career to have the chance to race a BMW Art Car. I know he and the team will give it their all to come in first.”

**Bobby Rahal (Team Principal, BMW Team RLL):** “There’s nothing like starting out the season with the most difficult race. In the recent past we have had some reasonable results with second place finishes in both 2014 and 2015. Last year wasn’t a great one for us but now, a year later, the car has certainly progressed and is more reliable. We think our pace will be reasonable, although no one is quite sure how good others may be despite all of the testing that has happened. For us, it’s just a matter of not having any problems. It sounds simplistic, but the least amount of time we spend in the pits the better chance we have of a podium. Our first job is to make sure we have the reliability, our second job is to make sure we have the pace and the third job is stay out of trouble on track. I’m very pleased with our driver line-up. We’ve always had good driver line-ups since day one of our relationship with BMW. That’s a huge plus obviously and that’s the part I worry about the least frankly.”

**Bill Auberlen (No. 19 BMW M6 GTLM):** “I am delighted that BMW chose me for the honour of driving an Art Car. I’ve been racing BMWs for many years and I can say without a doubt that this is a highlight of my career. We finished second at Daytona in 2014 and 2015, and fifth last year. I’m thinking there would be nothing better than to win on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my first Rolex 24 victory in 1997 for BMW.”





**Alexander Sims (No. 19 BMW M6 GTLM):** "I'm very excited about the Rolex 24, as it will be my first time racing in the States. The GTLM car is not far removed from the GT3 car I have raced, but with no ABS (anti-lock brake system) I am taking things one step at a time."

**Augusto Farfus (No. 19 BMW M6 GTLM):** "It is always special to be in the Rolex 24, and on top of that this year I am driving a piece of art. It is an honour for me and I'm very thankful to BMW for giving me this opportunity. We've been close here quite a few times in past years with the BMW Z4 GTLM, and last year we made it to the finish and fifth place with the new BMW M6 GTLM. This year it just may be time to get it done."

**Bruno Spengler (No. 19 BMW M6 GTLM):** "The Rolex 24 has been one of my highlights since first racing here in 2015 with BMW Team RLL. Many Canadians come to the race, so I can share the event with friends and family. I began with BMW in 2012 racing in the DTM and have heard of the Art Cars. I am honoured to now drive one and be part of such an important programme for the company."

**John Edwards (No. 24 BMW M6 GTLM):** "We had a productive test focusing on integrating our new drivers. Things went very well, and I believe we are ready for the Rolex 24."

**Martin Tomczyk (No. 24 BMW M6 GTLM):** "The Rolex 24 will be my first race in the US, so I am very excited. I have competed at Spa and the Nürburgring 24-hour races, but there certainly is something special about this race in America. I am genuinely looking forward to it."

**Nick Catsburg (No. 24 BMW M6 GTLM):** "This will be my second Rolex 24. My first was last year. The BMW M6 GTLM is a bit different than the BMW M6 GT3 car I raced in Europe, but I am pleased with how the Roar test progressed. Our team is working well together and I am looking for a good result."

**Kuno Wittmer (No. 24 BMW M6 GTLM):** "We have made good progress towards the second season of the BMW M6 GTLM. This will be the seventh Rolex 24 of my career and I would gladly wear a second Rolex on my wrist."





**Media Contact.**

BMW Sports Communications  
Jörg Kottmeier  
Phone: +49 (0)170 – 566 6112  
Email: [joerg.kottmeier@bmw.de](mailto:joerg.kottmeier@bmw.de)

Ingo Lehbrink  
Phone: +49 (0)176 – 203 40224  
Email: [ingo.lehbrink@bmw.de](mailto:ingo.lehbrink@bmw.de)

Thomas Plucinsky  
Phone: +1 (0)201 – 406 4801  
Email: [thomas.plucinsky@bmwna.com](mailto:thomas.plucinsky@bmwna.com)

**Media Website.**

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