



24h Spa-Francorchamps

Sensational victory in Spa-Francorchamps: BMW M6 GT3 celebrates overall win on its 24-hour debut in the Ardennes.

Spa-Francorchamps (BE), 31st July 2016. The BMW M6 GT3 repeated last year's success for its predecessor, the BMW Z4 GT3, by winning the 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps (BE). After 531 laps, the ROWE Racing car number 99, driven by Maxime Martin (BE), Philipp Eng (AT) and Alexander Sims (GB), crossed the finish line in first place. The trio clinched the 23rd victory overall for BMW in the endurance classic at the "Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps".

Local heroes Pascal Ickx (BE) and Gérard Langlois (BE) secured BMW's first triumph at the Ardennes marathon in a BMW 1800 TI/SA back in 1965. Nicky Catsburg (NL), Lucas Luhr (DE) and Markus Palttala (FI) scored victory with the BMW Z4 GT3 last season. Now its successor, the BMW M6 GT3, has also added its name to the list of winners of the 24-hour race in Spa-Francorchamps (BE) – and on its very first appearance.

It was a race of highs, lows and a perfect finish for the victorious #99 BMW M6 GT3. In the initial phase in particular, yellow flags, a safety car phase lasting almost an hour and a lot of traffic in the pit lane kept mixing up the field. Martin, Sims and Eng were even outside the top 30 for a while. As the race went on, they were able to battle their way up through the field lap by lap. When night fell, the BMW M6 GT3 had established itself among the front-runners and led the field. The car entered the pits for a mandatory five-minute stop to change its brakes during a yellow flag phase. Afterwards, Sims, Martin and Eng continued to hold their ground among the front-runners and were in fourth place halfway through the race. They returned to first place in the early hours of the morning. Unperturbed by the changeable conditions, ROWE Racing brought home victory. The triumph was a particularly special experience for Belgian driver Martin at his home race in Spa-Francorchamps.

Last year's winner Nick Catsburg (NL), with Stef Dusseldorp (NL) and Dirk Werner (DE), also drove a fantastic race in the car 98. ROWE Racing's second BMW M6 GT3 was in the top 10 for long periods of the race and also completed laps as the leader. Like their teammates in the sister car, Catsburg, Dusseldorp and Werner also made it through the night without incident. They were in 16th place at the halfway point, made it back into the top 10 with an outstanding display of driving, and established themselves in a strong position. Then, an hour and a half before the end of the race, the #98 BMW M6 GT3 suffered a problem with the clutch. Catsburg, Dusseldorp and Werner were forced to retire.

BMW DTM driver Martin Tomczyk (DE) in the #15 BMW M6 GT3 was also very unlucky. The German contested his first 24-hour race at the "Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps" for BMW Team Italia. Tomczyk, who drove the first stint, showed impressive pace right from the start. The BMW works driver started the race from 47th on the grid and delivered an impressive charging drive. At the end of his double



stint, he handed over the BMW M6 GT3 that was contesting the Pro-Am class to Stefano Colombo (IT) in 16th place. Unfortunately, Tomczyk's performance went unrewarded: the team was forced to return the car to the garage after an accident in the early stages of the race. The marathon also came to an early end for Boutsen Ginion Racing; shortly after six in the morning, a technical defect forced the team to retire.

Quotes after the 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps.

Jens Marquardt (BMW Motorsport Director):

"Last year we bid farewell to the BMW Z4 GT3 with a win in Spa-Francorchamps. The fact that its successor, the BMW M6 GT3, was able to repeat this magnificent success in its first year in action is fantastic. Congratulations to the entire ROWE Racing team on their sensational overall win in Spa. The crew did as flawless a job and so did the drivers Maxime Martin, Philipp Eng and Alexander Sims in the cockpit – and they more than earned first place. With this success on its debut at the 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps, the BMW M6 GT3 proved its enormous potential yet again and showed that it is totally reliable and competitive. I feel particularly sorry for Nick Catsburg, Stef Dusseldorp and Dirk Werner. They drove a very good race before they were forced to retire their car an hour and a half before the end of the race. I would also like to highlight Martin Tomczyk's incredible display of driving, he did a fantastic job with BMW Team Italia. Martin went on an impressive pursuit at his first appearance in Spa; he and his team deserved to do well. It was also a shame for Boutsen Ginion Racing, who were not rewarded for their efforts in this race."

Maxime Martin (#99 BMW M6 GT3, ROWE Racing):

"I can't describe how I'm feeling. I've competed in the 24 Hours of Spa ten times now and have been in the lead, without winning, in the four previous races. I had a technical issue each time, and I was kind of expecting us to be unlucky again this year. The entire team did a flawless job. We didn't have a single problem in the entire race – we were consistently good. It was the best win of my career, alongside my successes in the DTM. When I embraced my father, I felt a surge of emotions. My family has won the race seven times now, that is simply sensational."

Philipp Eng (#99 BMW M6 GT3, ROWE Racing):

"The feeling of winning here is fantastic. There are some races that you want to win in your career as a racing driver, and Spa is definitely one of those. The fact that we are at the top in the BMW M6 GT3's very first year is incredible. This is my first major success as a works driver, my first major win as an endurance specialist – I need to take it all in first. So much happened in the race, and we also had some good fortune. Then when it started to rain again 30 minutes before the end, I asked myself 'Is that really necessary, why now?' I don't need to experience that tension ever again."

Alexander Sims (#99 BMW M6 GT3, ROWE Racing):

"Honestly, I still can't believe it. The last stint in particular was very emotional, and I tried to focus on ending the race safely. My team helped me a lot with that via radio, keeping me informed. The 24 Hours of Spa has been a very special race to me since the start of my career in motorsport, and I never expected to win it after just four years of GT racing. I think that everyone at ROWE Racing and BMW Motorsport did

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a fantastic job with the BMW M6 GT3. What an incredible start; the first season for the car and the first victory at the 24 Hours of Spa. My thanks go to Philipp and Maxime too. They were fantastic from start to finish."

Nick Catsburg (#98 BMW M6 GT3, ROWE Racing):

"I'm still a bit torn at the moment. Naturally, we were unable to finish the race, but we were up there fighting for the leading positions for large sections of the race. We had the required pace. The team did an outstanding job. And our sister car brought home the win. I know what that feels like, and it is something very special for Maxime Martin and the entire team. There is no way that anyone could have predicted such a result in the BMW M6 GT3's first year. It really is fantastic."

Dirk Werner (#98 BMW M6 GT3, ROWE Racing):

"It was an unfortunate race for us. We lost a lap at the start during a yellow flag phase. But from that point on, things went pretty well for us. We had good lap times, were able to keep up with our rivals, but were a lap behind. This meant that we were stuck in sixth or seventh place. Unfortunately, we were unable to finish the race, which is a shame, but that can happen in a 24-hour race. Congratulations to our teammates on their win. They drove a fantastic race."

Stef Dusseldorp (#98 BMW M6 GT3, ROWE Racing):

"It is very frustrating. Somehow, the race seems to have it in for me. It all feels a little bit like last year. We were on the way to getting a good result, everyone delivered a strong performance, and then something like that happens. It is really depressing retiring from the race like that. Fortunately, the other car performed perfectly and they were able to bring home the win. However, overall everyone did a fantastic job, which is why no one can criticise anyone in the team."

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