



DTM

An interview with BMW Motorsport Director Jens Marquardt: “Marco has set the bar very high for the other drivers.”

Munich (DE), 20th October 2016. Marco Wittmann (DE) was crowned DTM champion for the second time at the Hockenheimring (DE) on Sunday. He became the first BMW driver to achieve this feat. In the Team competition, BMW Team RMG finished runner-up, ahead of BMW Team RBM, making it the best-placed BMW team for the third season in a row. BMW also finished second in the DTM Manufacturers' Championship.

In an interview, BMW Motorsport Director Jens Marquardt discusses Marco Wittmann's title win and looks back on the fifth season since BMW's return to the DTM.

Mr Marquardt, how do you rate Marco Wittmann's title win?

Jens Marquardt: “Marco Wittmann really lived up to his nickname ‘Mega Marco’, which he has had since winning his first title in 2014. His top speed, nerves of steel and cleverness made Marco a worthy champion in 2016. He has set the bar very high for the other drivers.”

What makes Marco so strong?

Marquardt: “He doesn't actually have any weaknesses. Marco is extremely quick when it counts on one flying lap in qualifying, at the same time he can also pace a race perfectly and drive very intelligently. This combination of raw speed and brains is what champions are made of. This is the same in any racing series. There are not many drivers with these attributes. Therefore, we are very happy to have Marco among our ranks.”

How did you enjoy the season finale in Hockenheim?

Marquardt: “That was a real thriller, in front of a great backdrop. A total of 142,000 fans watched the final two races live at the track, and were treated to what was pretty much a compact version of the 2016 season. It has been incredibly close and the majority of races have been extremely exciting. Edoardo Mortara produced two very strong races at the end to challenge Marco once again. However, our champion showed what he is made of again – and calmly secured his second title.”

Motorsport

Press contact.

Jörg Kottmeier
+49 170 566 6112
joerg.kottmeier@bmw.de

Ingo Lehbrink
+49 176 203 40224
ingo.lehbrink@bmw.de

Media Website
press.bmwgroup.com/global

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What place in the DTM history of BMW has Marco Wittmann already earned?

Marquardt: "Marco is the first BMW driver to win the DTM Drivers' Championship twice. Only two drivers have ever won more titles than Marco in this series. What more do I need to say? Although he's only 26 years old, and still has the majority of his career ahead of him, Marco is already assured of a place in the history books of the DTM and BMW Motorsport. He is one of the greatest."

BMW M has dedicated a special BMW M4 DTM Champion Edition to Marco...

Marquardt: "Yes, that has become something of a tradition. Bruno Spengler received a BMW M3 DTM Champion Edition in 2012, as did Marco following his first title win in 2014. It is fantastic that BMW M GmbH has now once again created an exclusive special edition of just 200 cars. The relationship between BMW M and BMW Motorsport has always been very close. The BMW M4 DTM Champion Edition is a strong symbol of this close connection."

How would you sum up the 2016 DTM season in general?

Marquardt: "I think the fans have enjoyed one of the most exciting seasons ever in the DTM. We have seen ten different winners. Eighteen of the 24 drivers have made it onto the podium. In qualifying, the drivers were regularly separated by mere fractions of a second. The title race was a thriller, right down to the final laps of the final race. This all shows that the measures taken prior to the start of the season have been effective. The packages of all three manufacturers were of virtually the same standard. Marco made the difference for us. That shows what an important role the driver plays in the DTM."

How would you assess the performances of the individual BMW teams?

Marquardt: "On the whole, we once again showed fantastic team spirit and, with the Drivers' title for Marco Wittmann and second place in the Team and Manufacturers' competitions, we achieved an awful lot together. BMW Team RMG was the most successful of our teams for the third time in a row. Stefan Reinhold and his guys are doing a really outstanding job. However, I am particularly pleased that all our teams made it onto the podium this season. BMW Team RBM finished third in the Team competition, while BMW Team MTEK had the fastest pit crew in the entire DTM field. BMW Team Schnitzer enjoyed a great end to the season in Budapest and Hockenheim with two pole positions and a podium. We can be proud of all our teams."

Press contact.

Jörg Kottmeier
+49 170 566 6112
joerg.kottmeier@bmw.de

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+49 176 203 40224
ingo.lehbrink@bmw.de

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We have seen two BMW drivers for the last time in the DTM, in the form of Martin Tomczyk and António Félix da Costa...

Marquardt: "That is right, but both will remain part of the BMW family and will take on new projects with us. Martin Tomczyk has had an extraordinary DTM career. He has been an instrumental part of this series for 16 years. Above all, however, he is a great guy. With his ability and personality, he is sure to be very valuable to us in international GT racing in the future. The same goes for António Félix da Costa in the FIA Formula E Championship, in which he has been racing from year one. He is an extremely talented racing driver, as he showed emphatically again at this season's DTM finale with his two pole positions. Martin bid farewell with another strong race and was rewarded with a point. Both enjoyed a worthy send-off."

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