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28 October 2019

BMW Motorrad International GS Trophy Female Team Qualifier 2019.

Once more two Female Teams will compete in the Int. GS Trophy, uniting ladies from Colombia, the Netherlands, France, the USA, Australia and the United Kingdom.



Munich/Málaga. The BMW Motorrad International GS Trophy Female Team Qualifier 2019 came to an exciting finish after three days of adventure motorcycling competition near Málaga, Spain. 31 women representing 20 countries all over the world competed for one of the six places on offer in what will be the seventh running of the prestigious BMW Motorrad International GS Trophy, to be held in New Zealand in February 2020.

While prior to the event BMW Motorrad had guaranteed places for three women (one team) in the New Zealand competition, for the second time in GS Trophy history the quality of the riders in this women's qualifier was of such a standard that a second team of three deserved to be included. In the 2017 event this had been communicated at the end of the competition, but this year it was announced ahead of the third and final day, so each could do their utmost to qualify.

The final day's super test did then see the leader board reshuffle, bringing joy and heartbreak in equal measure. Finally, though, the International GS Trophy 2020 has its six women competitors: Isabella Londono Rivas from Colombia, Nikki van der Spek from the Netherlands, Claire Bichard from France, Lisa Taylor from the USA, Andrea Box from Australia and Klara Finkle from the UK.

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It's worth highlighting just how successful this event has become. The first female qualifier, held in 2015, saw ten finalists picked from over 100 applicants. In 2017, 23 competitors won their place in the female final through their national/regional GS Trophy qualifiers. This year, such has been the growth in interest from international GS communities that 32 (including one last minute cancellation) women qualified through to this final.

Unquestionably, this growth both in numbers and riding quality reflects the continued worldwide rise in women's interest in adventure motorcycling. This year the newly participating countries were Argentina, Brazil, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Netherlands and Norway. The presence of competitors from some of those countries –reflects changing attitudes towards women participating in recreational motorcycling.

Here's a brief summary of the daily action in this year's International GS Trophy Female Team Qualifier:

DAY ONE **Thursday 24 October** **Málaga, 21°C, sunny**

After their phased arrival in Málaga over the preceding days (allowing for long haul flights) and having completed registration on the Wednesday afternoon, it was a 7:30am call for breakfast on the first day of the International Female Team Qualifier 2019. By 8:30 am the women had been assigned their BMW F 850 GSs and were riding out of the Alhaurin Golf Resort headed for the Enduro Park Andalusia where four tests awaited them.

The most significant challenge was the trials course which offered the women a long loop over a hillside with special challenge sub-sections which called for fine control and where crashes or course digressions would attract extra penalties. These included a steep hill climb (and descent) in pea shingle, a figure of eight and a prolonged climb with turns and rock steps.

The next challenge would be a test of their fitness. A long run (yes, on foot) along a rocky path in the bottom of a quarry brought the competitors to their bike, whereupon they had to fit the dongle to enable Enduro Pro mode, then fit the seat and ride the bike back along the same rocky path. Naturally against the clock. And yes, there were a few crashes as some of the women were prepared to take a risk or two in the hope of a faster time.

Testing their mechanical aptitude was a challenge that involved changing the front wheel on an F 850 GS, this task being conducted in pairs. The speediest wheel change involved teamwork both in releasing and refitting the wheel as well in balancing the bike as without the front wheel the bike would topple. Like all



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the day one tests this was against the clock – and additionally the women had to both run in and out of the test area (just to ensure a good heart rate!).

The day's final test was probably the most simple, but also the most difficult. Individually, the women would ride their bikes up a straight course picking up and depositing traffic cones along the way. Then at the end of the course they had to dismount and push their bike backwards, weaving through the cones, to return to the start box. The problem was the push backwards along the course was slightly uphill and over loose gravel. In all, a very difficult challenge.

The day rounded out with a fun competition – a ride on a mechanical rodeo bull! This was a lighthearted way of winding down from a tough day in the Enduro Park and a great way to bring the women together socially.

The day's challenges over, the women then rode to a wilderness camp, La Fuente in Barranco Blanco (a nature park), where they were issued with their camping equipment for the next two nights. Most were hard pressed to pitch their tents and get cleaned up and settled before the 8:30pm call to dinner under a marquee.

When the day's results were revealed it was Isabella Londono Rivas from Colombia who held the lead, from the Netherlands' Nikki van der Spek and Claire Bichard from France. But as sportive director Christoph Zimmerman explained, the top-10 were separated by only a handful of points and with two days competition to go, and many more tests to come, it was still wide open as to who would qualify for the Int. GS Trophy in New Zealand in 2020.

DAY TWO **Friday 25 October** **Málaga, 22°C, sunny**

After a busy day one, and a first night camping, the 31 women of the International Female Team Qualifier might have been forgiven for being a bit fatigued on the second morning. But with a full day's riding in the offing, covering a 150km loop, with special tests along the way, they were instead rather bright and certainly keen to improve on their placings from day one – except Isabella Londono Rivas, of course, who simply wanted to maintain her lead in the competition.

A single track (off-road trail) led the women out of La Fuente to the first test situated in a pine forest still in the Barranco Blanco nature park. Split into teams of three, the women were handed a BMW Motorrad Navigator VI GPS unit together with the coordinates for a first waypoint, to which they had to walk or (preferably) run and once they'd reach that they'd find coordinates for the next,



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and so on until they'd located the total of four waypoints before returning to the finish – with photographic evidence of having found each waypoint. Total time allowed: 20 minutes. The results were entertaining, especially if the team failed to set their GPS to an off-highway setting...

Having completed this challenge the women were back on their GS motorcycles for a terrific ride over mixed sealed road, gravel road and trails up into the hills where they found a trials course waiting. As ever, this was a ride against the clock where 'footing', riding outside the marked course and crashing all attracted time penalties. The course followed and crossed the hill's contours and offered testing scenarios such as a turn on the steep camber of a bank, a rock studded climb, turns in loose-ploughed soil and, near the end, a ride through a quarry section. Speed played against accuracy, but all enjoyed the opportunity to again demonstrate impressive off-road skills.

After a return ride back to Barranco Blanco the women started their final test of the day – this a surprising eight hours after they had set out that morning. This was a test of their stamina, for just when they were in sight of the day's finish – and fairly tired – they faced a run up (and down) a 100-foot sand hill (almost cliff) – while carrying a five-litre fuel can. While the ascent was grueling and required climbing with hands as well as feet, the descent was pretty hair-raising as the keenest competitors ran down at speed.

Incredibly, after the three challenges, the top three placed competitors remained the same. Only now it was Nikki van der Spek leading from Isabella Londono Rivas – the position swap came on account of a small crash Isabella sustained at the end of the trial test. That left Claire Bichard still third. With the announcement in the evening that there would be six women going to New Zealand, those holding the remaining Int. GS Trophy places going into the final day were Lisa Taylor (USA), Klara Finkle (GBR) and Chantel Blake (RSA). However, barely 100 points split sixth from 10th (1180-1289) and with the super final (day three) to follow, those precious places were still anyone's game.

DAY THREE **Saturday 26 October** **Málaga, 23°C, sunny**

Fatigue and a cold second night under canvas saw a slightly weary start to day three, although the competitors soon warmed up in the sun as they made their way back to the Enduro Park Andalusia for the super final.

The super final constituted a full lap of the quarry with a succession of challenges along the way. This started in a parkour area with a slalom, followed by a figure of eight, then a succession of angled railway sleepers to ride lengthways, before finally a ride between narrowly-spaced parallel telegraph



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poles. The competitors would then ride out of the parkour's area where they needed to initiate a rear wheel skid to knock over a traffic cone. Then came a zig-zag through deep shingle. Next was a fearsome climb of about 30 meters, something that could barely be climbed on foot and would need a fair charge in second gear followed by judicious throttle feathering over the near-vertical last meters if it was to be scaled successfully. Finally the competitors would return back down through the quarry following a rocky path to the finish.

As expected the super final brought a few changes to the standings. Spectacularly, leader Nikki van der Spek crashed off the very last turn and forfeited the overall win to Isabella Londono Rivas – although both were safely into the Int. GS Trophy Female Team by then. But as expected could happen, it was in the lower leader board where a shuffle of the pack created most sensation. Australian Andrea Box (returning for her second IFT qualifier), in seventh coming into the super final put in a great lap, going clean in several sections and riding at a good pace, while both Klara Finklele (GBR) and Chantel Blake (RSA) suffered falls in the parcours. Consequently Andrea jumped up to fifth in the final standings, Klara held on to make sixth, just, while the unfortunate Chantel dropping to seventh missed her chance to ride in New Zealand.

It is in the nature of competition that there has to be winners and losers and in the International GS Trophy Female Team Qualifier this holds true. However, it is to the credit of the women in this event that the competition does not override the camaraderie and friendships that are formed. The GS Trophy is also a place where East meets West, North meets South, and the women competitors have again shown that we are all more alike than we are different. It's been said before: one world, one GS! It's been an inspiring event and now the sensational six will join the male teams in New Zealand in February for an adventure of a lifetime.

BMW Motorrad International GS Trophy Female Team Qualifier 2019 Final standings:

1. Isabella Londono Rivas (COL) 1342
2. Nikki van der Spek (NLD) 1348
3. Claire Bichard (FRA) 1385
4. Lisa Taylor (USA) 1396
5. Andrea Box (AUS) 1471
6. Klara Finklele (GBR) 1477
7. Chantel Blake (RSA) 1501
8. Petra Kroon (NLD) 1510
9. Christelle van der Meulen (RSA) 1549
10. Laura Valerie Perez del Campo Calderon (MEX) 1573
11. Kandi Marie Spangler (USA) 1576



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12. Caroline MacLean (GBR) 1593
13. Yifei Xu (CHN) 1627
14. Adele Innocenti (ITA) 1657
15. Teresita Rodriguez Rivas (CRI) 1802
16. Maya Mufti (JOR) 1829
17. Grece Kassab (LBN) 1896
18. Virginia Guidetti (ARG) 1970
19. Vanessa Ruzanowsky Grillo Rezende (BRA) 2007
20. Stephanie Schinkel (MEX) 2070
21. Khaizatul Akmar Zabadin (MYS) 2073
22. Yizhen Zhou (CHN) 2139
23. Sylvie Soltges ep. Urbain (FRA) 2172
24. Elis Suriani Johari (MYS) 2430
25. Mieko Yoshida (JPN) 2598
26. Cinthia Morales (BRA) 2611
27. Ai Mizutani (JPN) 2685
28. Siham Loudghiri (MAR) 2709
29. Ananyalan Wattananupong (THA) 2969
30. Kate Wilhemsen (NOR) 3160
- 31. Ibtissam Eleuldj (MAR) 3259**

Statements from the winning riders:

Isabella Londono Rivas (COL):

"This is an unexpected feeling (to have won), I didn't come here anticipating this, I came here to ride this bike and have a great experience – but here I am, number one! Right now I can't imagine going to New Zealand, I can't believe it. Probably when I wake up in the morning I'll think about it, it'll be more real."

Nikki van der Spek (NLD):

"This is unbelievable, New Zealand has been on my bucket list for so long, so to be going now with the GS Trophy is amazing, really! I didn't expect to finish so high. And I'm lucky to be here, I've seen the GS Trophy in the press and online, but this year is the first time Holland is participating, so I thought it's now or never, just do it – and here I am!"

Claire Bichard (FRA):

"I am very proud to be here as I only started to ride off-road one year ago. I love going off-road and being in the nature and going where I want to go on my F 800 GS. People told me to get a smaller moto, but I said no, I want to learn on this moto, I love her. Being here I have felt what it is like to be a part of the GS family, this is a competition but between all the women here there is a link, a bond."



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Lisa Taylor (USA):

"This is incredible and I'm in disbelief, thrilled to bits and excited – and now looking forward to New Zealand. I never thought I'd get here, I really didn't see myself even being here, so this whole thing is quite a surprise. And it's my first time travelling outside of the USA; I absolutely love it and this has given me the gumption to travel internationally some more and get immersed in different cultures and peoples. But for now I have to prepare for New Zealand so I'm just going to keep on riding – make life a ride, for sure!"

Andrea Box (AUS):

"To weeks ago I got married, seven days ago we bought our first house and today I've qualified for a GS Trophy Female Team – it's been a massive month, I'm so excited! This has been three or four years in the making, I've been aspiring to it, every ride it's been in the back of my mind, 'this will make good practice for the GS Trophy' so to have been given a second chance and to have made it is phenomenal. So I must thank my family and my husband Dan – who's waiting for his honeymoon to start!"

Klara Finkle (GBR):

"I came here thinking a nice midfield position would be good because I've been doing trials for about two years and I'm always coming last and I do cry with the frustration. So when at the end of the first day they called the results and they'd got to the top ten without calling my name I honestly thought they'd forgotten me. When they said I was fourth my jaw dropped. This last day I made mistakes and I knew it would be tight, I was biting my nails. I'm over the moon. Three months ago when I took my Beemer for a ride and entered the UK GS Trophy qualifier I could not have imagined it would lead to this!"

Additional statements:

Svenia Ohlsen, BMW Motorrad, Head of Brand Experience:

"I'm so proud to now have our six female Int. GS Trophy riders from six different nations, and also to have seen the improvement the competitors here have shown in riding skills over previous years, it shows we are going in the right direction. It's amazing and a wonderful feeling – and a relief that everything has gone so well. These ladies here have shown it's never too late to change your life, never too late to create something new, to be different, to think differently. I'm very proud about what we've achieved!"

Christoph Zimmerman, Enduro Park Andalusia, Int. GS Trophy Sportive Director:

"The women have really impressed me. They are passionate about their riding and you can see the tiger in them. At first I thought each would fight for herself



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because she wants to win, to go to New Zealand. But I quickly saw how they help each other and how quick they build a community and start working together. So I think it's fantastic to have these six ladies onboard for the Int. GS Trophy, making a beautiful mix. If we went to New Zealand with only men it would be different, more strength, more force, more pushing. But this is not what we want. You want to have a community, to enjoy the ride together. All of the finalists – men and women – have won already, they've won this big adventure, so I'm telling them enjoy the ride and truly see New Zealand, it is beautiful!"

For more information on the Int. GS Trophy please go to www.gstrophy.com.

You will find press material on BMW motorcycles and BMW Motorrad rider equipment in the BMW Group PressClub at www.press.bmwgroup.com.

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The BMW Group

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In 2018, the BMW Group sold over 2,490,000 passenger vehicles and more than 165,000 motorcycles worldwide. The profit before tax in the financial year 2018 was € 9.815 billion on revenues amounting to € 97.480 billion. As of 31 December 2018, the BMW Group had a workforce of 134,682 employees.

The success of the BMW Group has always been based on long-term thinking and responsible action. The company has therefore established ecological and social sustainability throughout the value chain, comprehensive product responsibility and a clear commitment to conserving resources as an integral part of its strategy.

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