



American Le Mans Series

**BMW Team RLL kicks off the 2012 ALMS season in Sebring.**

Munich, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2012. BMW Team RLL launches the defence of its titles in the GT class of the American Le Mans Series (ALMS) at the 12 Hours of Sebring (US) this Saturday. The "Sebring International Raceway" is the oldest circuit in North America and this year hosts the spectacular endurance race for the 60<sup>th</sup> time.

This is not the only important anniversary this year: BMW M is celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2012. A BMW M3 has triumphed in the GT class at Sebring on four occasions – 1997, 1998, 2001 and 2011. BMW also has two overall victories to its name. In 1975 the BMW 3.0 CSL won in Florida, while the BMW V12 LMR prototype crossed the line first after 12 hours in 1999.

Joey Hand (US) and Dirk Müller (DE) return to the ALMS as reigning GT champions. This year they will once again alternate behind the wheel of the no. 56 BMW M3 GT. Twenty three-year-old Jonathan Summerton (US) will join them as the third driver in Sebring, and will also line up at a further three races over the course of the season.

The no.55 BMW M3 GT, which finished runner-up in Sebring last season, will be driven by Bill Auberlen (US) and Jörg Müller (DE). Auberlen has finished third in the Drivers' Championship for the last two seasons. Jörg Müller is contesting his first ALMS season since 2001, when he won the GT title in the BMW M3 GTR. BMW Team RLL has called on the services of another old hand as this car's third driver, in the form of Uwe Alzen (DE). The German is also due to start at the "Petit Le Mans" in Road Atlanta (US).

**Jens Marquardt (BMW Motorsport Director):**

"This weekend BMW Team RLL gets down to business in the American Le Mans Series for the first time since it won its titles in 2011. Everyone has worked hard through the winter to ensure that we remain successful with the BMW M3 GT this season. We will be the team to beat, but we are ready for that challenge. I am delighted that we will once again be represented by such an experienced and impressive team of drivers. Everything is in place for us to enjoy another strong year. Now we are all excited to see how the balance of power pans out in Sebring."

**Bobby Rahal (Team Principal):**

"We've made a number of changes this season. Although not as outwardly obvious as in previous years, we have continued to develop the BMW M3 GT for this season. For 2012, most of the improvements are under the skin to take advantage of some of the new tyres that Dunlop has developed. As we've done in every season, the driver line-up has been modified with Jörg Müller replacing Dirk Werner for the season. We've also added Uwe Alzen as a third driver at both Sebring and Petit. I'm also excited to add Jonathan Summerton for four races to substitute for Joey. Along with my son Graham, Jonathan was one of the first six Formula BMW USA scholarship winners in 2004. I believe Jonathan will do a good job for us. Anchoring the line-up will, of course, be Bill Auberlen and Dirk Müller."



**Bill Auberlen (BMW M3 GT – No. 55):**

"I can't wait for Sebring. I am looking forward to co-driving with Jörg Müller this year and have my fingers crossed that we find success together. The competition is going to be brutal, but we know our cars very well and the team which will work to find every advantage."

**Jörg Müller (BMW M3 GT – No. 55):**

"I have great memories of Sebring. I won there with the BMW V12 LMR in 1999, then won the GT class two years later with the BMW M3 GTR. The season kicks off with a real highlight at Sebring. I always feel very at home in America. Bill Auberlen, Uwe Alzen and I have experienced a lot in motor racing, and our wealth of experience will stand us in good stead."

**Uwe Alzen (BMW M3 GT – No. 55):**

"What could be better than to start the season in sunny Florida, and at a fantastic event like the 12 Hours of Sebring. This circuit is a law unto itself. It covers a long distance, and we have to contend with the prototypes, so it will not be an easy race. I spend a lot of time in Florida every year, so this is something of a home race for me."

**Joey Hand (BMW M3 GT – No. 56):**

"I am more than ready for Sebring this year as I've spent more time testing than ever before. We have tested the ALMS M3 GT twice at Sebring already and I have only recently returned from the test in the BMW M3 DTM in Portugal. Added to that was a week of physical training in Italy. I would love to get the ALMS season started like we did last year with a 1-2 finish. Momentum is important in racing and there is no reason why BMW Team RLL can't keep our championship form rolling on this year."

**Dirk Müller (BMW M3 GT – No. 56):**

"Finally the waiting is over. Everyone at BMW Motorsport, BMW Team RLL and Dunlop is highly motivated to defend the titles we won last year. The preparations have been excellent and I am very optimistic that we will have another successful season. It certainly won't be easy, but we are well prepared. It feels great to be the team to beat again."

**Jonathan Summerton (BMW M3 GT – No. 56):**

"I appreciate the opportunity BMW has given me and will do everything I can to support the BMW Team RLL programme at Sebring. I have had two productive tests with the team and feel ready for my first sports car endurance race."

**Press Contact:** Jörg Kottmeier, Phone: +49 (0)170 5666 112, [joerg.kottmeier@bmw.de](mailto:joerg.kottmeier@bmw.de)  
Ingo Lehbrink, Phone: +49 (0) 176 20340224, [ingo.lehbrink@bmw.de](mailto:ingo.lehbrink@bmw.de)  
Thomas Plucinsky, Phone: +201 406 4801, [thomas.plucinsky@bmwna.com](mailto:thomas.plucinsky@bmwna.com)

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