



Media Information  
BMW M Motorsport  
11<sup>th</sup> January 2023

## **After three years as the BMW Junior Team, Dan Harper, Max Hesse and Neil Verhagen are BMW M works drivers.**

- The BMW Junior Team programme has accomplished its major goal and turned talented youngsters into seasoned works drivers.
- Dan Harper, Max Hesse and Neil Verhagen will continue to compete as BMW Junior Team, but will also take on new challenges as BMW M works drivers.
- At the 24h Nürburgring 2023, BMW Junior Team will join forces with BMW M Team RMG once again to do battle for the podium.

Munich. When the BMW Junior Team had its initial meeting in Munich (GER) in December 2019 and then met up again soon after for the first training camp at Formula Medicine in Viareggio (ITA), there were high hopes for a repeat of the success story of the legendary 1977 training programme. Three years later, those hopes have become reality. Dan Harper (GBR), Max Hesse (GER) and Neil Verhagen (USA) have lived up to their predecessors and are a credit to their mentor Jochen Neerpasch, and, after intense training years, have officially become BMW M works drivers in 2023. They will remain as a team and continue to compete in race highlights such as the 24 Hours Nürburgring (GER) as BMW Junior Team, but their promotion to the works driver squad also gives the trio new opportunities.

Like in 2021 and 2022, Harper, Hesse and Verhagen will contest the iconic endurance race on the Nordschleife alongside BMW M Team RMG once again this season with the goal being a spot on the podium. The trio has enjoyed victory at the 'Green Hell' in both the BMW M6 GT3 and the BMW M4 GT3 in the past two years. They are even the youngest ever overall winners of an NLS race. The BMW Junior Team will also have joint appearances on tracks other than the Nürburgring again in 2023. Additionally, individual appearances as part of their works driver commitment are an option in the future. For example, Harper competed in the 'Gulf 12 Hours' in Abu Dhabi (UAE) for Century Motorsport in December 2022. Hesse will contest the 24 Hours of Dubai (UAE)

this weekend, and Verhagen will race at Daytona (USA) in the new BMW M4 GT4 in the BMW M Endurance Challenge at the end of January. In addition to race appearances, Harper, Hesse and Verhagen will also be involved in plenty of testing in various racing cars. All three of the drivers have already been heavily involved in the development of the new BMW M4 GT4. In their role as BMW M works drivers, they will also have the opportunity to represent the brand at various events.

The trio has enjoyed intensive, varied training on their journey from talented youngsters to BMW M works drivers. Regular fitness and mental training camps with the experts at Formula Medicine were a key element. There has also been intensive collaboration with the BMW M Motorsport engineers, various BMW M Motorsport teams and experienced BMW M works drivers to improve their technical understanding of motorsport. The team-building aspect was just as important to those leading the programme. Harper, Hesse and Verhagen spent much of the past three years living together in a shared house at the Nürburgring, which saw them become a real unit away from the racetrack as well. Sporting highlights were the class win with the BMW M4 GT4 at the 24h Nürburgring in 2020, the overall wins in the NLS in 2021 and in the 24h Qualifiers in 2022, as well as strong performances in GT World Challenge Europe, including at the 24h Spa-Francorchamps (BEL) with ROWE Racing last year. The BMW Junior Team also took the BMW M Hybrid V8 prototype for a spin as part of testing.

### Quotes on the BMW Junior Team:

**Andreas Roos (Head of BMW M Motorsport):** "Dan Harper, Max Hesse and Neil Verhagen are one of BMW M Motorsport's biggest success stories in recent years. With their team spirit and their performances on the racetrack, they ensured that Jochen Neerpasch and the people in charge at the time were absolutely right to bring the legendary BMW Junior Team back. I think that the lads and everyone involved can be very proud of what they have achieved. I'm delighted to have three such young, talented drivers in our works driver squad. They are a perfect fit for what I believe to be our very good mix of youth and experience. I can't wait to see how the BMW Junior Team's journey progresses in 2023."

**Jochen Neerpasch (Founder and Mentor of the BMW Junior Team):** "Our Juniors have reached the first major milestone through intensive teamwork. They have joined the phalanx of BMW M Motorsport works drivers. But the team's training continues. The goal is to help Max, Dan and Neil become a winning team in the major races in motorsport. My personal wish is to see the three of them celebrating on the top step of the podium at Le Mans. On the way they will continue to compete as BMW Junior Team in 2023, and gain experience."

**Dirk Adorf (Mentor of the BMW Junior Team):** "We have been on a journey with the BMW Junior Team that has been as exciting as it has been successful up to this point. The guys have worked their way through all the vehicle classes at the Nordschleife and, as the youngest GT3 race winners of all time, are now one of the very best teams. Our Juniors placed their trust in us at the start of the programme, not knowing what the future held. And BMW M Motorsport also placed their trust in them, fielding them in the top cars and top race series. After three years it is fair to say that the revival of the BMW Junior Team has been a real success. I'm excited to see how things progress in the coming years."

**Dan Harper:** "It has been a fantastic three years with the BMW Junior Team. Just taking part in this programme, and now my first official works driver contract, have been a dream come true for my family and me. There have been so many highlights during the training phase so far: the class win at the 24h Nürburgring, our trip to 24h Daytona, the battle for the podium at the 24h Spa-Francorchamps until just before the end, and the first outing in the BMW M Hybrid V8. I am very grateful for all these opportunities and hope that this is just the beginning of a long partnership."

**Max Hesse:** "Since sitting in a kart, my dream has been to make it as a works driver for a manufacturer. It's fantastic to have now achieved that goal. I can only thank all those in charge at BMW M Motorsport and Jochen Neerpasch for selecting Dan, Neil and me for this fantastic programme. I believe it was a brilliant selection because the three of us have got on really well on a personal level throughout. Whether on the racetrack, at the fitness camps or at our home, we have worked together terrifically as a team and have formed a very close personal bond. I'm very grateful to Dan and Neil for this. There has never been any egoism or internal competition. We have always pulled together. Which

made us strong and obviously convinced BMW M Motorsport that we have what it takes to be works drivers. Hopefully we will be able to continue this successful collaboration for many years to come."

**Neil Verhagen:** "I have learned an incredible amount these past three years. It was a privilege to work alongside experienced teams. I can't thank BMW M Motorsport, in particular Jochen Neerpasch, Dirk Adorf and Sven Bluszcz, enough for their trust and their support. I think that Dan, Max and I have proved what we are capable of, and have now been rewarded for this with the works contracts. I always dreamed of being able to make a career out of my passion. Now I have achieved this major goal. I'm really looking forward to my racing programme in the coming years."

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