

BMW Group

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BMW of North America and The Petersen Automotive Museum Celebrate 50 Years of the 3 Series in a New Exhibit.

The Ultimate Racing Machine. 50 Years of the 3 Series in Motorsports Opens for Twelve Months in The Petersen Vault.

Woodcliff Lake, NJ – July 17, 2025... BMW of North America in partnership with the Petersen Automotive Museum announced the opening of "The Ultimate Racing Machine. 50 Years of the BMW 3 Series in Motorsports" exhibit in the Phil Hill Legends Room of the museum's recently reimaged James H. Frank Family Vault.

"For 50 years, the 3 Series has embodied the spirit of competition and innovation that drives the automotive world forward. This exhibit offers visitors a rare look at how BMW's motorsport DNA has evolved—both on the track and on the street." Said Terry L. Karges, Executive Director, Petersen Automotive Museum.

"We are excited to celebrate 50 years of BMW 3 Series in partnership with the Petersen Automotive Museum with this special exhibit." Said Thomas Plucinsky, Head of BMW Group Classic USA. "The original BMW 3 Series and now the BMW 3 Series with its 'fraternal twins', the 4 Series, are the core of the BMW brand. 'The Ultimate Racing Machine' exhibit brings together seven of the most successful and important race cars—one from each generation." The exhibit traces the evolution of the iconic BMW model line through all seven generations, showcasing its impact on motorsport and the marque's heritage. The core group of race cars has been combined with three wonderfully preserved street examples of the 3 Series including one of the three remaining V8 powered M3 GTR Straßenversion (homologation street version).

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The featured models include:

First Generation (E21)

1978 BMW 320i Group 5

In December 1976, BMW decided to contest the Under 2-Liter Class in the World Championship for Makes and approved the development of the E21 3 Series into a Group 5 specification race car. Just three months later, the BMW Motorsport engineering team had transformed the 3 Series into a lightweight exotic race car with titanium coil springs, magnesium uprights, an all aluminum roll cage and wheel hubs. Everything from the engine and transmission, to the driver seat was repositioned for optimum weight balance, and the steel bodywork was replaced with fiberglass shaped in the wind tunnel. The engine for the E21 320 would be the 340 hp M12/7 four-cylinder based on the production M12 and used in Formula 2. This engine also formed the basis of the turbocharged engine developed by McLaren Engineering in the USA for the 1977 320i Turbo that raced in IMSA.

Championship: 1978 World Championship for Makes

Prepared by: Team Faltz Essen

Driven by: Dieter Quester, Derek Bell, Hans-Joachim Stuck and others

Results: Class Manufacturer Champion, Class Win at Mugello, Class Win at Watkins Glen

1983 BMW 320i US Version

In 1975, BMW introduced the 320i, the first of a long line of models known as the 3 Series. The car had an updated version of the strong overhead cam engine used in the 2002 incorporating Bosch fuel injection. The MacPherson strut front suspension, semi-trailing arm rear suspension and front disc brakes were also improved 2002 components. The new 3 Series featured more interior room, a stiffer chassis and improved ergonomics, all in a stylish body. The 320i was sold through the 1983 model year. The car on exhibit is a low mileage, unrestored, late US model example.

Second Generation (E30)

1990 BMW M3 Group A DTM

The second generation E30 3 Series came to market in 1982 and was homologated as the 'M3' in March 1987 for the popular and growing Group A racing rules. Among the prerequisites for homologation was the production of 2,500 BMW M3s for the street, built within the calendar year. Of those, 45 cars were shipped to BMW Motorsport for conversion to race cars. At the BMW Motorsport workshop in Garching, they were fitted with a welded tubular roll cage that tripled the chassis structural rigidity, the interior was removed and added a lightweight Kevlar racing seat and 110 L fuel cell. The rest of the parts needed for racing were included in a BMW Motorsport racing kit.

The car on exhibit was campaigned by Team Bigazzi in the Deutsche Tourenwagen Meisterschaft (DTM) championship for British driver Steve Soper. Then 38 years old, Soper had joined the BMW factory squad in 1989. This chassis was built to the final Evolution specification and saw action in DTM during 1991 and 1992 seasons. It is powered by last evolution of the 2.5 liter

S14/3 inline 4-cylinder engine, featuring slide throttles, a carbon fiber intake plenum and a BMW Motorsport electronic engine management. It develops upwards of 374 bhp at 8500 RPM and is mated to a 6-speed transmission.

Championship: 1992 Deutsche Tourenwagen Meisterschaft (DTM)

Prepared by: Team Bigazzi

Driven by: Steve Soper

Results: P9 in Championship, Two wins, 13 top ten finishes.

Third Generation (E36)

1996 BMW M3 GT-2

Based on the popular high-performance M3 coupe, this purposeful machine was equipped with race-tuned versions of the 3.2-liter inline 6-cylinder production engine. Removal of normal road equipment such as air conditioning, audio system, anti-lock braking system, sound insulation, interior etc. reduced vehicle weight to 2,350 pounds contributing to a favorable power-to-weight ratio in their racing class. Engine power reached a peak of 425 hp; with top speeds ranging up to 175 mph, according to gearing selected for specific racetracks.

The car on exhibit is one of the Team PTG prepared BMW M3 race cars that won both the 1997 and 1998 Drivers' and Manufacturers' Championships in SportsCar GT-2 category for production-based cars. This car and its teammates won 17 straight races over these two seasons. PTG Team Principal, Tom Milner named each chassis of the program and this chassis, "Greta", is the most heavily developed version. It won its class at both the 12 Hours of Sebring in 1998 and the 24 Hours of Daytona in 1997.

Championship: IMSA GT-2

Prepared by: Team PTG (Prototype Technology Group)

Driven by: Bill Auberlen, Mark "Simo" Simonaitis, Boris Said

Results: 1997, 1998 Driver and Manufacturer Championships GT-2 Class

Class win at the 1997 24 hours of Daytona,

Class wins at both the 1997 and 1998 12 hours of Sebring

1995 BMW M3 LTW

BMW of North America's product planners have always looked for ways to bring exciting cars to their customers and to create limited-production models aimed squarely at performance enthusiasts. The first of these was the 1995 BMW M3 LTW (Lightweight) conceived as a ready-to-race model for the then-popular showroom-stock IMSA Firehawk series. Built with no radio, no air conditioning and aluminum doors, the M3 LTW was 225 pounds lighter than the regular E36 M3. In keeping with its racing purpose, several parts designed for track use such as a taller

rear wing, a BMW Motorsport oil pan and a dual-pickup oil pump were shipped in the trunk. In total 126 example were produced. The car on exhibit is a low mileage, unrestored example.

Fourth Generation (E46)

2001 BMW M3 GTR

The most unique feature of the M3 GTR was its powerplant—the first M3 in the history of the company to feature a V8 engine. Designated “P60”, the 4.0-liter engine was the first engine designed and constructed by BMW Motorsport specifically as a race engine. This unique engine was smaller and weighed 30 pounds less than the inline 6-cylinder of the regular M3, despite adding two cylinders. The engine featured a dry sump for optimal lubrication at high cornering loads. A “flat plane” crankshaft was also utilized, allowing for more efficient exhaust scavenging without the need to have header primaries cross over from one bank to the other enabling optimal flow at high rpms. This combination resulted in a very reliable 444 horsepower at 7500 rpm in race trim. In addition to the BMW Motorsport-developed 4.0-liter V8 power plant, the GTR had such signature features as the two openings in the hood for a radiator ducting system that maximized engine cooling without adding aerodynamic drag, an almost completely smooth underbody, a step-up differential to minimize rear axle angles and a carbon fiber roof panel.

The BMW M3 GTR was a dominant competitor throughout the single season that it contested. Bill Auberlen, Boris Said and Hans J-Stuck capped off the season for Team PTG and BMW North America by winning the 2001 Petit Le Mans finale. As a tribute to a grieving nation and to those who lost their lives on September 11th, Team PTG owner Tom Milner had created the patriotic “Stars and Stripes” design specifically for this race. As a result of the win and the special livery, this car became a legend for BMW racing fans in America.

Championship: 2001 American Le Mans Series (ALMS)

Prepared by: Team PTG

Driven by: Bill Auberlen, Hans J. Stuck, Boris Said

Results: 2 wins, 4 podiums in 6 races. Win at the 1000km Petit LeMans 2001

2001 BMW M3 GTR Straßenversion

One of three remaining M3 GTR Straßenversion (road version) produced to homologate the racing M3 GTR. The M3 GTR Straßenversion was developed in parallel with the racing program by the special vehicles department of the BMW Regensburg Plant. The road car used a detuned version of the P60 racing engine rated at 350 horsepower at 7,000 rpm – complete with dry-sump lubrication and sharply canted radiator with hood venting. Power was transmitted through a racing style twin-disc clutch to a 6-speed manual gearbox and variable locking M differential.

The M3 GTR featured an extensively stiffened chassis and a very sporty suspension setup. The M3 GTR was dramatically lowered compared to the stock M3, additional bracing was fitted between the firewall and strut towers as well as between the rear shock towers. The extended and redesigned front and rear fascias and the rear wing optimized the aerodynamics of the M3 GTR by reducing lift.

The M3 GTR road car benefited from extensive weight reduction measures. The roof, rear spoiler, hood vents, front fascia and rear fascia were all constructed of carbon fiber reinforced plastic (CFRP) – just as on the race version. The interior of the GTR was also reworked with an eye on light weight. Leather-covered Recaro racing seats were added, the rear seats were removed, and special M3 GTR sill plates finished off the interior changes.

A total of ten cars were completed before the program was terminated. Seven of those were engineering development cars that were later recycled. Three production level examples were produced, and these survive as part of the BMW Group Classic collection. The road car debuted simultaneously at the Dubai importer and the Road Atlanta paddock during the 2001 Petit Le Mans event. The GTR road cars have been cloaked in mystery and have been part of M3 lore ever since.

Fifth Generation (E92)

2011 BMW M3 GT

Based on the fourth-generation street BMW M3 (E92), the 2011-2012 M3 GT race car was developed by BMW Motorsport for the American Le Mans Series / Intercontinental Le Mans Cup rules and was campaigned as a partnership between BMW of North America, Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing and BMW Motorsport. In developing the BMW M3 GT, BMW Motorsport engineers produced a high technology car that could win against pure sports cars in the ultra-competitive GT racing class. Results soon spoke for themselves both in ALMS and in the ILMC series in Europe (with almost identical sister cars running under the same race numbers). At the end of the 2011 season, the BMW M3 GT had completely swept the ALMS championships: Driver (Müller/Hand), Team, Manufacturer and the Michelin GreenX efficiency challenge.

The car on exhibit, Chassis #1101, raced as the No. 56 driven by Joey Hand and Dirk Müller for the 2011 and part of the 2012 seasons. It has several podiums to its credit in 2011 and 2012 including two dramatic Sebring 12hr wins in 2011 and 2012.

Championship: 2011-2012 American Le Mans Series (ALMS)

Prepared by: BMW Team RLL

Driven by: Joey Hand, Dirk Müller, Jonathan Summerton

Results: Winner ALMS Driver, Team, Manufacturer and Michelin Green X Championships 2011
Class wins at both 2011 and 2012 12 hours of Sebring

Sixth Generation (F82)

2020 BMW M4 DTM Class 1

The 2020 BMW M4 DTM Class 1 represented the pinnacle of development of the Deutsche Tourenwagen Masters formula before the series adopted FIA GT3 type cars in 2021. The 2019-20 Class 1 cars were the most technologically advanced closed roof race cars ever produced. With a carbon fiber chassis and body, a weight of 2,163 lbs and powered by the BMW P48 2-liter TwinPower Turbo 4-Cylinder engine, the BMW M4 DTM could accelerate from 0-62 mph in 2.5 seconds, had a top speed greater than 185 mph and could achieve corner loads up to 3g's. The Class 1 rules introduced features like Push-to-Pass that temporarily added 30hp and a rear wing with DRS (Drag Reduction System) that could be activated under specific conditions to increase top speed.

The car on exhibit was raced in the 2020 season by BMW Team RMG with Timo Glock as the driver. It is the only BMW DTM Class 1 race car in North America.

Championship: Deutsche Tourenwagen Masters (DTM)

Prepared by: BMW Team RMG

Driven by: Timo Glock

Results: 0 Wins, 1 Podium, 18 Races, 15 Top Ten Finishes

Seventh Generation (G82)

2023 BMW M4 GT4

The BMW G82 M4 GT4 makes the third generation of customer race cars built to the FIA GT4 rules. The M4 GT4 is the second step for BMW race car drivers working towards racing in the top level GT3 category. The M4 GT4 achieves its outstanding performance through the newest state of the art technology from pure racing and the production model. The latest generation BMW M 6-cylinder TwinPower turbo engine capable of up to 550 horsepower (allowable power output is regulated by the race series) mated to a 7-speed paddle shifted transmission provides a competitive and very reliable powertrain. Several Motorsport systems such as the limited slip differential and the production model's 10 stage traction control keep the BMW M4 GT4 planted on the track.

The car on exhibit is one of six being used by the BMW Performance Center West in Thermal, California, for advanced driver training and racing driver coaching.

Championship: Eligible for IMSA Michelin Pilot Challenge, SRO GT America Series
prepared by the BMW Performance Center West
Driven by: N/A
Results: N/A

The Ultimate Racing Machine. 50 Years of BMW 3 Series in Motorsport will run through June 2026. The Petersen Automotive Museum is located at 6060 Wilshire Blvd. Los Angeles, CA and is open daily from 10am – 6pm. General admission tickets are \$21, and Vault tickets are an additional charge of \$28. Tickets are available at petersen.org/tickets.

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BMW Group in the United States.

BMW of North America, LLC was established 50 years ago to support the sales, marketing and distribution of BMW automobiles in the U.S. BMW Motorrad was brought into the fold in 1980. In 1993 BMW Group Financial Services NA, LLC was founded, and one year later BMW Manufacturing Co., LLC began assembling vehicles in South Carolina. In 2002 and 2003, BMW Group established MINI USA, and Rolls-Royce Motor Cars NA, LLC relaunching two iconic brands and rounding out its product portfolio.

Today, the BMW Group has a nationwide corporate footprint in the U.S. which consists of nearly 30 locations in 12 different states. Beyond the National Sales Company and Financial Services headquarters in Woodcliff Lake, NJ, its manufacturing plant in Spartanburg, South Carolina, and numerous other operational facilities, BMW Group in the U.S. also includes Designworks, a strategic design consultancy in Santa Monica, CA, BMW Group Technology Office USA, a technology research and development center in Silicon Valley, and BMW i Ventures, a venture capital fund, also in Silicon Valley.

BMW Group Plant Spartanburg is the largest single BMW production facility in the world, and the global center of competence for BMW Sports Activity Vehicles including the X3, X4, X5, X6, X7, and XM. The plant assembles more than 1,500 vehicles each day, and up to 450,000 annually. Since 1994, Plant Spartanburg has assembled over 7 million BMW vehicles in the U.S.

The BMW Group sales organization in the U.S. is represented through a network of 350 BMW retailers, 144 BMW motorcycle retailers, 105 MINI passenger car dealers, and 38 Rolls-Royce Motor Car dealers. The company's activities provide and support over 120,000 jobs across the U.S. and contribute more than 43.3 billion to the U.S. economy annually.

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Journalist note: Information about BMW Group and its products in the USA is available to journalists on-line at www.bmwusnews.com www.miniusanews.com and www.press.bmwna.com