Preview: BMW Motorsport Gets Ready For The 24-Hour Race at Nürburgring

The preparation is over and now it is time for the real thing. Tomorrow the cars in the 31st 24 -hour Race at Nürburgring will tackle the famous 26-Kilometer Nordschleife track for qualifying for this weekend's race. This year, BMW Motorsport has entered two of its M3 GTRs that have been eagerly waiting for action since the team's last race in the American Le Mans Series in 2001. Schnitzer Motorsport, with help from the BMW Motorsport engineers, is running the cars.

BMW has gone for a combination of youth and experience for the seven drivers. The drivers in car number 43 are the all German team of Claudia Hürtgen and ETCC regulars Dirk and Jörg Müller, while the multinational team in car number 42 are Germany's Hans -Joachim Stuck, Denmark's John Nielsen and America's Boris Said. As if this lineup is not impressive enough, BMW has also acquired the services of Belgium's Marc Duez, who has won this race four times, as a reserve driver for both cars.

On Wednesday, May 28, all the cars completed a concours lap of the circuit and this proved an eye opener to the newcomers to this event, as the fans were allowed to be on the track. It took over an hour and a half and approximately every hundred yards the drivers stopped to talk to the fans, let them have a close look at the cars and sign autographs.

The first qualifying session on Friday, May 30, will be from 10:00 AM to 12.00 PM and the second from 7:00 PM to 11:00 PM. The race, which will start at 3:00 PM on Saturday, May 31, will have over 200 cars on the starting grid.

Car No 42 – BMW M3 GTR

Hans-Joachim Stuck: I have won this race twice and perhaps I know this track as well as any of the other drivers. This race is where the true basis of motorsport is. You have top level competition and you have inexperienced people. This is great as it gives people who love motorsport the chance to race against experienced people in works teams. This is the best circuit in the world. There is not another track that can match it.

Motorsport

Boris Said : You can't explain the craziness of driving round yesterday in the concours. You can't put it into words. You have to experience it and see it. The closest I can compare it to is if you take the craziest NASCAR race, put the fans on the track and spread them out for 15 miles. My lap was an hour and a half, but I think I will be a bit quicker now I have Marc (Duez) here to teach me!

John Nielsen: I have never done this race before. I have always wanted to do it but there was never time or the right opportunity. It was on my list to do and so I am delighted to be doing it now. I have done the long distance trophy four hour races, so I do know the track well. The car looks beautiful and it is nice to drive. The competition is very tough, there is no doubt about it, but being with BMW and Schnitzer I think we have a good chance. I have only had a couple of days testing at Spa, but the car is easy to drive and you get used to it very quickly. Mechanically I am pretty sure it will do the distance.

Car No 43 – BMW M3 GTR

Jörg Müller: It was amazing when we were out yesterday as some of those guys on the track were stroking the rear wing, some were praying in front of the car and lying down in the road. It was fantastic. We have a lot of very good fans here and I hope we are going to give them a nice show. It is a long time since I last drove this car in America. I am very happy to drive a car with such power again in this special surrounding at the Nurburgring. It is tough to drive this car but it is fun. I have done the race three times, with seventh my best position, so I am hoping to do better.

Dirk Müller: This will be my first 24 hour race here. I have only done a 4 hour race here and that was a few weeks ago with Boris. That was my first experience so I am quite excited about this weekend. I really love being here so many thanks to BMW. The cars are good and I am really pleased to see the M3 GTR out again, we need this car for this race. BMW has won this race 16 times, and I would like to be in the car that wins this race for the marque the 17th time.

Claudia Hürtgen: I have raced here four times before. I love the feeling you get here, especially with the spectators so close to the track. It is a big event and I am very happy to be here. It is special for me to be here as a factory driver for BMW. I know I am in a very good team and that is important for this race.

Reserve Driver

Marc Duez: I have won this race four times and competed in it about 15 times. This car is the best compromise you can imagine for such a race. You have reliability, power, good team-mates, a good crew and so you have potential for a good result. The race is long and there are lots of cars on the track. We always have to race with a little reserve in case of strange reactions from some of the drivers on the track because many of them are amateurs.

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Contact: Roy Oliemuller, BMW Corporate Communications, 201–307-4082
roy.oliemuller@bmwna.com

Motorsport