Customer Racing

After 16 hours: BMW teams still look good for strong results at Spa after an eventful night.

Spa-Francorchamps, 29th July 2012. Early on Sunday morning BMW is still involved in the fight for top positions with two of its BMW Z4 GT3s at the 24-hour race at Spa-Francorchamps (BE). Gregory Franchi (BE), Frank Kechele (DE) and Mathias Lauda (AT) of Vita4One Racing hold third, with eight hours to go at the iconic Ardennes circuit. After Marc VDS Racing had led the fourth round of the Blancpain Endurance Series for long periods of the race, Markus Palttala (FI), Bas Leinders (BE) and Maxime Martin (BE) are currently running in fifth.

At one point the lead for the local heroes of Marc VDS Racing stretched up to more than a lap on their closest rivals. However, the many safety car periods and incidents during the night didn't really help the squad with its mission to consolidate first place. Martin lost valuable time when the safety car was deployed just a few seconds after his pit stop. He was bound to wait at the red pit exit lights to let the field pass by safely. In addition, Palttala had to pit for a stop-and-go penalty shortly after 04:30 in the morning. He received this penalty for an incident that had happened in free practice.

While the second Marc VDS Racing BMW Z4 GT3 (number 4) successfully managed to fight back from some problems in the early stages of the race and was holding 17th place in the morning, some other BMW teams are already out of the race. This goes for the Race Art BMW Z4 GT3 as well as for the two DB Motorsport cars. When they retired from the race, Jeroen den Boer (NL), Stéphane Lémeret (BE) and Jeffrey van Hooydonck (BE) were running in fifth with their number36 car. The ROAL Motorsport BMW Z4 GT3 is back on the track, following lengthy repairs that were necessary after an accident. Unlike the first part of the race, when heavy rain had made for extremely difficult conditions, it remained mainly dry during the night.

Markus Palttala (Marc VDS Racing, BMW Z4 GT3 #3):
"I really couldn't understand why I got such a massive penalty for the race from free practice. As a consequence, I personally had to wait 12 hours before I was able to join the action on the track. We wanted to delay the penalty as long as possible, in order to make sure we could score maximum points up to the 12-hour mark. It felt really strange watching Maxime and Bas completing the first half of the race on their own. It was a great feeling, when I finally took to the track with our BMW Z4 GT3. The car went well during my double stint. We will keep on fighting."

Mathias Lauda (Vita4One Racing, BMW Z4 GT3 #66):
"I'm really happy with my stint in the early morning hours. When I jumped into the cockpit, it was still completely dark. But the later it got the quicker we were running. This was good fun. The BMW Z4 GT3 is working just great over here. We still have a good chance for a positive outcome of this race. Our goal is to finish within the top-3. Our pace is definitely good. And if the car will go the distance, there is a chance for a podium finish."

The BMW teams at the Spa-Francorchamps 24 Hours after 16 hours:

#3 Marc VDS Racing Team, 5th
Markus Palttala (FI), Bas Leinders (BE), Maxime Martin (BE)

#4 Marc VDS Racing Team, 17th
Bert Longin (BE), Henri Moser (CH), Mike Hezemans (NL)

#29 ROAL Motorsport, 41st
Tom Coronel (NL), Stefano Colombo (IT), Edoardo Liberati (IT), Michela Cerruti (IT)

#36 DB Motorsport, retired
Jeroen den Boer (NL), Stéphane Lémeret (BE), Jeffrey van Hooydonck (BE)

#37 DB Motorsport, retired
Simon Knap (NL), Andrew Danyliw (CA), Jochen Habets (NL), Léon Rijnbeek (NL)

#66 Vita4One Racing Team, 3rd
Gregory Franchi (BE), Frank Kechele (DE), Mathias Lauda (AT)

#70 Race Art, retired
Nick Catsburg (GB), Roger Grouwels (NL), Jaap van Lagen (NL), Robert Nearn (GB)

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