

BMW Motorsport – 24-Hour Race Nürburgring Season Review 2005.



BMW M3 GTR makes history as it bows out in the Eifel.

Team BMW Motorsport claimed a first in the 33rd edition of the Nürburgring 24-Hour Race: never before in the history of this endurance classic had a team managed to claim a one-two win in two consecutive years. In 2004, the Schnitzer racing team under manager Charly Lamm (GER) and in collaboration with the BMW Motorsport engineers had managed to cross the finishing line in first and second places. Then on 7th/8th May 2005, the BMW M3 GTR again proved the measure of all things in the Eifel.

After 139 laps, the number 2 GT sports car with 500 bhp was first to take the chequered flag. Boris Said (USA), the final driver, rounded off the victory for himself and his three team-mates Andy Priaulx (GBR), Duncan Huisman (NLD) and Pedro Lamy (PRT). Five laps behind them the previous year's winners from Germany – Dirk Müller, Jörg Müller and Hans-Joachim Stuck – finished the exciting event as runners-up.

For BMW it was the 18th overall win and the eighth clean sweep in the "Green Hell". No car brand has raked in more wins on the legendary Nordschleife than the Munich manufacturers. With 104 class wins, BMW was also able to boost its unmatched tally to claim more than double the score of second-placed Opel, which has taken 48 class wins since 1970.

"Nobody really thought it would be possible to replicate the perfect result of the previous year," said BMW Motorsport Director Mario Theissen. "But the team did it. Conditions were anything but straightforward, but both the drivers and the pit crew kept their cool – and that's what counts in a marathon like this. A huge compliment to the team. With this victory, the BMW M3 GTR has retired from the race track in impressive style."

180,000 spectators in the German Eifel region were treated to a thrilling race. The weather was so changeable that strategist Lamm was forced several times to respond instantly to new conditions. As in the previous year, the team manager's decisions proved right in most cases. For the drivers, too, the Nordschleife had plenty of surprises in store: "During my last laps it was snowing," noted Huisman. "That's something I've never experienced before in a 24-Hour Race."

Apart from the capricious weather so typical of the Eifel, the pit stops were also a source of keen tension. Car number 1, for example, had to spend 70 minutes in the pits shortly before the halfway mark of the race for a clutch replacement, but subsequently clawed its way impressively back to the front. On lap 90, the number 2 BMW M3 GTR took over the lead – and held on to it until the end of the race.

“It’s an incredible event and an incredible car,” said Priaux after the win. It was his debut on the Nordschleife and he delivered a fault-free race. “Particularly in the kind of conditions we had this weekend, the race really comes into its own.” Said and Huisman also found themselves at the top of the podium for the first time in this endurance event. For Lamy, it was the fourth time he had been in the winning car’s driver squad.

The seasoned drivers of the second BMW M3 GTR graciously congratulated their team-mates: “Last year we won, this time it was the turn of the others,” said Stuck, who had already won the 24-Hour Race for BMW three times, including its debut event in 1970. “To take the first two places with both cars two years in a row is just a unique achievement. It’s a pity the BMW M3 GTR is now heading for the museum.”

The outstanding career of the GT Coupé came to a close with this second one-two finish on the Nürburgring. The BMW M3 GTR was developed in 2001 with the American Le Mans Series (ALMS) in mind and secured BMW all the titles in the championship’s GT Class from the word go. Jörg Müller won the Drivers’ title, BMW Motorsport won the Team trophy, and BMW secured the Manufacturers’ Championship. “The BMW M3 GTR will finally enter the history books as a winner,” noted Lamm of the valedictory appearance of the most powerful M3 of all time.

Theissen added: “The BMW M3 GTR has contributed several chapters to BMW’s success story and earned itself a niche of honour in the museum thanks to its achievements. We won’t be forgetting it in a hurry.”

Profile: Team BMW Motorsport – Schnitzer Motorsport.

Although Dirk Müller of BMW Team Deutschland – Schnitzer Motorsport just missed out on the title in the FIA World Touring Car Championship (WTCC), the experienced squad led by team manager Charly Lamm and backed by BMW Motorsport engineers claimed another historic success in 2005. As in the previous year, the two BMW M3 GTRs of Team BMW Motorsport completed the Nürburgring 24-Hour Race in first and second place. Never before in this event had a team managed to take two one-two wins in a row.

For Schnitzer it was already win number five in the endurance classic. Together with BMW, the team can also lay claim to four wins in the traditional 24 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps. Long-distance races are a speciality of Schnitzer Motorsport. Representing BMW in 1999, the team took the BMW V12 LMR open prototype to victory in the quintessential endurance classic – the Le Mans 24 Hours. Race wins and titles in the American Le Mans Series (ALMS) were to follow, this time with the BMW M3 GTR. In the GT Class of this series, Schnitzer won everything that was up for grabs in 2001: Jörg Müller took the Drivers' title, BMW Motorsport came top of the Team classification, and BMW took the Manufacturers' prize.

In the company's more than 40-year history, Schnitzer in partnership with BMW has won almost two dozen titles around the world to date.

The list of drivers who have competed for Schnitzer in the course of their career reads like a Who's Who of motor sport. 39 former Formula One drivers alone have been at the wheel for Schnitzer, among them Keke Rosberg (FIN), Nelson Piquet (BRA) and René Arnoux (FRA).

As in the European Touring Car Championship of the last three years, Dirk Müller and Jörg Müller were also driving their BMW 320i models for BMW Team Deutschland in the WTCC. In the battle for the 2004 Drivers' Championship, Dirk Müller was only trumped by Andy Priaulx at the season's finale, while Jörg Müller finished fifth. However, with a total score of 145 points, BMW Team Deutschland played a key role in enabling BMW to claim the Manufacturers' Championship.

Team director:	Herbert Schnitzer
Team manager:	Charly Lamm
Founded:	1963
Address:	Görlitzer Straße 2a, 83395 Freilassing
Website:	www.schnitzer.de

Major successes:

1966	1 st place German Championship (BMW 2002 ti)
1975	1 st place European Formula 2 (Martini BMW)
1976	2 nd place GT Manufacturers' World Championship (BMW 3.5 CSL)
1978	1 st place German Racing Championship (BMW 320)
1980–2004	Ten wins in Touring Car Races in Macau – Guia Race (BMW 320, BMW 635 CSi, BMW M3, BMW 320i)
1983, 1986, 1988	1 st place ETCC (BMW 635 CSi, BMW M3)

1985, 1986, 1988	1 st place Spa 24-Hour Race
1990, 1995	(BMW 635 CSi, BMW M3, BMW 320i)
1987	1 st place World Touring Car Championship (BMW M3)
1989, 1991	1 st place 24-Hour Race Nürburgring (BMW M3)
1989	1 st place DTM Championship (BMW M3)
1989, 1990	1 st place Italian Touring Car Championship (BMW M3)
1993	1 st place British Touring Car Championship (BMW 318i)
1994	1 st place Asia Pacific Championship (BMW 318is)
1995	1 st place Japanese Touring Car Championship (BMW 320i)
	1 st place ADAC Super Touring Car Cup (BMW 320i)
1998	1 st place German Super Touring Car Championship (BMW320i)
1999	1 st place Le Mans 24-Hour Race (BMW V12 LMR)
	1 st place Sebring 12-Hour Race (BMW V12 LMR)
2001	1 st place GT Class American Le Mans Series (BMW M3 GTR)
2002	2 nd place FIA ETCC Team Championship (BMW 320i)
	2 nd and 4 th place FIA ETCC Drivers' Championship (Jörg and Dirk Müller)
2003	2 nd place FIA ETCC Team Championship (BMW 320i)
	2 nd and 5 th place FIA ETCC Drivers' Championship (Jörg and Dirk Müller);
	Nürburgring 24-Hour Race (BMW M3 GTR)
2004	1 st and 2 nd place Nürburgring 24-Hour Race (BMW M3 GTR)
	2 nd place FIA ETCC Team Championship (BMW 320i)
	2 nd and 4 th place FIA ETCC Drivers' Championship (Dirk and Jörg Müller)
	1 st and 2 nd place Macau GP – Guia Race (BMW 320i),
	1 st and 2 nd place in rounds of BF Goodrich Long-Distance Championship at Nürburgring (BMW M3 GTR);
	Class win GT2 and 6 th overall Spa-Francorchamps 24-Hour Race (BMW M3 GTR)
2005	2 nd and 5 th place FIA WTCC Drivers' Championship (Dirk and Jörg Müller)
	2 nd place FIA WTCC Team Championship (BMW 320i)
	1 st and 2 nd place Nürburgring 24-Hour Race (BMW M3 GTR)