



Media information
10 October 2022

BMW Motorrad International GS Trophy 2022 Southeast Europe. Recap.



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The BMW Motorrad International GS Trophy 2022 – what a ride.

Munich. The BMW Motorrad International GS Trophy 2022 Southeast Europe, the eighth edition, concluded one month ago on 10 September. After 1,230 km of hard adventure riding and 15 special stages, set in the hills and mountains of Albania, Team South Africa emerged victorious, not once but twice – winning both the male and female team competitions.

Some 21 international teams, that's 57 competitors in all, took part in this year's edition. Albania certainly tested them. This being the tail end of a hot European summer, the riders endured temperatures of up to 37°C and extreme humidity as they rode highly technical tracks that called for excellent skills and technique. The trails were mostly rocky, often with loose stones and shattered rock over a limestone

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base – inevitably hard on bike and rider. But there was sand and mud, too. And given the trails passed through two mountain ranges, the Central Mountain and Pindus ranges, there was plenty of climbing and descending to deal with, so often very steep, very technical. The hardest GS Trophy yet? Possibly. They're all hard!

The days, as always with the International GS Trophy, were long. Morning reveille came at 6am and often the riders didn't make their destination until 6pm, so typically they were in the saddle nine to ten hours a day. And that the total distance – 1,230 km – is under half that travelled in the 2020 International GS Trophy in New Zealand and tells the story of just how technical this GS Trophy was. Long off-road sections, so challenging. The ultimate test of rider – and motorcycle.

This year's GS Trophy motorcycle was the latest BMW R 1250 GS. Equipped with Metzeler's latest hard-adventure tyre, the Karoo 4, this GS was more than up to the job, delighting the riders with its rugged dependability and superlative performance whether on road or track.

South Africa – again.

Team South Africa was again the dominant team in the GS Trophy. In winning the male competition, this was their fourth consecutive win, they really have placed themselves as the best GS riders in the world – a reflection of the preparation and training the South African GS community puts into this competition. In winning the female competition, too, that makes five wins to the South Africans. Unbeatable?

No, they're beatable – but it'll take some serious application by the competing teams in 2024 to do so. This year, going into the final day



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of the competition both the male and female competitions were still wide open. In the males, teams UK and Germany were both close enough, while teams China 2020 and USA had a long shot. And it was so good to see Team China 2020 in the competition – this was the team that qualified for the 2020 edition in New Zealand, only with the outbreak of the Coronavirus in China they were unable to join the event. Two and half years later they at last got to enjoy the 'ride of their lives' and they totally embraced it, with great riding and a great result.

In the female competition, after six days there was just one point between South Africa and Germany – it could have gone either way. Only the final test is always a tough one, the toughest most intensive test of technique of the week, and it's here the South Africans' thorough training shone through, both in individual capability and teamwork.

There is certainly depth in talent and ability in the GS Trophy, as can be seen by the even spread of points won. After seven previous editions, there's an understanding of the effort that's needed to compete. So many of the finalists in Albania had committed years in training and contested several qualifiers to reach the level required, taking the knockbacks of previous failures, learning from mistakes, building strengths and understanding. The GS Trophy is the ride of a lifetime after all.

Warren Ventner, Team South Africa: "We are so pleased to have won again, and it all came down to the last challenge. So, we are really stoked. And to take the fourth win is great, there was that pressure not to be 'that' team – the ones who didn't win – but we said to ourselves we'll do the best we can and whatever comes up, comes up. Also, we want to thank everyone who's supported us back at home, they really helped make this happen."



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Hanneli Zondagh, Female Team South Africa: "It's unbelievable. We were only leading Germany by one point after Day 6 and we didn't have the best last stage, so until the result was announced we didn't know which way it had gone. But somehow we kept that one-point advantage, I feel truly blessed. It just shows what teamwork can do if you just don't give up. It's been a great competition, we've really enjoyed our times with the other female teams, they've been incredible, and so much fun. And what a great thing to do; once women have been exposed to this great sport and pastime of adventure motorcycling, they'll see how fantastic it is, how liberating, that you ride, you see the world, you meet new people, see different places, even in your own country. It's a wonderful thing."

The female competition.

This year, BMW Motorrad took the decision to separate the female teams and double the number of female participants. Now, with six two-person teams, all doing exactly the same course and the same challenges as the male teams, they were competing for their own Trophy. And what a success it was. As previously experienced at the international female qualifiers in 2017 and 2019, the female competitors came together as one, on the trails and in the challenges, helping and urging each other on. And they were fearless, but also well prepared in terms of their skills and physicality. This despite many being so much shorter and smaller than their male counterparts, making their mastery of their BMW R 1250 GS motorcycles all the more impressive.

They are at the sporting pinnacle of a swelling movement of women riding adventure, and it's worth considering their stories to understand just how the female GS scene is evolving.



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Christelle van Der Meulen, Team South Africa: "For me the GS Trophy has been a fight – mind, spirit and body. You overcome your fears, your apprehensions, I was told by my friends and trainers, 'you can do this'. And with practice, well, the more you practice the smaller the bike becomes, and your legs become longer – except in a special stage sometimes when your legs become shorter again! For me, I'm inspired by the Esther (Pinzon) and Karyn (Julliard), they are really, really short – and we're already on our toes – they have this real shortness, yet they are little fireballs, they are incredible in what they can do on the R 1250 GS, I love watching them."

Tere Rivas, Team Latin America: "When putting your feet down is not an option, you are forced to improve your technique. I would laugh when we were in a challenge section and the marshals would say, 'here we don't count your dabs, you can put your feet down' – well, that's no advantage to us because anytime we are putting our feet down the bike is already going down!"

Christelle: "To be here with Valeria (Zomazy) and with Tere is one of the nicest feelings. We were together in the 2019 international female qualifier in Spain, but we didn't make the final six. So, we went away and we worked on our riding, I think there's something of the GS Spirit in this 'never give up' mentality, but also in the connection that comes through our journey to this moment. And we got to share the trails, and when in one stage I was quite down, they were there for me, they helped and supported me. That's special. Of course, they also chased me in the competition – and that's quite tough!"



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The BMW R 1250 GS.

The International GS Trophy returned to Boxer power for this edition, with the BMW R 1250 GS. In all, there were 126 specially prepared machines, known as the BMW R 1250 GS Trophy Competition.

The special modifications of these motorcycles included parts commonly available through BMW Motorrad:

- Metzeler Karoo 4 tyres
- Enduro engine guard
- Headlight protector
- Cylinder head cover
- Enduro footrests from the BMW R 1250 GS Adventure
- Adjustable gearshift and footbrake levers
- Sports windshield
- Rally seat
- Akrapovic silencer
- Small tank bag from the Adventure Collection

Kyle Robertson, Team UK: "It's a great bike, the versatility is enormous. We could go from riding extreme off-road, like trial sections, through to effortless road miles, swinging through the bends on the mountain roads like a supersport. It's got an answer to everything."

Esther Pinzon, Female Team Latin America: "I have really come to like the R 1250 GS a lot – I love the grip from the tyres, I just really love the bike. I think the response from it when riding is huge, just perfect. So now I want one! I have a G 650 GS at home, but having ridden this bike I now need this motorcycle in my life, it's so easy and enjoyable to ride."



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Tere Rivas, Female Team Latin America: "The GS has a balance, it's like it is fixed to the ground, so you can balance it really well, and if it gets deflected it just finds its balance again and keeps going. It's really nice, plus you feel a little bit protected with the Boxer engine, because you know if the bike falls down it's not going to crush your leg, there is a space there."

Christelle van der Meulen, Female Team South Africa: "The bike has the capability, I've been told just let the bike do the work, obviously technique is important, but the bike is amazing, it's a very capable bike."

Albania.

Albania brought so many new experiences. In a landmass just a little smaller than Belgium, with one-fifth of the population – 2.8 million – Albania was part wilderness, part rural idyl.

The mountain regions brought towering 2,500m peaks, vast valleys, high plateau, mountain villages and the cow-bell melody of sheep and goat herds. In the lowlands the story was the farming where so much of the cycle of sowing and harvesting was manual, the farming community using scythes, picks, shovels and hoes, while their harvests were transported by wheelbarrow and horse or donkey cart. Haystacks built by hand and fork. Almost subsistence farming – certainly pre-mechanisation – the oversupply being sold on roadside stalls. And everywhere donkeys and ponies, dutifully carrying wood, bags, children. And everywhere a certain dignity, a sense of calm and patience.

The Albanians were excited to meet the GS riders, always smiling, always welcoming. The children would run out and wave or seek a



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high-five from the passing riders. In turn the GS riders rode with respect and care, using their installed BMW Motorrad communications systems to alert each other to the presence of people or livestock and slowing accordingly.

In all a special experience, creating memories all participants of the GS Trophy 2022 will forever hold dear.

The International GS Trophy in their words.

Chowde Gowda, Team India: "It was an excellent experience: amazing rides, good terrain, wonderful hospitality, you couldn't ask for anything better. Five-star, man!"

"We prepared for the riding with special training, so we didn't have any issues and we got through without any injuries, that's more than we can ask for. We are happy with our result, although having been placed 10th after six days we're a little disappointed to drop two places on the last day – and I was the one who messed up! I got stuck and I was trying a different line, there was the pressure, and it didn't work out. But we proved we can ride competitively."

"We made new friends: Team USA on the first day were a bunch of fun guys, Team UK, too, they just kept the jokes rolling. Then we rode with the Chinese, quite quiet but excellent riders. Then Latin America and Brazil – those guys are fun, they taught us a bit of Spanish although I wouldn't like to go on record as to what they taught us :) That's what this week is about, you meet people from around the world. I mean, I don't know if we'll ever get to travel to all those countries, so this was a chance to get to experience their cultures. We all come from different parts of the world; everyone's perspective is different. It was amazing, I couldn't ask for anything more."



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Benjamin Phaup, Team USA: "A fantastic week, with a great party to end as well. I only had that one fall all week, in the final on the rocks. Overall, it's been incredible."

"Day 3 we switched focus. Originally, we were here for the competition and then on Day 3 we said, 'screw it, let's have fun on the ride!' (Note: Team USA were then lying 10th in the competition), so we just killed it on the trails, we'd really rip it up – in spots where it doesn't count! We had a lot of fun doing it. The challenges are only a few minutes of your day really, so we made sure we enjoyed the long sections, too."

"And it was super cool meeting all these people – that was easily the best part. I didn't think about that before we came. I came for the competition, but then realised all the people here is kind of what the whole thing is about, so that was really cool. I guess because I came with no expectations for that I was then blown away. We had a real good time getting to know people and making friends, it was a real cool part of the experience that I wasn't expecting."

"It was cool getting to know my teammates as well. We're 2,500 miles apart so it's like we come from different countries, too. There's a lot of subcultures in the US, like Cory is a true Californian, then I'm from Virginia, so there's a little getting to know each other, understanding how each other ticks. We all have our different ways of doing things, but we made it work. And in the end, we finished fifth, that was a cool way to end the week."

Roberto Arguedas, Team Latin America: "It was like a week that felt like a month, because you experienced so many things every hour, there was always an activity, a competition, something happening. It's been a special week for us, adventure riding, the competition, a lot of exercise. I'm a mountain person, who likes the country, the animals,



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so I remember on Day 4, when we went into the hills and there were a lot of sheep on the trails, I loved that moment – the landscape and the sound of the bells around their necks, we don't have that in our country. I've seen it in films, but finally I see and hear it, with my mates – a very special moment."

Valeria Zomazy, Female Team Mexico: "I am feeling very, very happy and proud of myself and my teammate, Esther. Our training was so hard, so that we could win in the qualifier and to be here on the GS Trophy. And we made it, so I'm very proud that we got through everything. I go home to Mexico very happy."

"We learnt a lot about the Spirit of the GS. I met Esther one month before the qualifier, and after the qualifier we were a team and we stayed together every day the month before we came here, training, doing everything with the motorcycle. We are very, very happy to be on podium, it's a dream come true."

Miles Davis, Australia, Marshal: "For me the joy is going to some pretty crazy places that I'd probably never get to see and ride, meeting a whole lot of people who love similar stuff to me, whether they're the marshals or just these fanatical motorcycle riders who love adventure bikes and riding trail – we call them competitors. And I get to meet so many people from so many countries, who I'd never have met otherwise. The connection you have when you get on the bike and out on the trails, you're with them for a day, it's amazing, and afterwards there's a drink at dinner. There are not many opportunities to enjoy that kind of thing unless you're a fulltime tour guide, but this is a bit different, there's the competition, the fact that these guys won the position to be here. It's exciting and it's really cool. I love it."



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A word from the BMW Motorrad management.

Stephan Reiff, head of customer, brand, sales BMW Motorrad:

"What an event! It's fantastic what the riders can do and what our product – the R 1250 GS – can do. And also, what a country! I've thoroughly enjoyed the nature, the hospitality and friendship extended by the Albanians, whether it's the people we've met on the ride or the authorities who helped so much to make this happen."

"I'm amazed we can create such an event, it's like a huge product test because here are over 100 of the best GS riders in the world and they're not shy on testing the bike, I can tell you! They really put our products through their paces and I'm glad to see we all came through it very well. And the R 1250 GS – how can I describe it, a workhorse in the mountains yet so elegant on the street."

Ralf Rodepeter, head of brand and product BMW Motorrad:

"Congratulations to the Teams South Africa, our winners, but also to all the 21 teams on a great week's riding. This was the first time we had a separate female GS Trophy and it was really, really cool to see all the different teams competing against each other and at the same time having the time of their lives here in Albania."

"And now we will start to prepare for the next International GS Trophy in 2024 – somewhere in the world...! That means in 2023 – next year – all the qualifiers will take place, so get your application in, get training and, who knows, we could see you competing in the International GS Trophy two years from now!"

Thank you.



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Lastly, a word of thanks to the people of the GS Trophy that the public will probably never see, yet every participant will have come to know and remember eternally as one of the faces of their GS Trophy: To the Steffis and Natalies, to the Chris' and Toms and Kellys, the Axels and Robs, the Max, Markus and Sabrinas, to the Nanjas and Danjas, the Lisas, to the Pablos, the Dorinas and the Jans, to the other Markus's Amys and Lieblings – a list that quite possibly breaks the hundred mark. The people whose passion and dedication make this whole thing possible, to all of them a HUGE THANK YOU.

Highlight film.

YouTube: Int. GS Trophy 2022 — Creating Memories Together

<https://youtu.be/lu4eJ04u0hE>

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Final standings:

Male Teams:

1. South Africa 217 points
2. United Kingdom 204
3. Germany 185
4. China 2020 169
5. USA 165
6. Netherlands 155
7. Thailand 146
8. South Korea 142
9. Latin America 141
10. Mexico 139



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11. France 133
12. India 120
13. China 2022 113
14. Brazil 100
15. Japan 88

Female Teams:

1. South Africa 297 points
2. Germany 296
3. Mexico 264
4. France 241
5. Latin America 237
6. Brazil 167

BMW Motorrad International GS Trophy

Winners year-by-year

2022 Male: South Africa, Female: South Africa
2020 South Africa
2018 South Africa
2016 South Africa
2014 CEEU (Central Eastern European Union)
2012 Germany
2010 UK
2008 USA



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The BMW Group

With its four brands BMW, MINI, Rolls-Royce and BMW Motorrad, the BMW Group is the world's leading premium manufacturer of automobiles and motorcycles and also provides premium financial and mobility services. The BMW Group production network comprises 31 production and assembly facilities in 15 countries; the company has a global sales network in more than 140 countries.

In 2021, the BMW Group sold over 2.5 million passenger vehicles and more than 194,000 motorcycles worldwide. The profit before tax in the financial year 2021 was € 16.1 billion on revenues amounting to € 111.2 billion. As of 31 December 2021, the BMW Group had a workforce of 118,909 employees.

The success of the BMW Group has always been based on long-term thinking and responsible action. The company set the course for the future at an early stage and consistently makes sustainability and efficient resource management central to its strategic direction, from the supply chain through production to the end of the use phase of all products.

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