

Beat: Sports

BMW WORKS DRIVER ALESSANDRO ZANARDI TO COMPETE IN TOTAL 24 HRS OF SPA

BLANCPAIN GT SERIES 2015

Milan, Italy, 26.03.2015, 11:32 Time

USPA NEWS - Alessandro Zanardi and BMW Motorsport will tackle a new exciting adventure together: The BMW works driver will compete in the Total 24 Hours of Spa.

The 67th edition of the Total 24 Hours of Spa will be held on the 25th and 26th July 2015. It will be the first appearance in a 24-hour race for Zanardi, who lost both of his legs in a serious accident in 2001. From 2003 to 2009 he successfully competed in the FIA European Touring Car Championship (FIA ETCC) and the FIA World Touring Car Championship (FIA WTCC) with BMW Motorsport. After a break of four years he returned to racing in 2014 as a BMW works driver and competed in the Blancpain Sprint Series in a BMW Z4 GT3 modified to his special needs.

The participation in the top category of the Total 24 Hours of Spa, however, will mark a new challenge for Zanardi and BMW Motorsport: for the first time ever Zanardi will share the cockpit with other drivers who are not disabled. The task for the engineers at BMW Motorsport was to find solutions to modify the BMW Z4 GT3 in a way that allows driver changes in a very short space of time. During the pit stops the car must be adapted to the different needs of a driver with and without legs as quickly as possible. For this reason, BMW Motorsport is developing special components for accelerating, braking and changing gear. Zanardi's team and team-mates will be announced at a later date.

"We are really excited to take on this great new adventure with Alex," said BMW Motorsport Director Jens Marquardt. "In his 2014 comeback season with the modified BMW Z4 GT3 he once more demonstrated that everything is possible if you bring determination and technical know-how together. To participate together in the Total 24 Hours of Spa is the next milestone in our long and close partnership. For sure, it is not an easy task to develop the modifications which are required when Alex shares the cockpit with other drivers. But is a great challenge for our engineers at BMW Motorsport which we face with a lot of enthusiasm. We can't wait to see Alex lining up on the grid of this prestigious race in our BMW Z4 GT3."

"To compete in the Total 24 Hours of Spa will definitely be the next highlight in my career," commented Zanardi. "I have been dreaming of racing in an endurance classic like this for a long time, and it is great that Jens Marquardt and BMW Motorsport are turning this dream into a reality. If you first look at it, it seems impossible that a guy with no legs like me competes together with "normal" drivers in such a highly competitive, tough and prestigious event. But I know that my friends at BMW Motorsport have all the technical expertise and innovative ideas to master this challenge. I really want to thank them for all their efforts and am looking forward to this new adventure for our BMW family."

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-3662/bmw-works-driver-alessandro-zanardi-to-compete-in-total-24-hrs-of-spa.html>

Editorial office and responsibility:

V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDSIV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): David Franciamore

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