



# BMW at the 24 Hour Race of Le Mans

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## 1. BMW at the 24 Hour Race of Le Mans

### Works team takes on the challenge

The 24 Hours of Le Mans - a legend and at the same time a trial for both man and machine. „This race is one of the world's greatest motor sporting events and is also the greatest sporting challenge for BMW in 1997,“ says Karl-Heinz Kalbfell, head of central marketing for BMW. „Drivers and cars, which withstand this crucial test, can be counted amongst the best.“

The BMW works team will be bringing two McLaren BMW cars to Le Mans on June 14/15. Two of the six works drivers, and the car itself, have secured themselves a place in the list of winners of this endurance classic: in 1995 the Finn JJ Lehto crowned the first entry of a McLaren BMW with a victory, whilst the Frenchman Eric Helary won in 1993 in a Peugeot.

The two Le Mans winners will be sharing the two BMW works cars in 1997 with four other drivers, all of whom have already raced in Le Mans, but have yet to win: the BMW works drivers Peter Kox (NL), Roberto Ravaglia (I), Steve Soper (GB) and Nelson Piquet (BR).

For Nelson Piquet, the Formula 1 triple world champion, the constellation brings a second aspect to the challenge. The McLaren BMW is a car which has the same fathers as the one in which he took the title in Formula 1, in 1983. Paul Rosche, the BMW high priest of engineering and managing director of BMW Motorsport Ltd, was the one who had conceived the motor then, for the car, which Gordon Murray, now in the services of McLaren, had designed.

The BMW works team for Le Mans will be headed by Rosche himself. It consists of the crew who have already proven themselves in the FIA GT-Championship, under BMW race director Charly Lamm, and additional experts from BMW and McLaren. Around 60 mechanics, technicians and engineers, take care of the two cars.

### BMW in Le Mans - the first victory in 1995

Superstition has nothing to do with tradition, but BMW took part in the 14th edition of the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1937, with a BMW 328. A large variety of BMW models took part in the legendary

marathon, and many attained notable successes on the long journey to the first victory in 1995. The first of these was the fifth place achieved by Prince Paul von Schaumburg-Lippe and Fritz Wencher in 1939 in a BMW 328 Touring.

BMW returned in 1972 with group 2 touring cars and in 1973, Dieter Quester (A) and Toine Hezemans (NL) came eleventh in a BMW 3.0 CSL Coupé. In 1975, Harald Grohs, the American Sam Posey and Hugues de Fierlant from Belgium came tenth in a BMW CSL. Two BMW cars came under the top ten in the following year: the European Touring Car Champion Pierre Dieudonné and the Belgian Jean Xhenceval won their category and came overall eighth in a BMW 3.0 CSL. The BMW 320, specially decorated as a BMW Art Car by Roy Lichtenstein and driven by Hervé Poulain and Marcel Mignot came ninth.

1979 saw the start of the BMW M1 era, the first serial sports car from Munich. BMW sent the M1 in the Group 4 category as a rolling work of art signed by Andy Warhol to Le Mans. Manfred Winkelhock with his visibly slower team mates Poulain and Mignot, accomplished sixth place despite technical difficulties.

A Sauber C7 BMW piloted by the South American trio Garcia, Naon and Montoya achieved a notable ninth place as the best placed naturally aspirated engine powered car, amongst an armada of Porsches.

In 1984 and '85, the BMW M1 won the Group B category. Its engine powered ALD sports cars in the following years. BMW dropped out of the list of participants between 1990 to '92. After the end of the Group C in 1993, a rather dated Sauber C6 BMW, and in 1994, again an ALD BMW turned up in Le Mans, both failing to finish however.

1995 saw a triumphant return by BMW to Le Mans, with the rebirth of the GT cars. The McLaren BMW came first, third, fourth and fifth place overall. JJ Lehto (FIN), Yannick Dalmas (F) and Masanori Sekiya (J) comprised the winning team.

In 1996, John Nielsen/Thomas Bscher/Peter Kox came fourth in a McLaren BMW from West Competition ahead of Lindsay Owen-Jones/Pierre-Henri Raphanel/David Brabham (Gulf McLaren BMW).

Sixth place was taken by Andy Wallace/Olivier Grouillard/Derek Bell in the same car (Harrods Mach One racing). The two McLaren BMW cars deployed by the Italian BMW Team Bigazzi came eighth (Nelson



Piquet/Johnny Cecotto/Danny Sullivan), and eleventh (Jaques Laffite/Steve Soper/Marc Duez). Placed between the two was the Gulf McLaren BMW with the previous year's winner Lehto, along with Ray Bellm and James Weaver, in ninth place.

## The legend in facts and figures

The first 24 hour race was instigated by the Frenchmen Charles Faroux and Georges Durand. It was started at 4.00 pm as it still is today - at the time however it was hailing. The winners covered a distance of 2,209 kilometres at an average speed of 92.064 km/h. Already in those days, the foundation was laid for a sort of fair ground village with music and cinemas.

From 1925 to 1969, the Le Mans start was implemented, in which the drivers ran to their vehicles which were parked across the track from them. 1970 saw the drivers already in their cars waiting for a standing start. Since 1971, the race has been set off with a flying start.

The circuit was shortened in 1929, from its original 17.262 kilometres to 16.30 km, and again in 1932 to 13.492 km. The present and tenth variation of the „Circuit des 24 Heures“ measures 13.60 kilometres.

24 hour races can also have tight finishes. In 1933, Tazio Nuvolari took the victory just 400 metres ahead of his Alfa Romeo team colleague Luigi Chinetti. Gonzales and Trintignat won in a Ferrari with a 90 second lead in 1954 and in 1966, the Ford teams Amon/McLaren and Miles/Hume were just separated by 20 metres at the finish line.

The most successful Le Mans driver of all times is the Belgian Jacky Ickx, with six victories to his name.

## 2. The 1997 McLaren BMW in Le Mans:

### Modifications for the marathon

The two McLaren BMW works cars, which have been specially built for Le Mans, differ mainly in aerodynamical aspects from their counterparts in the FIA GT-Championship. The BMW twelve cylinder motor has the same configuration for the 24-hour race, with a bit more than 600 bhp and above all, weeks of development work in order to increase reliability and reduce consumption. Further modifications for Le Mans include the implementation of ABS.

„We carried out wind tunnel tests for five weeks for Le Mans alone,“ said the McLaren constructor Gordon Murray. The aims were to reduce air resistance in order to maximise top speed and minimise fuel consumption, whilst maintaining the necessary downforce. „Le Mans is a Mekka for aerodynamic technicians due to the enormous velocities achieved on the long straights,“ explained Murray, „the smallest changes have a large effect.“

The entire aerodynamic specification for the carbon-fibre chassis was set up for Le Mans. This includes a seven centimetre lower rear wing, the air flowing of the air intakes and the optimisation of the air flow over and under the car.

The most legendary part of the 13.605 kilometre long circuit is the Hunaudières straight, which runs from the edge of the town Le Mans in the direction of Mulsanne. Shicanes split its 5.475 kilometres length into three sections, where the first and longest section measures two kilometres. The McLaren BMW car reached a top speed of over 320 km/h during prequalification.

In Le Mans, the use of ABS is permitted as opposed to in the FIA GT-Championship, which not only relieves the tyres and brakes, but the driver as well. „The fact that the driver can brake into the corners, requires less concentration and reduces the risk of driver error,“ explains Charly Lamm, BMW race director, „and that is a deciding factor by a race in which each pilot spends around eight hours behind the wheel.“ In addition, the brakes of the McLaren BMW cars in Le Mans are fitted with a hydraulic power booster. Fluid supply systems for the drivers and a cool air supply into the cockpit bring further relief to the pilots.



With these ingredients, the weight of the McLaren BMW lies between 950 and 1,000 kg - in the GT series, the car is in the weight class up to 950 kg. Due to the increase in weight, the size of the two air restrictors, whose dimensions are determined by the car weight to engine capacity ratio, can be increased by 1.0 millimetre according to the regulations. In Le Mans, the twelve cylinder BMW motor breathes through air restrictors with a diameter of 35.2 mm. instead of the normal 34.3 millimetre intakes.

Whilst the electronic motor management for Le Mans has been optimised in terms of fuel consumption, the rev limiter remains unchanged and shuts down at 8,000 r.p.m. „The details are what makes the Le Mans motor special,“ expounds Paul Rosche, father of the V12 and managing director of BMW Motorsport Ltd. Quality control and ease of maintenance is what it's all about. Each and every part, however ordinary, whether it's a bolt or a piece of hose, is looked at, proofed and tested; various brackets and mountings have been altered to enable the rapid changing of parts subject to wear. „For example,“ adds Paul Rosche, head of the BMW Le Mans works engagement, „an alternator has to be easily replaceable in a 24-hour race, where as the battery would be capable of bridging such a problem in a race over a normal distance.“

The chassis is constructively identical to that of the FIA GT-Championship, „but the set up, that has to be correct,“ says BMW race director Charly Lamm and adds: „In a 24-hour race, a set up which allows one of the drivers to put in single fast laps is inadequate. The car has to be consistently fast and as comfortable as possible for all the drivers.“ Consistent here means no large differences in lap times regardless of whether the tank is empty or full or whether the tyres are new or worn out.

Charly Lamm, whose success matches the respect shown to him as a strategist during 24 hour races at the Nürburgring and in Spa, is facing his first commitment in Le Mans. „The primary requirement,“ he explains, „remains reliability. It mustn't be necessary to do anything else apart from the scheduled pit stop servicing, including the changing of tyres, brake pads and discs, adding of oil and refueling.“ That is what the team trains for. Lamm, a Bavarian, adds: „well, we'll just have to see, won't we.“

## 3. Technical data McLaren BMW - 24 Hours of Le Mans 1997

### Motor:

Type:	BMW Motorsport Ltd., S 70/3
Configuration:	V12 engine, cylinder angle 60°, distance between cylinders 91mm/3.58", four valves per cylinder, four overhead camshafts, dual chain drive, mechanical tappets, Vanos intake (infinitely adjustable intake shaft settings).
Block:	Aluminium alloy with nikasil-coated cylinder liners.
Cylinder head:	Aluminium alloy
Capacity:	5,995 cc
Bore x stroke:	86mm x 86mm
Compression ratio:	12.5 : 1
Ignition system:	Transistor coil ignition with twelve single coils
Intake system:	Twelve individual throttle valves, carbon fibre air collector.
Pistons:	Forged box pistons
Fuel system:	One injection nozzle per cylinder
Valve housing:	Magnesium alloy housing with carbon fibre cover
Flywheel:	Aluminium
Exhaust system:	Fan type manifold with flame pipes made of 0.8mm inconel and fitted with two oxygen sensors
Lubrication:	Dry sump with four extract pumps and one pressure pump. Oil sump and pump made of magnesium alloy, oil/water heat exchanger. oil capacity approx. 12 litres.
Alternator:	165 amps
Fuel:	98 ROZ, unleaded
Oil:	Fina First Oil
Engine management:	TAG-3.12 with lambda dissector, engine load determined via throttle butterfly angle and engine revolutions (a/n)
Power:	604 bhp @ 6,500 rpm
Max torque:	711 Nm (524 lbs/sq ft) @ 5,000 rpm
Max engine speed:	8,000 rpm



**Car:** **McLaren BMW**

Model: F1 GTR

**Transmission/power train**

- Rear wheel drive
- Transverse sequential 6-speed gearbox, straight toothed, magnesium housing.
- hydraulically operated three-plate carbon-fibre clutch
- Transmission oil cooled by a high performance pump for lubrication system
- Drive shafts with constant velocity joints
- Limited slip differential

**Car body**

Length/width/height: 4,924,mm/1,920,mm/1,120,mm  
Ground clearance: 70,mm  
Wheelbase: 2,718,mm  
Track, front/rear: 1,598 mm / 1,556 mm  
Weight: 950 kg  
Tank capacity: 100 litres

**Suspension**

Front axle: Double wishbones, light alloy dampers, coaxial coil springs, anti roll bars.  
Rear axle: Double wishbones, light alloy dampers, coaxial coil springs.  
Steering: Mechanical rack-and-pinion steering without power assistance.  
Brakes: Inner-ventilated carbon-fibre discs, 36 mm thick. Diameter 380 mm front and 355 mm rear. 8 Piston monoblock light alloy brake callipers front and rear, ABS (ITT), hydraulic power booster.  
Wheels: 18 inch Magnesium rims with central bolt.  
Tyres: Michelin high performance tyres

## 4. BMW works driver portraits

### Eric Helary

#### The nippy Frenchman

Charly Lamm is well known for his astute conclusions: „Eric Helary is the French Joachim Winkelhock,“ declared the BMW race director upon meeting Helary for the first time. The Frenchman, lightly built, with a mischievous sense of humour and a disarming honesty, inquired immediately what this comparison was supposed to mean. „One of the biggest compliments that Charly can make to a driver,“ Dieter Lamm, Charly's brother, reassured him.

Eric Helary, who was born 30 years ago in Paris and now lives with his family in a rather more tranquil spot south of the capital, was introduced to motor sport by his father. Helary senior first raced touring cars before getting involved in cart sport.

In 1981, Eric Helary became the French cart champion in his first season. He repeated this success three years later, before joining the „Elkron Monthlery driving school“. He was best amongst 300 drivers, all of them on Formula Ford racing cars. The reward: a fully financed racing season in this category. In 1988 he became the French Formula Ford champion and in 1990, he was Formula 3 champion.

His move to sports cars was immediately crowned with success. In 1992 he won the European-Cup in a Peugeot 905 Spider and was second in a Group C race in Magny-Cours. Helary's most notable success was the 1993 victory in the 24-hour race in Le Mans.

Although Helary has proved his versatility by becoming runner up in the French Touring Car Championship in 1995 and winning the „24 hours of Chamonix“, the ice racing spectacle twice, sports cars have remained his greatest passion. „One must learn to drive a touring car, but one must control a sports car,“ explains Helary. He loves the power and the downforce of the McLaren BMW. „I am pleased to drive for BMW. The team has an excellent leadership, good engineers and conscientious mechanics. You can only really floor the throttle on the straights in Le Mans if you trust your people in the box.“

## Eric Helary (F)

Birth date /place August 10 1966 / Paris (F)  
Address: 3 Rue de Beauregard, 91490 Milly la forêt (F)  
Marital status: Married to Marie-Laure,  
daughter Laura, son Lööc  
Hobbies: Cycling and motor cycles

## Sporting career

1981	1st Place French Cart Championship
1984	1st Place French Cart Championship
1986	1st Place „Elkron Monthlery Driving School“ (Formula Ford)
1987	4th Place French Formula Ford 1600
1988	1st Place French Formula Ford 1600
1989	4th Place French Formula 3
1990	1st Place French Formula 3
1991	Five Formula 3000 Europe Championship races
1992	1st Place Peugeot 905 Spider European Cup 2nd Place French Peugeot 905 Spider Cup 2nd Place Group-C world championship race in Magny-Cours (F)
1993	1st Place 24 Hour Race Le Mans (Peugeot) 1st Place French Peugeot 905 Spider Cup
1994	5th Place French Touring Car Championship (Opel), 1st Place 24 Hours of Chamonix (Ice race)
1995	2nd Place French Touring Car Championship (Opel), 1st Place 24-Hour race Le Mans
1996	1st Place 24 Hours of Chamonix (Ice race) (Opel), Chrysler works driver
1997	2nd Place Andros Trophy (Opel), BMW test und works driver (McLaren BMW, BMW 320i), sporadic races in the STW-Cup, 24 hour race in Le Mans for the BMW works team



## Peter Kox

### Genuinely committed

„Eerlijkheid duurt het langst“ - which roughly translates as 'honesty is the best policy' - is Peter Kox's motto. "I have undoubtedly also harmed myself with it at times," reflects the Dutchman, „because the dividing line between honesty and a lack of diplomacy is unclear - I like it when people say straight out what they don't like about me." The 33-year-old speaks calmly and resolutely. He knows what he wants and works hard to get it. Discipline is important for him. „I have worked on my fitness programme since 1990, as consistently as can be expected from a works driver," he explains. „It would be far more costly to gain three or four tenths through technical changes." Kox does not drink or smoke and if you happen to find him in a fast food restaurant, he has probably been dragged there by his three-year-old daughter Stephane.

In 1996 he won respect in the further development of the BMW 320i racing touring car through dedicated testing. A year without a fight for a title, even if crowned by a victory in the McLaren BMW on the Nürburgring, is not easy for someone who feels best in competition, as Kox does. His passion for cars and racing sport developed early. „My father once invited me to a race. I was at first really enthusiastic and then completely disappointed because it wasn't Formula 1," he says. Today, the eagerness to drive himself is what keeps him away from Grand Prix racing.

Motorsport cannot be demanding enough for him. In 1992 he started in the British Formula 3000, won the first race and was dissatisfied. „I knew I had made some mistakes in that race. I thought: what kind of a championship is this if you still win in spite of that?" In the end he came third in the championship. Neither did the years 1993 and 1994 - a title and a third place in the Dutch Touring Car Championships - present him with the right challenge for his taste. In 1995 he was runner-up to his BMW colleague Joachim Winkelhock in the STW Cup, then came the test season.

„And now," says Peter Kox beaming, „I am in a position in which I feel great again. The new McLaren BMW is a great car, hard competition awaits us in the GT Series as well as in Le Mans and I like my partner Roberto. We want to work together at helping the car become a winner."



## Peter Kox (NL)

Birth date/place: February 23 1964 / Eindhoven (NL)  
Address: St. Christoffelstraat 3, NL-5614 BM Eindhoven  
Marital status: married to Esther, Daughter Stephane  
Hobbies: Cart and skiing

## Sporting career:

1978-1982	Cart sport
1982	1st Place Int. Dutch Cart Championship
1983	1st Place Marlboro Formula Ford Challenge
1984	2nd Place Dutch Formula Ford 2000, 3rd Place Benelux Formula Ford 2000
1985	4th Place Toyota Corolla Cup (NL), a victory
1986	Sports 2000 Race, a victory
1987	7th Place British Formula 3
1988	Formula Opel Euroseries, Formula 3 und Formula 3000-Races
1989	1st Place Formula Opel Euroseries and Benelux- Championship
1990/91	Formula 3 in England und Germany, two victories
1992	3rd Place British Formula 3000, a victory
1993	1st Place Dutch Touring Car Championship (BMW 325i und M3), five victories
1994	3rd Place Dutch Touring Car Championship (BMW M3), three races ADAC Touring Car Cup (BMW 318is)
1995	2nd Place ADAC Touring Car Cup (BMW 320i), Winner 24 Hour Race in Spa-Francorchamps/B (BMW 320i)
1996	4th Place 24 Hour Race Le Mans/F, 1st Place 4 Hour Race Nürburgring (McLaren BMW), 2nd Place 24 Hour Race Spa- Francorchamps, Races in the British Touring Car Championship (BMW 320i)
1997	FIA GT-Championship (McLaren BMW) in Team BMW Motorsport (Schnitzer), 24 Hour Race in Le Mans for the BMW works team

## JJ Lehto

### Finn for Fun

„I felt as if I had just won a world championship.“ JJ Lehto described his feelings after winning Le Mans in 1995. Together with the Frenchman Yannick Dalmas and Masanori Sekiya from Japan, he had just crowned the first McLaren BMW engagement in Le Mans with the most coveted endurance trophy. „It was tough,“ remembers the Finn, who will be taking on this legendary marathon in 1997 as a works driver in a McLaren BMW. „The rain wouldn't stop - we drove each lap on the limit - it was a 24 hour sprint.“

Winning Le Mans was not only so special for the 31 year old, because it was so hard, it also marked the much longed for end of a rather unsuccessful spell. 1994 was a disappointing year for Lehto whose last Formula 1 season to date began in January, with an accident whilst testing in Silverstone. He suffered a fracture of the fifth neck vertebra which prevented him from racing until Imola. A sixth place in the Canadian GP was his best result.

All this despite a promising start in Formula 1 for Jyrki Järvilehto (a very hard name for a non-Scandinavian to remember let alone pronounce - a fact which resulted in him changing it some nine years ago). He came to Grand Prix sport in 1989 as reigning British Formula 3 Champion and came third in Imola some two years later.

After well over ten years in cart and moto-cross racing, JJ almost made rallying his profession. Friends of his suggested he take up circuit racing instead. There is hardly a vehicle which Lehto has not tried out, as long as it promises speed and fun, regardless of the number of wheels or whether it has runners or a keel. „It really was great fun,“ is a favourite phrase to describe a race.

JJ Lehto simply enjoys his profession in which he spent the last two years mainly as an Opel works driver in the German and International Touring Car Championship. Lehto describes his motivation to the point: „The harder the fight, the more fun it is, and Le Mans is one hell of a tough fight.“

## JJ Lehto (FIN)

Birth date/place: January 31 1966 / Espoo (FIN)  
Address: Le Titien 36/37, 4 Quai des Sanbarbani  
MC-98000 Monte Carlo  
Marital status: Married to Satu, daughters Juulia and Johanna  
Hobbies: Old timers, rally racing, badminton, skiing

### **Sporting career:**

1972-1980	Cart sport
1981-1983	Moto-cross
1985	4th Place Finnish Formula Ford 1600
1986	1st Place European, Skandinavian and Finnish Formula Ford 1600
1987	1st Place British and European Formula Ford 2000, 1st Place Formula Ford World Cup
1988	1st Place British Formula 3 Championship
1989	Formula 3000-European Championship, start in Formula1 (Onyx)
1990	Formula 1 (Onyx)
1991	12th Place Formula 1 (Scuderia Italia), 3rd Place in Imola (I)
1992	Formula 1 (Scuderia Italia)
1993	Formula 1 (Sauber)
1994	Formula 1- crash whilst testing at Silverstone (Benetton), Six GP for Benetton, 6th Place in Montreal (CDN), two GP for Sauber
1995	Victory 24 Hours of Le Mans/F (McLaren BMW), 13th Place German Touring Car Championship, 11th Place Int. Touring Car Series (Opel)
1996	5th Place Int. Touring Car Championship (Opel), Win 1000 Kilometer Race Suzuka/J (McLaren BMW)
1997	FIA GT-Championship (McLaren BMW) in Team BMW Motorsport (Schnitzer), 24 Hours of Le Mans for the BMW works team



## Nelson Piquet

### Achieved almost everything

„I have always been lucky," says Nelson Piquet; „I was always in the right place at the right time." He includes his heavy accident during practice for the Indianapolis 500 in 1992, in which his feet were crippled badly, in this statement. „I survived and I can even walk again." The 44 year old is as positive as he is religious and a picture book Brazilian at that - a touch casual, a touch of playboy. „I don't have to prove anything anymore," he goes on, and it is easy to believe the triple Formula 1 World Champion. „I have achieved almost everything; I only had two goals after Formula 1: Indianapolis and Le Mans."

Following his success in kart and the title win in the Brazilian Formula Super V, he was also impressive in England, where he went on to take the title in the British Formula 3 Championship after winning 13 of 17 races in 1978. „I was then invited into Formula 1 - it was that simple." In 1978 he drove his first Grand Prix and took his first title in 1981 in a Brabham-Ford.

In the middle of 1982, Piquet switched with Brabham to BMW turbo engines and curious highs and lows: in Detroit he was unable to qualify whilst he was able to win the first GP for BMW just one week later. In 1983 he was able to offer BMW the first Formula One World Champion title. The creators of motor and chassis were at the time, the same as those, who are responsible for designing the McLaren BMW today: the high priest of motors at BMW Paul Rosche and constructor Gordon Murray. Piquet switched to Williams at the end of the turbo-era and won his third title there in 1987. He retired from Formula 1 racing in 1991.

He lives near the capital Brasilia with his wife Viviane and one of his five children. After ending his professional career he is now a successful businessman, dealing in satellite communications. Furthermore, he manages the race track in Brasilia, runs a series with small sports car prototypes powered by BMW engines and takes care of his son Nelson-Angelo's karting career. He pushed through tough regulations in the kart championship, in which everyone drives with the same material in order to separate the drivers by ability rather than through social differences.



## Nelson Piquet (BR)

Birth date/place: August 17 1952 / Rio de Janeiro (BR)

Address: Brasilia - DF.001 KM 26 (BR)

Marital status: Married to Viviane, five children

Hobbies: Motor sport

### Sporting career:

1970	Start in cart sport
1976	1st Place Brazilian Formula Super V
1978	1st Place British Formula 3 Championship, Formula 1 debut (Ensign, Chesterfield-McLaren and Brabham-Alfa)
1979	Formula 1 (Brabham-Alfa, Brabham-Ford)
1980	2nd Place Formula 1 (Brabham-Ford), 1st Place Procar Championship (BMW M1)
1981	1st Place Formula 1 (Brabham-Ford), 1st Place 1000 km Race Nürburgring (BMW M1)
1982	11th Place Formula 1 (Brabham-Ford, Brabham BMW)
1983	1st Place Formula 1 (Brabham BMW)
1984	5th Place Formula 1 (Brabham BMW)
1985	8th Place Formula 1 (Brabham BMW)
1986	3rd Place Formula 1 (Williams-Honda)
1987	1st Place Formula 1 (Williams-Honda)
1988	6th Place Formula 1 (Lotus)
1989	8th Place Formula 1 (Lotus)
1990	3rd Place Formula 1 (Benetton-Ford)
1991	6th Place Formula 1 (Benetton-Ford), retirement from Formula 1
1992	Heavy crash during practice for the Indianapolis 500 (USA)
1993	Qualified for the Indianapolis 500, retirement in race
1995	24 Hour Race Nürburgring and Spa-Francorchamps (BMW)
1996	8th Place 24 Hour Race Le Mans (McLaren BMW)
1997	Works driver for BMW for the 24 Hour Race in Le Mans in the BMW works team

## **Roberto Ravaglia**

### **I like myself**

He is a reticent man who does not like talking about himself - least of all, about what he considers to be his best qualities. „I like myself,” says Roberto Ravaglia simply. And hardly anyone would disagree with his judgement, certainly no one in the BMW Team Schnitzer, who in 1997 operate under the name Team BMW Motorsport. „For me, this team is much more than the sum of the people who prepare a superb car for me,” he states, „Here, I am amongst friends.” Trust and human warmth are important to him. „The atmosphere in the Schnitzer team impressed me when I first joined it twelve years ago, and that hasn't changed.”

The McLaren BMW is new territory for him - twice as much horsepower as in the touring car, much greater down-force and carbon fibre brakes. „I consider myself very fortunate to be able to take on a new challenge without leaving the intimacy of the BMW circle.”

Roberto Ravaglia draws the calm which he radiates partly from his family, but his successes also gives him superiority. From 1984 to '89 he drove in the European and World Touring Car Championships. He won the European title twice and was World Champion once. „It bothered me when someone said 'who knows how much of the credit his partners deserve?'. That's why winning the German Touring Car title in 1989 meant so much to me. I proved I could do it alone.” Ravaglia adds, „I am now far better suited for endurance racing in which one shares a car.”

Ravaglia's career began with a brotherly shunt. His older brother Maurizio went carting and Roberto helped prepare, hoping to drive too one day. The two qualified for the first starter series and jostled each other off the track at the first bend. Their father decided that in future only one of his sons should be on the starting line. Roberto took the matter seriously and quickly obtained sponsors. Roberto Ravaglia met Gerhard Berger in 1983, in Formula 3. „Gerhard gave me the tip to go for BMW's driver screening.” He and Berger won the competition and the result was Ravaglia's first BMW contract - and the start of a long friendship.

## **Roberto Ravaglia (I)**

Birth date/place: May 26 1957 / Venedig (I)  
Address: 39, Avenue Princess Grace,  
MC-98000 Monte Carlo  
Marital status: Married to Franca,  
Daughters Stefania und Francesca  
Hobbies: Cycling and hunting

### **Sporting career:**

1974-1979	Cart sport, twice Italian Champion
1980	Formula Fiat Abarth
1981	Italian Formula 3
1982/83	Formula 3 European Championship
1984/85	Touring Car European Championship (BMW 635 CSi), two wins
1985	Victory 24 Hour Race Spa-Francorchamps/B (BMW 635 CSi)
1986	1st Place Touring Car European Championship (BMW 635 CSi)
1987	1st Place Touring Car World Championship (BMW M3)
1988	1st Place Touring Car European Championship (BMW M3)
1989	1st Place German Touring Car Championship, Victory 24 Hour Race Nürburgring (BMW M3)
1989-1992	German Touring Car Championship (BMW M3), total of six wins
1990/91/93	1st Place Italian Touring Car Championship (BMW M3 and BMW 318i)
1994	Italian Touring Car Championship, Victory 24 Hour Race Spa-Francorchamps/B (BMW 318is)
1995	ADAC Super-Touring Car Cup, Victory 24 Hour Race Nürburgring (BMW 320i)
1996	6th Place British Touring Car Championship (BMW 320i)
1997	FIA GT-Championship (McLaren BMW) in Team BMW Motorsport (Schnitzer), 24 Hours of Le Mans for the BMW works team



## Steve Soper

### British bulldog

„Onward,” Steve Soper thinks, referring not only to forgetting the bad luck he suffered, but also to the joy of a victory or a new challenge. He regards getting worked up about a technical failure as a waste of energy. „On the other hand, if I make a mistake, nobody judges me harsher than myself,” says the 43-year old Briton who has won 141 races. „It’s strange, but I don’t feel any exuberance. If I’m the first to see the flag, I just think: thank God, you’ve made it.”

And then he remembers the 24-hour race in Spa-Francorchamps in 1992 - the exception which makes the rule - a turbulent weekend. On Thursday his wife Lulu had called: Cassia’s birth was imminent. Soper dashed to London and arrived just in time to greet his new daughter. „Then on Sunday, during the race, I had just finished my last turn, had already changed and just wanted to get home to Lulu and the baby, when I was told that I had to drive again after all.” He got in reluctantly. „And then on the last lap I took the lead and won.”

As a 14-year old he drove his first slaloms under his father’s name and preferred to spend the following years in the garage working on his own cars. „Then I realised that this improvisation was getting me nowhere.”

Before his wins with BMW in the German Touring Car Championship from 1989 to 1992, he spent six years in the European and World Touring Car Championships. „It was a great time,” he adds. „International endurance races in which you shared a car and had to budget for fuel and tyres.” It is these attributes and the new McLaren BMW which give the STW Cup runner-up the incentive. „Maybe it’ll be a new experience. Until now I haven’t had a partner who was faster than me,” he reflects with a glance at his new partner JJ Lehto. „But I am firstly a happy person and mature enough to be able, if necessary, to accept it, secondly, JJ is a great guy, and thirdly, my own prospects of success would sink if he wasn’t fast.”



## Steve Soper (GB)

Birth date/place: September 27 1953 / Greenford (GB)  
Address: Le Mille Fiori, 1, Ave des Genets,  
MC-98000 Monte Carlo  
Marital status: Married to Lulu, daughters Cassia und Gabriella  
Hobbies: Boats, helicopters and family

### Sporting career:

1972-1976	Special-Touring Car Race in England
1977/79	1st Place Mini Cooper Cup
1980	1st Place British Ford Fiesta Cup
1981	1st Place British MG Metro Cup
1983	British Touring Car Championship and European Touring Car Championship (Rover)
1984/85	European Touring Car Championship (Rover)
1986	European Touring Car Championship (Ford)
1987	World Touring Car Championship, 1st Place 24 Hour Race Nürburgring (Ford)
1988	2nd Place European Touring Car Championship (Ford)
1989-1992	German Touring Car Championship (BMW M3), total of nine wins
1992	Victory 24 Hour Race Spa-Francorchamps/B (BMW M3)
1993	2nd Place British Touring Car Championship (BMW 318i), three victories
1994	3rd Place Japanese Touring Car Championship 7th Place British Touring Car Championship (BMW 318is)
1995	1st Place Japanese Touring Car Championship Victory 24 Hour Race Spa-Francorchamps/B (BMW 320i)
1996	2nd Place ADAC Super Touring Car Cup (BMW 320i)
1997	FIA GT-Championship (McLaren BMW) in Team BMW Motorsport (Schnitzer), 24 Hours of Le Mans for the BMW works team

## 5. Private team GTC Driver portraits

### Gulf Team Davidoff

GTC Motorsport  
Baynards Park  
Cranleigh, Surrey GU6 8EQ  
England

Founded: 1994  
Team manager: Michael Cane  
Team members: 30  
Press contact: Charles Rickett  
Tel: (+44) 1483 - 27 21 51  
Fax: (+44) 1483 - 27 19 97

### Sporting History:

1994	1st Place BPR-Series (Porsche) with Raymond Bellm/Harry Nuttall/Charlie Rickett
1995	3rd Place International BPR Championship (McLaren BMW) with Raymond Bellm/Maurizio Sala, five wins 4th Place 24 Hours of Le Mans with Raymond Bellm/Mark Blundell/Maurizio Sala
1996	1st Place International BPR Championship (McLaren BMW) with Raymond Bellm/James Weaver, four wins
1997	FIA GT-Championship (McLaren BMW) with Raymond Bellm, Thomas Bscher, Andrew Gilbert-Scott, Jean Marc Gounon, John Nielsen, Pierre-Henri Raphanel

## **Raymond Bellm (GB)**

Bellm started in the British Championship for Historical Cars at the age of 30. He collected three World Championship titles in sports cars between 1985 and '88 and two Le Mans victories in Group C2 cars. He was fifth in a BMW M3 in 1991 in the British Touring Car Championship, before returning to sports cars in 1994 as team owner and driver, winning the BPR Series along with Michael Cane as team manager and Harry Nuttall and Charlie Rickett as drivers in a Porsche. In 1995 he came third with Maurizio Sala in a McLaren BMW and along with Mark Blundell fourth in Le Mans. Last year, the 47 year old won the BPR anew with James Weaver in a McLaren BMW.

## **Thomas Bscher (D)**

Thomas Bscher (45), a banker from Cologne began his career in the same way as his team mate Bellm, in classic car racing, between 1979 and '91, mainly in a Maserati. In 1992 he came third in the Italian Maserati Barchetta Challenge, in '93 he was runner up. After switching to the BPR Series he ended the 1994 season third in a Porsche. It was Bscher, who convinced McLaren boss Ron Dennis to deploy the McLaren sports car in motor sport. Bscher has shared a McLaren BMW with John Nielsen since 1995. The pair celebrated the BPR Series title win in '95. In 1996 they came third and were fourth in Le Mans.

## **Andrew Gilbert-Scott (GB)**

Born in 1958, Andrew Gilbert-Scott landed in the British Formula 3 after having started in the Formula Ford. In 1986 he drove in the British Formula 3000, before going on to Group C cars. At the same time, he drove Formula 3 in England and touring cars in Japan. In 1989 he led the 24 Hours of Le Mans for four hours with team mates Patrick Tambay and Jan Lammers, before having to retire the Jaguar with gear-box trouble. After being runner up behind Damon Hill in the contest to become test driver for Williams in the Formula 1, he started for Leyton House in the Formula 3000, and 1992 in Formula 1. He became Touring Car Champion in Japan in 1993 and was second in the Formula 3000 in 1994.



## **Jean Marc Gounon (F)**

Jean Marc Gounon (34) began his career in the classical manner with cart sport, in which he was runner up for the European title. In 1986 and '87 he was runner up in the French Formula Renault. After coming fourth in 1988 he won the French Formula 3 in the following year. In '91 and '92 he came sixth in the European Formula 3000 before starting in two Grand Prix in the Formula 1 for Minardi. In 1994 he drove six GP for Simtek, whilst at the same time coming sixth in the French Touring Car Championship. He drove his first sports car race in 1995 for Venturi in Le Mans and in Suzuka. Last year he took a victory in a Ferrari F40 GTE in the last race of the season in the BPR, and came fifth overall in the championship.

## **John Nielsen (DK)**

Having just come of age, John Nielsen came second in the Danish Formula Ford, which he won in 1975. He was European Formula Super V Champion in 1979, '80 and '81 and won the German Formula 3 in the following year. Nielsen has raced in Le Mans since 1986, which he won in a Jaguar XJR12 in 1990, after having won the World Sports Car Championship for Jaguar in 1987 and '88. In addition, he was winner of the 24 Hours of Daytona in 1988 and came second in the IMSA Series. He was winner of the Italian Barchetta Cup in 1992 and '93. He won the title in the 1995 BPR along with Bscher in a McLaren BMW and came third in '96 with a fourth place in Le Mans. Nielsen, now 41, also won the Japanese GT Series.

## **Pierre-Henri Raphanel (F)**

Born on May 27 1961, Raphanel will be starting this year in his twelfth race at Le Mans. 1987 he came third (Courage), 1992 he was second (Toyota). He graduated to the Formula 3000 after winning the Formula 3 in Monaco and in 1989, he made his debut in the Formula 1 (Coloni and Rial). He came second overall in the Japanese Prototype Series in a Toyota and in the year after, came fourth in the Japanese Touring Car Championship. In 1995 he started in the BPR with Lindsey Owen-Jones and raced in Le Mans. The McLaren BMW led for 40 seconds before Alliot spun off. In 1996, Raphanel and Owen-Jones were sixth in the BPR and fifth in Le Mans.

## 6. General race information

The 24 Hours of Le Mans for the 65th time:  
June 14/15 1997

### Schedule (mid-european time)

Wednesday June 11 1997

1st Practice        19.00 to 21.00  
                         22.00 to 00.30

Thursday June 12 1997

2nd Practice        19.00 to 21.00 Uhr  
                         22.00 to 00.00 Uhr

Friday June 13 1997

Drivers' parade    18.00 to 20.00

Saturday June 14 1997

Start                16.00

Sunday June 15 1997

Finish:             16.00

Length of circuit: 13.605 km

Organisation:

Association Sportive ACO des 24 heures du Mans

Press Accreditation:

A.S.A. A.C.O. 24 heures du Mans

Circuit des „Heures du Mans“

Les Raineries

72019 Le Mans Cedex

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- ☐ Peter Kox
- ☐ Nelson Piquet
- ☐ Roberto Ravaglia
- ☐ Steve Soper

### Portraits of

- ☐ Paul Rosche, head of entire BMW works team
- ☐ Charly Lamm, BMW race director
- ☐ Gordon Murray, constructor of the McLaren BMW
- ☐ Drivers of the McLaren Gulf Team

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