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## KILOMETRES ON THE WAY TO VICTORY

During the weekend of 12-13 June 1999, BMW celebrated a historical success at the 24 Hour Race of Le Mans. Behind the wheel of a BMW V12 LMR, the works team brought home the first overall victory for the white-and-blue brand.

By Niklas Drechsler    Photos BMW AG

It was the third time in a row that BMW Motorsport had fielded a works team at the world's most famous and toughest long-distance race. Under the management of Charly Lamm, the experienced racing strategist of the Schnitzer team, the drivers Tom Kristensen, JJ Lehto, and Jörg Müller, as well as Yannick Dalmas, Pierluigi Martini, and Joachim Winkelhock, lined up in the prototype class in the two new BMW V12 LMR sports cars.

The race could not have been more dramatic. The Kristensen-Lehto-Müller trio dominated the race for three quarters of the distance. Soon after the start on Saturday at 4 p.m., the superior team took the lead of the 48 fielded cars to regally keep it for more than eighteen hours. At 3 p.m., the partner vehicle, piloted by Yannick Dalmas, Pierluigi

Martini, and Joachim Winkelhock, caught up and shot forward to position two: double leadership for the two BMW V12 LMR.

It happened shortly before noon on Sunday: a screw came loose in the leading vehicle, causing part of the anti-roll bar to press against the throttle linkage and jam the pedal. The driver, Lehto, crashed against a wall. Fortunately, he only suffered minor injuries, but the car dropped out. Now the so-far-second BMW V12 LMR with the starting number 15 took the lead and held on to it. After 365 laps and 4,968 kilometres, Pierluigi Martini claimed the chequered flag at exactly 4:00 p.m. It was the first time a BMW works racing car had brought home the overall victory at the 24 Hour Race of Le Mans, which was held for the 67th time that year.





“ Nowadays, Le Mans is driven like a sprint – each lap at the limit, for 24 hours. ”

*Dr Mario Theissen, Director BMW Motorsport*



**WORLD** Exhausted but on the top of the world: the winning BMW team (left to right) Joachim Winkelhock, Yannick Dalmas, and Pierluigi Martini at the award ceremony.

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**T**he BMW V12 LMR was also the first car in twelve years to win both the 24 Hour Race of Le Mans and the 12 Hour Race in Sebring in the same year. Furthermore, the racing car also celebrated victories in Sears Point, Laguna Seca and Las Vegas.

**B**ack then, Dr Mario Theissen, the Director of BMW Motorsport, described the big challenges BMW was facing in designing the BMW V12 LMR as follows: "The outstanding engineering achievement in building a Le Mans race car is to find the optimal compromise between maximum road performance, low fuel consumption and stability. Nowadays, Le Mans is driven like a sprint – each lap at the limit, for 24 hours." The BMW engineers did everything correctly 10 years ago.







Historic  
race tracks

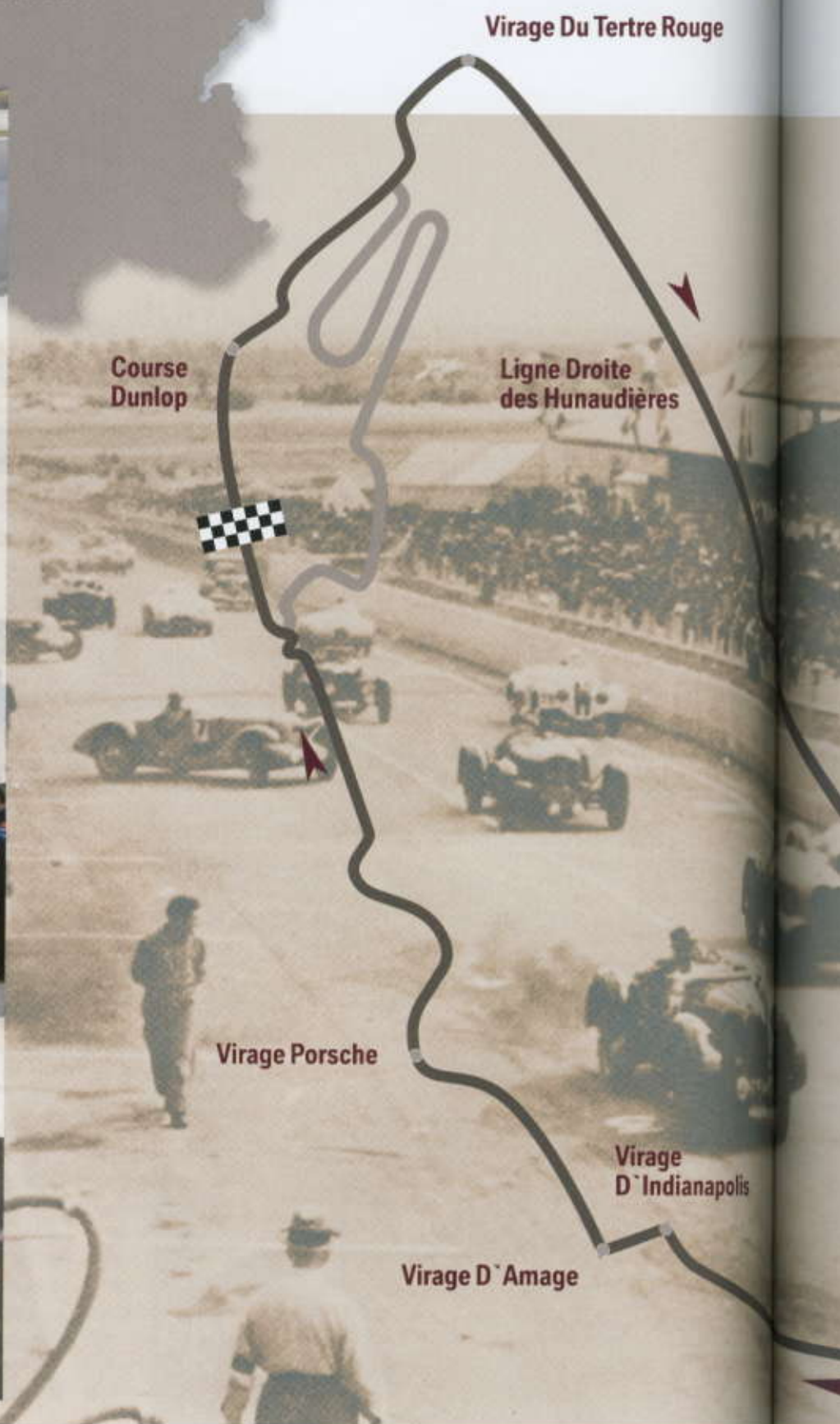
# Circuit des 24 Heures du Mans



- The 24 Hour Race of Le Mans was also the cradle of BMW's Art Car engagement. The first four BMW Art Cars all participated in the long-distance race. The first vehicle, a BMW 3.0 CSL painted by Alexander Calder, lined up in Le Mans in 1975.
- In 1976, BMW fielded a BMW 3.0 CSL featuring a 750 hp turbo engine and a paint job created by Frank Stella. One year later Roy Lichtenstein's piece of art (BMW 320 Group 5) lined up for the race and finished ninth.
- In 1979 the BMW M1, painted by no less than Andy Warhol, caused a great stir. The Art Car, with an output of 470 hp, achieved an excellent sixth place in the overall rankings and ranked second in its class. At the time, the drivers Hervé Poulain, Marcel Mignot, and Manfred Winkelhock drove the BMW M1 3,874.837 kilometres with an average speed of 163.386 km/h.



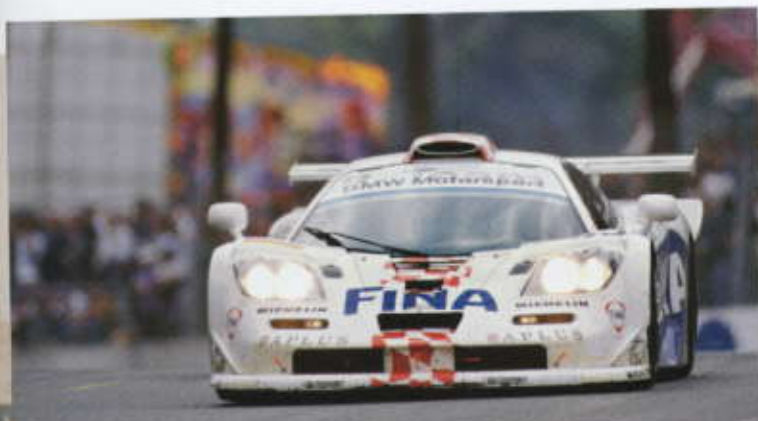
- In 1999 another BMW Art Car made an appearance at the 24 Hour Race in Le Mans: the BMW V12 LMR, designed by Jenny Holzer, lined up in the pre-qualifying races.





The 24 Hour Race in Le Mans in France is one of the world's most renowned motor sport events. In car racing, a victory in Le Mans ranks right after winning the Formula One World Championship, and is therefore much sought-after by drivers and teams. It proves the reliability of a vehicle, the tactical skills and the perfection of the pit team, and the ability of the drivers to drive fast and as error-free as possible.

The race in Le Mans had its debut on the weekend of 26-27 May 1923. Until the 1980s, two drivers paired up as one team; today three drivers share one vehicle. For many years, a distinguished feature of the Le Mans Race was the so-called Le Mans Start: the drivers had to run across the race track to their vehicles, which were positioned in front of the pit lane, to perform a standing start. Since 1971 the race has begun with a flying start preceded by one warm-up lap.



- In 1997 a works team driving a McLaren F1 featuring a 12-cylinder BMW engine achieved the second place in the GT 1 class and the third place in the overall rankings. In 1995 a private team had already taken the overall victory behind the wheel of a McLaren F1 with a BMW engine.

- In 1939 Max Prinz zu Schaumburg-Lippe and Hans Werlicher gained a class victory in the 2-liter class with the BMW 328 Touring Coupé, taking fifth place in the overall rankings. In addition, Ralph Resso and Paul Henemann, as well as Willy Briem and Rudolf Scholz, ranked second and third in the 2-liter class at the wheels of two BMW 328 Roadsters.



- Toine Hezemans and Dieter Quester drove to victory in the touring-car class at the wheel of a BMW 3.0 CSL in 1973. Jean-Claude Aubriet and "Déprie" repeated this triumph in 1974 in a BMW 3.0 CSL, as did Daniel Brillet, Giancarlo Gagliardi, and Michel Degoumois of Team Heidegger Racing in 1975, with a BMW 2002 Ti.



**Ligne Droite  
des Hunaudières**



**Mulsanne**

