



## Press Release 12 / 2016

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### Emotional rollercoaster for the “Bentley Boys” at the Spa 24 Hours

The 69th edition of the prestigious Spa 24 Hour race has met the public's, teams' and drivers' expectations fully, and will be remembered as one of the most exciting Blancpain GT Series races in the recent past.

The Bentley Boys in the #8 Team M-Sport car have made a big impact right from the beginning, always ranking amongst the Top 10 during the practice sessions, and securing a meritorious third place on the grid during the Superpole session. It was obvious that the Continental GT3 was in perfect condition to fight for the top spot on the podium if the reliability and other circumstances were favourable all along the 24-hour race.

During the first few stints, the pace set by the #8 Continental GT3 was noteworthy, and quickly it became apparent that a great result in this historic race was within their reach. During the first phase of the race, they received several setbacks in form of penalties which saw the Bentley Boys paying unscheduled visits to the pitlane a couple of times. The special layout of Spa's pitlane means that every drive-through is equal to a loss of over a minute. However, even having pitted more often than their rivals, and even having to overcome a puncture, thanks to their incredible pace they were in the lead at half race distance. In this 24 hour race points are awarded at the six and twelve hour marks as well, so Soucek and his colleagues were able to secure some valious points for the overall GT Series chamionship standings.

During the following hours the Bentley Boys fought hard to maintain their top spot. In a race full of incidents, safety-cars and several intense sudden rainshowers, and despite another penalty for exceeding the maximum stint time, they went into the final two hours of the race in P2. Soucek took the wheel for the final time and continued constantly cutting down the difference to the race leader.

If during the first 23 ½ hours it was the unexpected visits to the pitlane that had jeopardized Soucek's and his colleagues' aspirations, the last half hour turned the whole race completely upside down. In the blink of an eye a sudden shower put several turns of the track completely under water, and forced the teams to switch to wet tyres within a critically small timeframe. In this short moment of uncertainty, several competitors were luckier than Soucek and took advantage of a Virtual Safety Car to send him down to P5. Despite the blow, the Austro-Spaniard recomposed himself and kept on fighting to regain at least a podium position. Sadly, he did not succeed, finishing the race in P4.

Taking into account the car's performance and how the race developed until its final minutes, P4 may seem an insufficient reward for the Bentley Boys' titanic fight, but they were able to score an important amount of points that see them climb to P3 in the overall GT Series standings. In the Endurance Series, they are now only six points behind the leader, which leaves the title open until the final race of the season on the Nürnbürgring in Germany.

Soucek comments on his emotions at Spa:

“Honestly, I don't even know where to start. I am emotionally and physically tired, even though I feel very proud of what we achieved. Yesterday I had one of the most amazing experiences of my life, a mixture of feelings I had never experienced before. A 24-hour-race implies many things, but first and foremost to never give up. We have fought until the very end and worked ourselves into the ground to win one of the most demanding races on the planet. We have led te race until the end and were favourites for the win, but ended up crying. I'm not sure if it was a sudden outburst of emotions or because we were so sorry to have lost the second place we already had in our pocket during the last few minutes.

We could have won, but destiny wouldn't want us to, and even took away the podium from us. But we will come back stronger than ever before.

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BENTLEY



I'd like to thank Team M-Sport and Bentley for working so hard to provide us with a car that has been competitive and reliable for the whole 24 hours. I'd also like to point out the excellent work by Maxime Soulet and Wolfgang Reip, without whom this would not have been possible. Last but not least, my congratulations to the race winners for their well-deserved and hard-fought victory."



Stay tuned with the official Twitter accounts @Asoucek & @bentleyracing

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