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Nürburgring 24 Hours 2010

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People still say it's not possible to learn the Nordschleife as you would any other circuit. Others believe that 24-hour events are great fun but hardly exciting as motor races. Both views are out of touch with the real world of the Nürburgring 24 Hours, an event contested by several hundred drivers who know the place inside out, back to front and, in more than a few cases, upside down.

Last weekend, the 38th running of this magnificent motor race ended in triumph for the **BMW Motorsport/Schnitzer team M3 GT2**, which took the lead in the closing stages to win by under four minutes from a **Ferrari 430 GTC**. The **'Ring 24Hrs** has been **Porsche's** happy hunting ground for some years now and, for most of the race, it seemed that things would go Stuttgart's way yet again, even though **Audi** had impressively stitched up the first two rows of the enormous grid in qualifying.



Four new **Audi R8 LMS** cars led away at the start but, before the field had got round the modern GP circuit, a **Porsche GT3-R** had risen from seventh on the grid to lead the way onto the first lap of the full circuit. Setting the fastest lap of the race, the **Porsche** stayed in front until a backmarker punted it up the back after four hours, putting it out of the race. At about the same time, the best-placed **Audi** suffered a similar fate.



In a race of ever-changing fortunes, an unexpected leader emerged in the shape of the **Porsche GT3 Hybrid**, which headed the survivors for most of the race, only to suffer engine failure after more than 22 hours. The winning **BMW** drivers were a German/Brazilian/Portuguese combination of **Jorg Müller, Augusto Farfus, Uwe Alzen** and **Pedro Lamy**. An **Audi R8 LMS** finished third and, incredibly, the best **Porsche** was a **GT3 Cup S** in sixth place and three laps down.



The most successful British driver this time was **Sean Paul Breslin** who finished fifth in one of the **Audi R8s**, while **Andy Priaulx** came in seventh in another **Schnitzer BMW M3 GT2**. British driver **Roger Green** leapt unscathed from his blazing **Lotus Exige**, which was destroyed in the flames. Another Brit, **Chris Harris**, enjoyed better luck as the road-legal **Porsche GT3 RS** (above) he shared with three German drivers finished remarkably well in 13th place overall. The car was even driven to the circuit.



Aston Martin had a successful 24 Hours, winning one class and finishing an impressive second in

class with an almost standard four-door **Rapide**.

Text - Tony Dron

Photos - Porsche / BMW / Audi

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