

# LONG LIVE MOTORCYCLE RACING

For the past 90 years, motorcycle racing has been an integral part of the history of BMW Motorrad. Whether on or off the road, in an attempt to set a new speed record, riding solo or with a sidecar, BMW Motorrad and motorcycling racing are inextricably linked.



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## SUCCESS RIGHT FROM THE START

Back in the 1920s, the best way to gain publicity for a new motorcycle, particularly for a new brand name, was to achieve success in sporting events. It was ninety years ago, in 1923, that Max Friz rode his R 32 (even though the model had not yet actually been launched) in the “Race through Bavaria’s Mountains”, a reliability test organised by the Munich Automobile Club, without incurring a single penalty point. What better way of demonstrating BMW Motorrad’s concept of “tested in sport, proven in series”?

The young engineer Rudolf Schleicher was also well aware of this. Once he had completed the final detailed engineering for the R 32, his mind returned to the racing career that he had commenced not long beforehand. And so, on February 2, 1924, he went on to clock the best time of the day at the Mittenwalder Steig mountain race, at once becoming the Bavarian Motor Works’ very first winner of a racing event, and writing BMW history as a result, ❶.

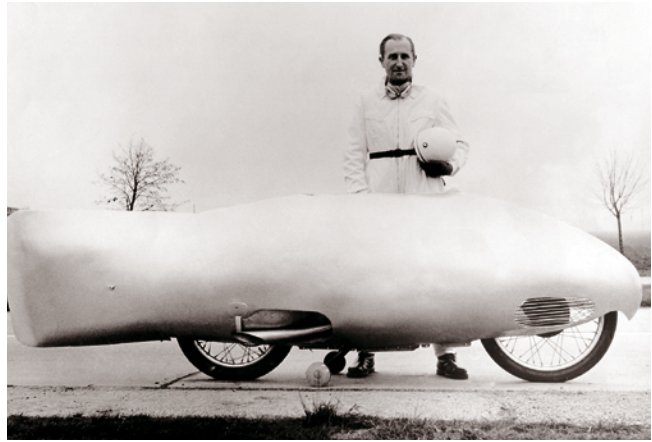
On May 18, 1924, three BMW works riders lined up at the Stuttgart Solitude with their R 37s plus OHV cylinder head constructed by Rudolf Schleicher, and won the event across three classes. This achievement was followed by further victories in several prestigious national races in Germany, including the first master title, which was awarded to Franz Bieber, also riding an R 37; this established BMW







❶ Rudolf Schleicher went down in history as the first ever winner of a racing event for the Bavarian Motor Works



❷ Ernst Henne with his 500-cc BMW that he took to 279.503 km/h on the motorway near Frankfurt on November 28, 1937

as a leading manufacturer even in this first year of motor racing. In the following years, the German motorcycle racing scene would be dominated by works and private riders using motorcycles from Munich.

## VICTORIES AT THE SIXDAYS AND THE TARGA FLORIO

A further victory came in 1925, with the German 250-cc class championship, which BMW claimed with an R 39. On an international level, the remarkable flat-twin Boxer, with its unusual shaft drive to the rear wheel, caused a sensation at the six-day race in Buxton, England in 1926, when Rudolf Schleicher won the gold medal. The commentators in the British press were full of praise for the BMW, calling it the motorcycle with the “most advanced” construction; BMW was now making a name for itself internationally. Meanwhile, victories by Paul Köppen and Ernst Henne at the Sicilian Targa Florio were also turning heads over in Italy. By 1929, BMW Motorrad had won the prestigious 500-cc class title several times running.

In 1933, the BMW team won the nations ranking in the international six-day race at Llandrindod Wells in Wales, on two R 16 solo bikes and an R 16 bike and sidecar, the first such win for Germany. It defended its title again the following year, also with R 16 bikes, followed by a further victory in 1935 at the Sixdays, this time with 500-cc compressor models.

## WORLD SPEED RECORD WITH SUPERCHARGER

The idea of participating in world record contests came from Ernst Henne, and fittingly, he was the one in the saddle in the contest for the absolute world speed record for motorcycles. It was in 1929 that he set a new world record of 216.75 km/h with a 750-cc BMW on the Ingolstädter Landstrasse near Munich; this was but the first round of a long series of attempts at setting new levels of top performance. He went to achieve another 75 world-best performances, culminating in a phenomenal 279.5 km/h on November 28, 1937, which he achieved with a streamlined, supercharged 500-cc BMW, ❷. The record he set was to remain in place for the next 14 years, an achievement that would seal BMW’s reputation as a motorcycle manufacturer of international standing.

It was thanks to the enhanced performance brought about by supercharging that standard-production OHV racing engines could achieve racing and world record successes. Moreover, the complex racing engines constructed by Rudolf Schleicher had two overhead camshafts on each side of the cylinder, driven by an upright shaft, plus compressor. This meant that from 1935 onwards, it was finally possible to give the leading British and Italian competitors a fair run for their money. After Grand Prix victories in 1936 and 1937, Georg “Schorsch” Meier won the European championship title in 1938, riding a supercharged BMW racing motorcycle, ❸. This was the first year in which the Euro-

pean road championship was held over an entire season, similar to international contests nowadays. Previously, the title could only be bestowed following victory in the European Grand Prix.

## SCHORSCH MEIER MAKES TT HISTORY

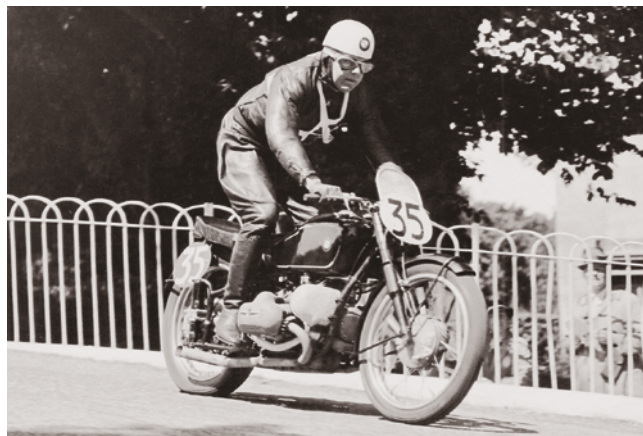
With the new member of the BMW Team, the former off-road rider Schorsch Meier, the supercharged BMW was virtually unbeatable. He was the one to find a way of making optimum use of the engine’s great potential combined with the low vehicle weight, culminating in victory in the Senior TT on the Isle of Man in 1939, the greatest racing success that BMW Motorrad had achieved up to that point. In second place was Meier’s team mate, Jock West, ❹. Even then, the TT was regarded as the biggest challenge in motorcycle racing and Meier was the first non-British entrant to win the premiere class.

## SUCCESSFUL START INTO THE POST-WAR PERIOD

In the first years after the Second World War, Germany was excluded from taking part in any international sporting events, including motor racing. For this reason, racing events were restricted to national terrain. In 1947, a year before the first post-war BMW motorcycle left the production lines, BMW took another opportunity to raise its brand profile through its racing performance, when Schorsch Meier



3 Georg "Schorsch" Meier performing a jump in his supercharged BMW



4 Jock West at the Tourist Trophy (Senior TT) 1939

eased his way to victory in the German championship. The BMW works rider followed this success with further victories in 1948, 1949, 1950 and 1953.

#### THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE RS ENGINE WITH DOHC AND VERTICAL SHAFTS

This was the time in which hundreds of thousands of people got to see both Schorsch Meier and Walter Zeller ride their BMW RS racers to victory. The BMW RS racing Boxers with vertical shafts and two overhead camshafts per cylinder turned in an unparalleled string of victories, even in the sidecar class. In 1954,

Wilhelm Noll and Fritz Cron achieved the first world championship title with the BMW RS combination, 5, in the sidecar class. Between 1954 and 1974, BMW racing combinations would win a total of 19 rider classifications and 20 manufacturer's championships. Klaus Enders took the world championship no less than six times.

#### FOCUS ON OFF-ROAD RACING IN THE 1960S

After the withdrawal of the works riders from the road-racing solo classes, Munich was free to focus on its off-road activity. One advantage was that it allowed BMW

to continually develop and improve its motorcycles, with Sebastian Nachtmann, Manfred Sensburg and Herbert Schek the most well-known riders. Of these, Schek went on to perform his own developments, aiming towards an optimum off-road BMW, which would eventually become the BMW GS 800, the predecessor of the R 80 G/S.

#### ON SUPERBIKE TERRAIN WITH THE R 90 S

The American journalist Bob Braverman first coined the term "superbike" in "Cycle Guide Magazine" in 1969. He was talking about the new, large-engine motorcycles of



5 Noll and Cron with a BMW 500-cc RS combination crossing through a town on the Isle of Man (1955)



750 cc and above that were gaining in popularity at that time. Only a short time later, the “Levi’s Superbike Series” was held in Australia, followed in 1976 by the first season of the US Superbike Championship in the USA, in which BMW Motorrad was also involved, together with the team from the American importer, Butler & Smith, ⑥. The later founder of the Superbike World Championship, Steve McLaughlin, along with Reg Pridmore, another American, were signed as riders of the meanwhile 1000 cc BMW R 90 S. While McLaughlin was victorious in the season’s prestigious first event, the 200-mile Daytona race, Pridmore was able to claim the title of the first US superbike champion at the end of the season.

In the late 1970s, ongoing world records were gaining attention, and in the years 1977 and 1980, BMW Motorrad joined in with the recently launched R 100 RS, the first series-production motorcycle in the world to be developed in a wind tunnel. But for its shortened suspension travel and lack of lower body panels, it was largely a standard-production motorcycle, and it was soon put to good use competing in the world record events held in the Italian town of Nardo, ⑦, taking part in races over 10, 100 and 1000 km as well as one, six, twelve and 24 hours. Also taking part: Helmut Dähne.

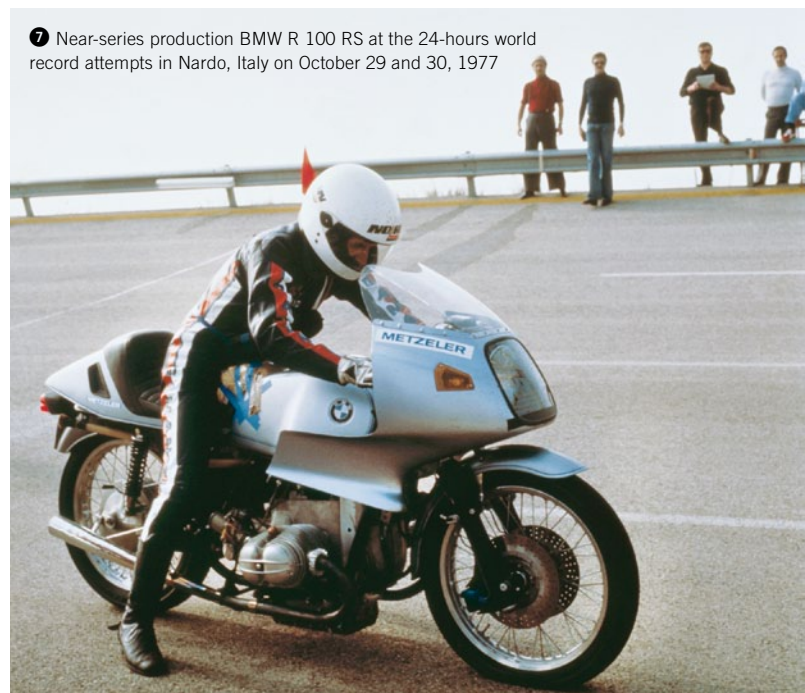
### FROM VICTORY TO VICTORY WITH THE BMW GS

Four years later, the subject of motor racing was to gain a considerable push at BMW Motorrad, with Rolf Witthöft winning the European Offroad Championship, riding an off-road 800-cc BMW, ⑧. With perfect timing, the series version of this enduro bike – the R 80 G/S with the BMW Monolever single-sided swing arm on the rear wheel – was launched to the general public in autumn of that year. This motorcycle not only established the new touring or large enduro segment, but also went on to win further prestigious sporting titles for BMW Motorrad over the following years.

Right from the start, BMW off-road motorcycles took part in the Paris-Dakar rally through the West African country of Senegal. In 1981, the Boxer finally asserted itself thanks to its robust and reliable air-flow cooling, ease of maintenance, and shaft drive. The French desert specialist,



⑥ Poster “BMW: 1976 Superbike Champion in the USA”



⑦ Near-series production BMW R 100 RS at the 24-hours world record attempts in Nardo, Italy on October 29 and 30, 1977

Hubert Auriol, won the motorcycle classification, and repeated his success in 1983. The 1000-cc two-cylinder maintained its close similarity to standard-production models, claiming victories in 1984 and 1985 when the former Belgian world Moto Cross champion, Gaston Rahier, upped and left the competition, ⑨. In 1992, the later car-racing driver, Jutta Kleinschmidt, celebrated her victory in the women’s classification at the Cape Town rally, riding a BMW R 100 GS after 12,700 km.

### DESERT RALLY TRIUMPHS

In 1999, no less than four BMW works riders lined up at the start of the Paris-Dakar in Granada, riding the 55-kW (75 hp) rally version of the BMW F 650. Eighteen days and 9022 kilometres later, the event was won by Richard Saint from Saint-Affrique, France. In 2000, the rally was routed from Dakar to Cairo in Egypt, and BMW entered four specially developed F 650 RR bikes, plus, in a surprise



8 Rolf Withthöft on a special stage with the works GS

move, two R 900 RR models – the newly designed rally version of the four-valve Boxer. After its debut appearance with Jimmy Lewis at the handlebars, it achieved third place, which together with the triple performance of the F 650 RR riders, resulted in a four-times victory for BMW Motorrad, 10. Richard Saint repeated his previous year's success, Oscar Gallardo came in second, and Jean Brucy finished in fourth place. In addition, Andrea Mayer took the women's title in the Paris-Dakar for the third time in a row, also riding an F 650 RR.

The resounding success of the one-cylinder motorcycle in 2000 was accompanied by the launch of the new F 650 GS to mark the moment the winners crossed the finish line in Cairo. It lent a whole new dimension to the launch of the F 650 GS

two months later, which retained the former model's road performance and added improved off-road capability.

#### VICTORIOUS ONE-CYLINDER MOTORCYCLES BASED ON THE F 650

The Chrysalis team from the English city of Southampton made several headlines with their one-cylinder, aluminium bridge-frame F 650. In 1997, 1998 und 1999, rider Dave Morris won the one-cylinder class of the TT on the Isle of Man with a 59 kW (80 hp) motorcycle weighing only 134 kg. Only three years previously, in 1995, the German PAMI team created a very similar design for Herbert Enzinger, which weighed no more than 115 kg and had a power output of 63 kW (85 hp). Enzinger not only won that year's Ger-

man Supermono championship but also celebrated a formidable third-place finish in the Daytona Speedweek.

#### THE BMW MOTORRAD BOXERCUP

The idea of a race series with identical BMW R 1100 S motorcycles was born in France. After two seasons in France and Belgium, the BoxerCup was organised as an international event for the first time in 2001. Over seven heats held during the racing weekends of the motorcycle Grands-Prix and long-distance world championships, 30 riders from all over Europe competed with each other for the brand trophy, riding near-series production BMW R 1100 S bikes. The already exciting heats were made even more thrilling by the presence of a number of



9 Gaston Rahier at the Paris-Dakar rally in 1984



10 2000: the victorious BMW Motorrad Team Gauloise, from left to right: Mayer, Lewis, Sainct, Gallardo, Brucy

guest participants. On one occasion, former 500-cc Grand-Prix star, Randy Mamola took to the handlebars, originally signed as the ambassador of the BMW Motorrad BoxerCup, thrilling onlookers with his spectacular riding style. The winner in 2001 and 2002 was Stephane Mertens from Belgium. In 2003, the BMW Motorrad BoxerCup was held in the USA for the first time, as a guest event at the traditional season opener at the 200-mile Daytona meeting.

Entrants in the 2005 season of the established BMW Motorrad brand cup lined up at the start with a completely new BMW motorcycle: the BMW K 1200 R. The BMW Motorrad BoxerCup had now grown into the BMW Motorrad PowerCup. The most powerful naked bike in the world, with 120 kW (163 hp), was responsible for the extreme dynamism and excitement that characterised this racing season, thanks to its extreme performance potential, high-revving four-cylinder engine and characteristic appearance.

### SUCCESSFUL WORLD ENDURO CHAMPIONSHIP WITH THE G 450 X

In 2007, BMW presented its G 450 X, the first pure-blooded sport enduro for the attractive 450-cc class. Its crowning achievement came when Juha Salminen from Finland took the runner-up title in the 2009 world championship in the E2 class of the World Enduro Championship (WEC). After moving from the BMW Motorrad Motorsport team to the Husqvarna brand, which was also part of BMW Motorrad, he succeeded in winning the world championship in the E class in 2011.

In 2007, the BMW Motorrad Motorsport Endurance team made its debut appearance with the new HP2 Sport, the first series-production Boxer with DOHC, at the 24 Hours at Le Mans, exactly fifty years after Walter Zeller's last works appearance in 1957. The riders Markus Barth, Thomas Hinterreiter and Rico Penzkofer finished in sixteenth place in the overall rankings and as winners in the



open class. The BMW Motorrad team won four of the five world championship heats in the open class, easily gaining the title in this category.

### WORKS TEAM IN THE SUPERBIKE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

In 2008, exactly twenty years after the Superbike World Championship was first established, BMW Motorrad announced its participation in this near-series world championship event, 11. Just before the

end of the year, the BMW Motorrad Motorsport headquarters were inaugurated in Stephanskirchen. The BMW S 1000 RR required for the homologation had not yet officially been launched, but its four-cylinder engine was presented to the invited guests nevertheless.

Barely three months later, the BMW Motorrad motorsport team debuted at the season opener on the Australian Phillip Island, with the two works riders, Troy Corser and Ruben Xaus. The second superbike world champion and local hero



11 Superbike World Championship, Monza, Italy in May 2009

Troy Corser came in eighth on his favourite route around the Tasmanian Sea, with a sensational result of 1:32.726 minutes at an average speed of 172.573 km/h, which also earned him the fastest lap time. A made-to-measure starter event for the young team.

#### FIRST PODIUM SUCCESSES IN THE SUPERBIKE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

In 2010, Troy Corser earned his team its first successes, finishing twice in third place in Misano and Monza, and assuming the eleventh position in the final ranking. Ayrton Badovini riding an S 1000 RR won nine of the ten heats in the Superstock 1000 FIM Cup, finishing in second place once. Then there were the eight pole positions and six fastest laps. This superior championship victory underlined the sheer potential and clout of the series-near S 1000 RR extremely convincingly. Even in its first year, the BMW Motorrad S 1000 RR achieved second position in the brand ranking at the IDM Superbike contest in the International German Motorcycle Championship.

In 2011, Leon Haslam from the UK, son of the former 500-cc Grand Prix star Ron

Haslam, otherwise known as “Rocket Ron”, was signed up for the Superbike World Championship. Alongside Troy Corser, he made efficient use of the potential at his disposal, taking his S 1000 RR onto the podium no less than three times, and finishing in a very satisfying fifth place in the world championship rankings. At the same time, the BMW Motorrad France 99 team came in second in the FIM Endurance World Championship, with an S 1000 RR. In the IDM, Michael Ranseder made it as far as runner-up, winning the manufacturer’s competition for BMW Motorrad.

#### THE S 1000 RR IN THE WINNING LANE

In the 2012 season, the BMW Motorrad Motorsport Team signed the 30-year-old Italian, Marco Melandri. The 250-cc world champion in 2002 and Superbike runner up in 2011 finally brought in the victories that the RR deserved. The Italian secured a total of six racing victories – more than any other rider in that season. However, there were several unfortunate falls that cost him a number of decisive points, with the result that Melandri only came in

third in the final placements. This also meant that BMW Motorrad just missed the title of constructor champion.

The Superstock 1000 FIM Cup, on the other hand, ended with optimum results for BMW Motorrad and the S 1000 RR, won by Sylvain Barrier. The good average performance on international level was enhanced by the second place in the final ranking attained by the BMW Motorrad France 99 team in the FIM Endurance World Championship. The IDM was nothing short of perfect. The 29-year-old Frenchman, Nigon Erwan, became the superbike champion, an achievement enhanced by the superior victory in the manufacturer’s championship, finishing with 644 points, 403 points ahead of the second-placed Far Eastern entrant.

After an abstinence of more than thirty years, BMW Motorrad returned to the World Sidecar Championship in 2012. Jörg Steinhausen, son of the two-times world sidecar champion, Rolf Steinhausen (in 1975 and 1976), piloted the racing combination in the BMW motorsport colours, with the S 1000 RR engine and together with partner Grégory Cluze. The two ended the comeback season as runners up in the competition.