

JJ Motorsport's insights: how do I train for a 24h race?

Motor racing is one of the most physically underrated sports in the world. Especially in 24 hour races, the human endurance is put to its limits. Drivers are not only facing temperatures of 30+° C in the cockpit, but also get to endure the g-forces from racing the car, not to mention the mental fatigue after being in the car for 1,5 or maybe sometimes 3 hours during a double stint. Fortunately, our BMW M235i Racing Cup car makes endurance races more endurable thanks to the “flappy paddle” gearbox from the standard road car, which is as fast as a sequential gearbox but much smoother than the latter.



Endurance racing requires a good basic condition, to remain hydrated and stay focussed during the remainder of the race. But where do you start? First of all, cardio is an important element in your training routine. The amount of oxygen you get during a 24h race is limited. That in combination with the warm fireproof race suit you are obligated to wear, means your blood pressure and heart rate increases. According to an article on *Men's Health*, a 24 hour race can burn as much calories as 3 (yes, 3!) marathons. For example: during the 24 hours of Le Mans drivers in a GT car burn up to 1000 calories per hour whilst running consumes about 600 to 700...

But not only cardio and heart rate form an important element in the preparation of a 24 hour race. When you are driving a 24 hour race, you'll need to recuperate quickly from your stint, for you only have a limited time to rest. Sleeping at the racetrack with all the ambient noise is not easy either, so earplugs might be a good tip to bring if you want to have some decent sleep in between your stints. Make sure you are well rested the week before you start a 24 hour race. Even training should best be avoided in the week prior to the event, so you can start the race fully recuperated.

Mental focus can best be trained on a racing simulator. Simracing is not only good to get acquainted with a new car and/or track, but it also helps you improve your concentration while driving. Try to get into your “zone” before you get into the car. Endurance racing can be very lonely sometimes, and on other moments it can be completely the other way round. The better you’re mentally prepared for this “rollercoaster”, the easier you will coast through your stint and the sooner you’ll be recovered for your next stint.

Don’t forget that it’s not only about the racing, you also need to keep into account the temperature of the gearbox, differential, oil and engine to get through the 24 hours without mechanical problems. If one of the temperature raises, an alarm will go on and you will have to inform the team so they can take their precautions. However, driving a night stint with 60+ cars on the track and at the same time keeping an eye on the logger can be very demanding. So try to get in some mental training as well in your preparation for a 24 hour race.



One of the other key elements in a good preparation for an endurance race is a hydration. This is of importance for your blood pressure regulation and you need to make sure you are well hydrated before you get in to the car. When you cannot control your blood pressure, and if it drops significantly during the race, so does your concentration, reaction time and cognitive processing. Driving a racing car is not something solely muscular, but also the cognitive process is one of the elements which is often forgotten by many drivers. Osteopaths can help you in getting well prepared before the race, but also during. Make sure you have a hydration strategy planned the week before you start a 24 hour race. And whatever you do: if you have a routine set which involves for instance caffeine, don't try to break the routine during the race. Your body will be so used to it, that letting go of the caffeine just for the race might cause adverse effects.



Another important factor is that you need to train your muscular system for endurance. Unlike single-seater racing, you are sharing the car with 3, maybe 4, other drivers and time is crucial during a pitstop. To ensure you have the right seat position, make sure you practice your pitstops with your teammates and make 'marks' on the floor regarding your position. Your body will be the key element to feel the car, and will endure all the g-forces under braking. In order to remain stable during your stint, you need to focus on core training. Sit-ups can be good, but also cycling may help. This helps you control your balance while exercising, and even though you're sitting down in the car, your core will help you stabilise under braking, cornering, etc.