



ROUNDS 3 & 4 PRACTICE AND QUALIFYING

Weather: sunny and warm, with temperatures in the high twenties during the hottest hours.

PRACTICE 1 – BMW AND SEAT AT THE TOP

The FIA WTCC has arrived in Magny-Cours for rounds 3 & 4 and the first free practice session has been completed. Jörg Müller set the fastest lap with a time of 1:49.226 minutes which is a positive start for the BMW Team Deutschland who will be aiming to repeat the success they had with Dirk Müller in Monza three weeks ago. SEAT Sport's Rydell claimed second position on the timesheet, 0.431 of a second behind Jörg, and Priaulx posted a time of 1:49.927 making him the third fastest at this stage. With Dirk Müller fourth and Peter Terting fifth, BMW and SEAT cars filled all the top spots.

Farfus had the quickest of the Alfa Romeo Racing Team cars, 6th best time overall, while Menu headed the Chevrolet team clocking the 21st fastest time. Ford Hotfiel Sport were very busy in the pits as both Klenke and Jäger's cars had engine changes. Swedish driver, Carl Rosenblad completed the best lap of the independent drivers, 1.6 seconds off of Jorg's pace and 11th position overall, just behind Alessandro Zanardi, who topped the list for the Italian Championship.

PRACTICE 2 – TARQUINI AND GENÉ BEAT THE MÜLLERS

The fastest lap of the FIA WTCC second free practice session was not set until the very final moments. As some of the cars were returning to the pit lane, Gabriele Tarquini crossed the chequered flag in his Alfa Romeo 156, with his last lap being the overall fastest. Due to rising temperatures, his time was 1:50.465 – over a second slower than J. Müller's best time this morning. It was an Alfa Romeo, SEAT and BMW top three with Jordi Gené and Jörg Müller achieving times 0.138 and 0.237 of a second behind Tarquini respectively.

Chevrolet are clearly learning rapidly as Nicola Larini set the 17th quickest time overall, which is a notable improvement from this morning. Ford also had a positive session as both cars participated. Jäger completed a useful 10 laps and managed a best time of 1:53.787.

There was a battle between Rosenblad, Hennerici and Coronel to be the fastest of the Independent drivers with Hennerici emerging with the 10th fastest time of the entire field. Zanardi was again, top of the Italian Superturismo field in his BMW 320i and placed 11th overall.

Roberto Colciago did not take part in the session, due to a broken throttle cable in his JAS Motorsport Honda Accord.



QUALIFYING – ANOTHER MÜLLER ON POLE

There will be a BMW, a SEAT and an Alfa Romeo occupying the top three spots on the grid for the start of the FIA WTCC third round which is being held at Magny-Cours tomorrow. It was an immensely active qualifying session with top positions constantly changing between drivers. But Jörg Müller used the cooling track temperature to his advantage to set the fastest time of 1:49.486 on his last lap. He claimed the second consecutive pole of the season for Team BMW Deutschland, after Dirk Müller's in Monza, but also his own second pole in Magny-Cours, considering last year's FIA European Touring Car Championsh event.

Rickard Rydell and Augusto Farfus qualified second and third behind him. In fact, the top three qualifying times were only separated by 0.378 seconds and just 0.719 covers the difference between the top nine times. Gaps were so close that Farfus beat Andy Priaulx for third position by only 0.001 seconds!

Alain Menu qualified as the fastest of the three Chevrolet Lacetti cars and will start the race from 15th position. Brilliant progress for the RML-built machine that reduced the gap from pole to 1.9 seconds.

Due to engine changes earlier in the day, Ford drivers Klenke and Jäger will be starting from 33rd and 31st positions respectively. They are separated by De Lorenzi who also replaced his engine this morning.

Young Finn, Valle Mäkelä, qualified as the fastest of the Independent drivers, 12th overall. The GR Asia driver is also competing in the Italian Superturismo and set the best qualifying time in this field. Zanardi, who is currently leading the Italian championship, stopped on the track with four minutes remaining, due to a gearbox problem, which prevented him to improve his 14th position.

On his first outing in the FIA WTCC, Frank Diefenbacher, crashed into the barriers at the end of the qualifying session substantially damaging his RS-Line IPZ Racing Ford Focus. The driver was then taken to Nevers hospital for a check up.

ROUNDS 3 & 4 QUALIFYING QUOTES

Jörg MÜLLER, BMW Team Deutschland – pole position

“Magny-Cours is a circuit that really suits BMW. We have won here in the last four races over the past two years and I hope to continue this success by capitalising on my pole for the first race tomorrow. We knew we were coming to Magny-Cours with a good car, especially after the Monza results. I am obviously happy. It will not be an easy race as I’m sure the other drivers will make it difficult for me.”

Rickard RYDELL, SEAT Sport – 2nd fastest

“We knew we were going to be competitive here. I am really pleased to be starting from second position. It will be a tough race I believe we have a good pace so we have a good chance but as was shown in Monza, things can happen in a race that you can’t plan for. I think that the driving was too aggressive in Monza and I hope for a clean race tomorrow.”

Augusto FARFUS jr., Alfa Romeo Racing Team – 3rd fastest

“Every time we go to a track we aim to get pole position - this time it was particularly hard. We have done a great job so far this weekend, so in the race I hope to overtake Rickard and Jörg and fight for the win. The top drivers all achieved very close times so they are set to be a couple of tight races.”

Valle MÄKELÄ, GR Asia – 12th fastest, 1st of Independents

“I knew that if everything went well, we could do it. I’m really happy, it’s great. Today has been my first experience of the Magny-Cours track. It has lots of fast corners which I like. Tomorrow I will aim to gain as many places as I can in order to increase my points. We will have to see what happens..”

Alain MENU, Chevrolet – 15th fastest

“This morning my car was very nervous in fast corners. But in the afternoon it was completely different, as stable as could be. Magny-Cours has a rather abrasive track surface, so with more rubber laid down on a hot track it improves things quite a bit. I set my time on my second set of fresh tyres, as I was had traffic problems with my first set. If it’s hot tomorrow, we should be in for a good result. In any case we are making good progress.”



Sascha PLÖDERL, RS-Line IPZ Racing – 33rd fastest

"It has been a tough start for the team. We had some problems with the cars and people worked overnight so we could drive today. It is the first time I have driven this car so I don't think my result was too bad because I achieved times only 1 second behind my team-mate who has much more experience than I do."

Bart MAMPAEY, BMW Team UK Team Principal

"Jörg's performance was impressive, but we are nevertheless satisfied, because from fourth place Andy (Priaulx) has every chance of getting involved in the battle for a podium place. However it will be a tough job, as things are very tight up front."

Bernd MEYER, Ford Hotfiel Sport Technical Director

"We saw that we made a step forward when using new tyres for just one flying lap. We now have to work on adjusting the set-up in a way that enables us to reproduce that over the whole race distance."