



ROUNDS 7 & 8 PRACTICE AND QUALIFYING

Weather: sunny and hot, with a dry track.

FORMER FOOTBALL ACE MASSARO PATRON OF IMOLA RACES

Daniele Massaro, former football ace, is the patron of the FIA WTCC at Imola. 44 year old from Monza, Massaro was one of the most successful Italian players in the Eighties and Nineties. A midfielder for Fiorentina and Milan, with the latter team he won the Italian Championship four times and the Champions League twice. He also achieved 15 caps with the Italian National Team.

Since the end of his football career, Massari competed in a number of rallies and races, and in Imola, he will take part in the Trofeo Maserati race in a Sportitalia-backed car. He then will join the drivers for the autograph session in the paddock at 10.30 am.

PRACTICE 1: GIOVANARDI IS FASTEST

Within the first five minutes Priaulx, Dirk Müller and Giovanardi had set a fastest lap. The latter remained at the top and improved his best lap three times, with the fastest being 1:59.406. Rydell's last lap was his fastest, promoting him to second spot (0.730 seconds slower than Giovanardi) while Farfus and Gené set the third and fourth fastest times lately in the session. BMW's Dirk Müller, García and Jörg Müller were fifth, sixth and seventh respectively. Positions 2 (Rydell) to 12 (Thompson) were all within 9 tenths.

Nicola Larini was the best of the Chevrolets in 16th place, 2.405 seconds off the pace, and Klenke headed the Ford's - 22nd best overall. His team-mate Jäger only managed to complete 4 laps due to engine problems. Tavano looked set to secure the quickest of the Independents' times until, with four minutes remaining, De Michelli completed a lap of 2:00.987 in his Honda Accord. This was also the best time out of the Superturismo competitors, demoting Zanardi to second. De Michelli's performance matched his team-mate Colciago's (eighth overall), proving that JAS Motorsport Hondas can compete with the works cars.

PRACTICE 2 – DRASTIC IMPROVEMENT FOR FORD

Tarquini started as fastest but was demoted to second by team-mate Giovanardi half way through the session. In the opening minutes, Tarquini had set a time of 2:00.444 which remained at the top until Giovanardi posted a 1:59.880, half-a-second faster than the rest of the field. Subsequently Tarquini spun at Rivazza and was unable to rejoin.

SEAT Sport's Plato was among the quickest for the entire session with his best lap being just 0.641 seconds behind the top time, he claimed third spot. García was sixth fastest overall and best of the BMW cars while team-mate Zanardi set his



best time with three minutes remaining, topping the Italian Superturismo field for a brilliant 9th place overall.

Ford just missed out on a top ten slot with Jäger posting the 11th fastest lap of the session, 1.415 seconds behind the best lap, a drastic improvement in performance after an engine change that solved the problems of the first session. Coronel emerged as the fastest independent and ranked 12th overall.

QUALIFYING – ALFA ON POLE, AHEAD OF BMW AND SEAT

Fabrizio Giovanardi proved the fastest man in Imola, claiming his second consecutive pole position after that in last year's FIA ETCC. In all the sessions the Alfa Romeo man was half a second faster than the rest of the field, and in qualifying he went to top of the timesheet in the early stages, clocking a time of 1:59.132 and demoting his team-mate Augusto Farfus who had set a provisional pole with a lap in 1:59.577.

He managed to drastically improve his time within the final five minutes to ensure he remained there. His best lap was 1:58.573 – over half a second ahead of Antonio García's best time for second place.

Jordi Gené looked as though he would begin tomorrow's first race in second place until the BMW Team Italy-Spain driver, García set a time just 0.158 seconds quicker on his last lap. The qualifying session ended with drivers from three different Manufacturers – Alfa Romeo, BMW and SEAT – at the top.

Andy Priaulx spun at Villeneuve half way into the session but rejoined and jumped from twelfth to sixth on his last lap. Farfus and Gabriele Tarquini occupy fourth and fifth places respectively. However the latter will be dropped by ten places on the grid, due to the penalty for the incident with Terting at Silverstone.

Roberto Colciago continued to impress by qualifying seventh in his JAS Motorsport Honda Accord, while his team-mate Adriano De Micheli was the fastest of both, the Independents Trophy and the Italian Superturismo Championship, as well as qualifying 12th overall.

Alain Menu qualified 17th, the best of the Chevrolet drivers and 1.977 seconds slower than Giovanardi. Ford drivers, Thomas Klenke and Thomas Jäger were 26th and 27th quickest. However, the latter will start from the back of the grid due to an engine change occurred in the morning, between the free practice sessions.

ROUNDS 7 & 8 QUALIFYING QUOTES

Fabrizio GIOVANARDI, Alfa Romeo Racing Team – pole position

“I have a great connection with this circuit; I have gained pole positions and won races here in the past. I have a fantastic car here today as I did in Silverstone, so considering I am starting from the pole I am very confident for tomorrow. I have worked a lot on how to get the best out of my car and I seem to have found it, so hope it continues for the rest of the season.”

Antonio GARCÍA, BMW Team Italy-Spain – 2nd fastest

“Things have improved greatly for the team since last year. Then we were two seconds off the pace whereas now we are just half a second slower. We were competitive in Monza and Magny-Cours, however not as much in Silverstone. It looks like we are back again and I think it will be a really good race tomorrow. I will hope for a good start and then the first few laps will be interesting.”

Jordi GENÉ, SEAT Sport – 3rd fastest

“I knew it was very close between me and García. I am quite happy with third because my aim was to start in front of the pack. I think we’re more than capable of taking second place but it’ll be tough to win; Giovanardi was very fast today and it will be difficult to catch him tomorrow. But, in general, I’m pleased with the car and my set-up; today has been a good day and I think all the indications for tomorrow for the entire team are very positive.”

Adriano DE MICHELI, JAS Motorsport – 12th fastest

“I’m so happy! We see now the results of having more experience and more track time. We knew that it would be tough at the beginning, because we hadn’t tested before the start of the season. Because of this we always have to spend the first free practice getting our bearings. Today it also helped having knowledge of the track. And I should say that this good result left me with a sour taste in my mouth, because I made a mistake while on my third set of fresh tyres. Otherwise I could have improved by one tenth and moved to fifth or sixth.”

Alain MENU, Chevrolet – 18th fastest

“I did a good lap. I kept myself back a bit for my third set of tyres and then attacked everywhere I could. On my fastest lap I outbraked myself in the chicane, but I don’t think I lost much time there. Other than that the car still has too much understeer in the slow and medium corners, but all in all I’m happy with my afternoon.”



Thomas JÄGER, Ford Hotfiel Sport – 27th fastest

“Unfortunately we didn’t achieve the same results as we did in the second practice session, when I was 11th fastest. The track felt different after the GT qualifying, I didn’t get a perfect lap and this resulted in a lower position. Also, the other works teams can step up the pace by a second or two for qualifying whereas our set-up is the same throughout the day, and this is something we are working on. The time we achieved in second practice showed what we are capable of when everything works.”

Carlos MASTRETTA, GR Asia – 31st fastest

“The team have been very professional and helpful in increasing my speed. The car felt much better in qualifying than in the practice sessions so I am hoping that it will go even faster during the races. We have achieved what we wanted to do today, which was to learn as much as possible. I didn’t know the track and have never driven a front wheel car before, but the SEAT is such a great car and I am learning with every lap I do.”