

## **ROUNDS 11 & 12 RACE REPORT**

*Weather:* overcast with a dry track during the first race; rain fell during the repair time, but stopped before the start of the second race, and the track changed from wet to dry as the race went by.

### **DIRK MÜLLER WINS ONE AND STRETCHES HIS LEAD**

The second race of the FIA WTCC in Spa will be remembered as one of the most dramatic and breathtaking of recent motorsport history.

Its results matched the unpredictable weather of the Ardennes, with two different incidents involving the title contenders and a third crash causing a safety car period that resulted in the race being restarted at the beginning of the last lap.

The final classification might have turned out to be a bookmaker's worst nightmare, as Independent driver Stefano D'Aste emerged from the havoc as the overall winner at the wheel of his Proteam Motorsport BMW. His fellow Independent competitor, Tom Coronel claimed third place on the podium behind Fabrizio Giovanardi.

However, the Stewards decided to hit D'Aste with a 3-second penalty for cutting a chicane, which demoted him to second.

As for the title fight, the Belgian event worked in favor of Dirk Müller and Giovanardi. With a lot of determination, the German driver claimed his third victory of the season in Race 1, after a tough fight with Andy Priaulx. Jörg Müller completed a perfect BMW 1-2-3 stealing third position from Alfa Romeo's Augusto Farfus by inches. This fight was also investigated by the Stewards, who decided to exclude Farfus for dangerous driving, and also to penalise Jörg Müller for having caused an avoidable collision. Alfa Romeo racing appealed against Farfus' exclusion.

Thanks to a hard-worked fifth position in Race 2, Dirk managed to stretch his lead by two points ahead of Giovanardi, which is now 4 points. But the Alfa Romeo man is on the ball, with three victories in three consecutive events. Priaulx has retained his third position, but he is now 11 points off the lead.

SEAT was hit by very bad luck, as none of their works drivers managed to finish within the points in either of the two races. Only Coronel saved the Spanish Manufacturer's honour. Ford had even a darker day, with newcomer Michael Funke going upside down at the start of Race 1, and Thomas Klenke sent crashing into Jordi Gené's car in Race 2. After Nicola Larini and Robert Huff had scored Chevrolet's first points in the Drivers championship at Puebla, the team's third man, Alain Menu, was able to do the same by finishing sixth in Race 2.

In the Independents' Trophy, Coronel reduced the gap between he and the leader Marc Hennerici.

Results of both races remain provisional, pending the appeal lodged by Alfa Romeo and the technical inspection of the ECU of car #7 (Farfus).



### **RACE 1 - DIRK MÜLLER LEADS A BMW 1-2-3**

Soheil Ayari (qualified 24<sup>th</sup>) was demoted at the back of the grid due to an engine change.

Andy Priaulx claimed the race lead off the starting line. At the first corner Dirk Müller overtook team-mate Jörg Müller. SEAT Sport driver, Gené and Alfa man Tarquini made contact which resulted in the former spinning and rejoining in 19<sup>th</sup> position. Funke rolled his Ford Focus car as he was pushed wide at Combes, which meant one lap was completed under safety car conditions.

Priaulx got a good start as the safety car entered the pits while Dirk overtook Farfus to move up to second. Another BMW/Alfa Romeo battle was taking place as Jörg and Tarquini fought for fourth spot.

Lap 4 saw Plato overtake Giovanardi for 8<sup>th</sup>. However, the latter reclaimed the final point scoring position while the SEAT driver had a battle with García for 7<sup>th</sup>.

Dirk overtook Priaulx on lap 5 to take the lead but the Briton remained close and they entered lap 6 with just 0.541 seconds between them. The remaining laps were packed full of action as Priaulx tried to attain his first race win of the season, his challenges however did not come into fruition. Jörg made a move on Farfus at the last corner of the final lap and the two crossed the line side by side with smoke billowing out of Jörg's rear right tyre. It was a BMW 1-2-3 as the front of Jörg's car was just 0.022 of a second ahead of Farfus' Alfa.

Coronel kept hold of his 14<sup>th</sup> place start to win the Independent category. Behind him for 15<sup>th</sup> place was Menu, the best of the Chevrolet team while the remaining Ford driven by Klenke was 22<sup>nd</sup>. Ayari finished 24<sup>th</sup> in his Peugeot after a spin.

### **RACE 2: GIOVANARDI WINS AS D'ASTE IS PENALISED**

As the cars lined up on a damp track, the reverse grid meant Giovanardi started on pole, and took the lead at the start chased by García, Tarquini and Thompson.

As the field dived down to the Eau Rouge, Priaulx, Farfus and Dirk Müller were involved in an accident. Priaulx's car was so damaged that he had to retire, whereas Farfus and Dirk were able to rejoin. Also in the first lap, Jörg Müller overtook Thompson for fourth and Tarquini drifted wide at a corner losing three places as he rejoined in fifth. Jörg proceeded to suffer problems and had to pay a visit to the pits. More action occurred as Hennerici and Rydell made contact, both came off the track: the Swede retired while Hennerici rejoined. Thompson pitted on lap 2 after being overtaken by many drivers.

Giovanardi looked set to secure his third victory of the season when on lap 3 Klenke was touched by Larini's Chevrolet, which caused the Ford to skid through the Bust Stop chicane and collect Gene's SEAT. The damage to both cars was extensive and the safety car made its second appearance of the day, this time for three laps.

The race resumed with just one lap remaining, with Giovanardi closely chased by García, Tarquini and Dirk Müller. While trying to outbrake each other at the Bus Stop, García and Tarquini clashed, involving Dirk Müller. D'Aste, who was fighting for fifth position with Coronel and Menu cut across the chicane to avoid the three spinning cars, and rejoined the track well ahead of Giovanardi. Which eventually cost him a 3-second penalty, meaning that Giovanardi scored his third win of the year, from D'Aste, Coronel and Farfus. Dirk Müller obtained an important fifth place, while Alain Menu finished sixth and scored his first championship points.

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### **RACE QUOTES**

#### **Dirk MÜLLER, BMW Team Deutschland – 1<sup>st</sup> in Race 1 and 5<sup>th</sup> in Race 2**

“I have to say it was a lucky day for me. The first race was incredible. My start was spot on, then I overtook Farfus and I was lucky to get a slipstream from Andy (Priaulx). There was a tough fight between Andy and me. In the second race, the crash at Eau Rouge was incredibly scary but the car seemed fine apart from the aerodynamics being affected. So I got up to fourth place but then there was the last corner, I knew something was going to happen because the other guys seemed to brake too late. I tried to brake on my normal line but the back of my car was hit, I spun, tried to recover and made it to the finish despite broken suspension.”

#### **Fabrizio GIOVANARDI, Alfa Romeo Racing Team – 8<sup>th</sup> in Race 1 and 2<sup>nd</sup> in Race 2**

“When it started to rain between the races I was happy because with the ballast in my car and a good setup I was fast in the wet conditions in one of the practice sessions. I had a lot more power than García and I thought it would be possible for me to win the second race. I was careful at the end because I had the lead and the Bus Stop corner was wet but these things happen and 2<sup>nd</sup> place is good.”

#### **Stefano D’ASTE, Proteam Motorsport – 17<sup>th</sup> in Race 1 and 1<sup>st</sup> in Race 2**

“I’m really happy about this weekend and what a great race! After everything that happened at the start of the second race I found myself in 5<sup>th</sup> position. When the safety car came out I was concerned because I had a good margin on Menu but I managed to hold on and then the crash on the last corner left me as the winner. I had two options - crash into them or cut the chicane, I don’t think I did anything wrong.”

NB – D’Aste crossed the line first, but was later demoted to second behind Giovanardi, for cutting a chicane

#### **Andy PRIAULX, BMW Team UK – 2<sup>nd</sup> in Race 1 and DNF in Race 2**

“Yesterday after qualifying I was fairly optimistic about the race and then today after warm-up I was very optimistic because the balance of the car was much better. I felt that I was faster than Dirk at the end but I couldn’t get past him, I didn’t benefit from the slipstream at all. The second race wasn’t good. Last year I had some lucky times and this year they are not coming my way but I am not giving up and I could still win the championship.”

**Jörg MÜLLER, BMW Team Deutschland – 3<sup>rd</sup> in Race 1 and 16<sup>th</sup> in Race 2**

“I should imagine they were great races for the spectators with all the action that went on. I believe my car could have won both races today but I had a bit of back luck like Andy (Priaulx) and it didn't happen. In the first race I was blocked by Farfus and Tarquini was behind me so I was in an Alfa sandwich. At the end I was lucky to not hit the wall because Farfus pushed me hard but I pushed hard back and my tyres had more grip. In the second race I had a slow puncture and came into the pits, changed my tyres and after the safety car I thought I could get somewhere in the points but I was hit by somebody and that was it for me.”

**Tom CORONEL, GR Asia - 14<sup>th</sup> in Race 1 and 3<sup>rd</sup> in Race 2**

“Spa is a kind of home race to me as it is the closest to my house. In the first race I just tried to survive. In the second race I saw Dirk at Eau Rouge and had to brake. However, when you brake up hill you have no speed for the straight and I lost a lot of places. But I overtook a lot of the other independent drivers and when the safety car came out I thought ‘thank you very much’. On the last lap all I saw was a mass of smoke, D’Aste went right, I went left to try and take the corner, Giovanardi was in front and I finished third. Great!”