



ROUNDS 13 & 14 PRACTICE AND QUALIFYING

Weather: mostly sunny, with a dry track.

PRACTICE 1 - FUNKE'S FORD FOCUS ON TOP

Michael Funke was the surprise name that shot to the top of the timesheet at the start of first free practice and it remained there for the entire session. The Ford Hotfiel Sport driver set a time of 1:33.062 in his Ford Focus within the first ten minutes and none of his competitors were able to better it. *"I'm very happy, but not surprised, because we have tested a lot here. I know that if everything goes right in qualifying I can lap in the low 1:32s. I don't know if this will be enough to make the front row, but it should be for a top position."*

The BMW cars of Jörg Müller and Andy Priaulx were second and third fastest, clocking times 0.195 and 0.332 slower than that of Funke.

Another unexpected outcome was that new Team Oreca Playstation driver, Stéphane Ortelli was the quickest of the SEAT pack with the 4th best time overall (1:33.415), which he set on his last lap. Jordi Gené was right behind him in 5th spot which is an encouraging start for the new SEAT León.

Gabriele Tarquini was 0.461 of a second off the top time, making him 6th overall and the fastest Alfa Romeo driver. Chevrolet's best lap came from Alain Menu who clocked a 1:34.454 to take 17th place. Eric Hélary, who is driving the Peugeot this weekend was 20th overall.

The best of the independent category was Marc Hennerici with the 15th best time. In fact, the top 15 times were within just one second of each other.

PRACTICE 2 - NEW SEAT LEÓN IMPRESSES

The weekend has got to a great start for Ford and Michael Funke as they were once again, the quickest of the FIA WTCC field. With a time of 1:33.080, he was nearly half a second faster than anyone else. Alfa Romeo's Gabriele Tarquini set the second best time with six minutes remaining, while Jörg Müller was third in his BMW. SEAT were also among the top times with Jordi Gené completing the fourth fastest lap in the new León, 0.749 of a second off the lead pace. *"I'm quite pleased. I have said that our new car may be surprisingly good on its first outing. I don't mean it can win, but perhaps a top-five result, which would be very good for us. And so far it is going well, especially when you think that on the first session I was on new tyres, but in the second I was on used tyres like everybody else."*

A dirty track meant that many drivers spun off, Alessandro Zanardi being one of them. The BMW Team Italy-Spain man continued and in the late stages clocked a time of 1:34.230 to shoot to 6th. Behind him with the 7th best time overall and the fastest of the independent drivers was Stefano D'Aste.



Chevrolet drivers Robert Huff and Alain Menu posted their best lap times as the session drew to an end, claiming 9th and 11th spots respectively – a good improvement on this morning's results.

Peugeot still appear to have difficulties finding the pace as Eric Hélary's best time was the 25th quickest overall.

QUALIFYING – VIRTUAL POLE FOR JÖRG MÜLLER

In a very close qualifying session Jörg Müller set the best time and a new lap record of 1:31.772. However, due to the implementation of a suspended penalty he incurred at Spa, he will begin Race 1 from 11th on the grid. This gives pole position to James Thompson of Alfa Romeo while his team-mate and last year's pole occupier, Augusto Farfus joins him on the front row, their times were just 0.154 and 0.177 of a second off that of Jörg's.

Andy Priaulx ensured it wasn't to be an Alfa Romeo 1-2-3 start tomorrow by using his last lap to set a time of 1:32.053. This secures him 3rd position on the grid at the wheel of his BMW Team UK car. Gabriele Tarquini will be right behind him in 4th place.

SEAT cars occupy 5th, 6th and 7th positions with Rickard Rydell, Stéphane Ortelli and Peter Terting setting times within 0.220 seconds of each other. Jordi Gené claimed 9th spot at the wheel of the new León, with the BMW of Dirk Müller in 8th position splitting the SEAT squad.

Despite good performances in practice, Michael Funke was unable to make the top-ten in qualifying and will start the race 16th on the grid. His Ford Hotfiel Sport team-mate Thomas Klenke had more success and his time of 1:32.717 means a 10th place start – the best yet for Ford.

Alain Menu was the fastest of the Chevrolets, 0.992 of a second off Jörg's pace so he will begin the race from 13th. The Peugeot 407 driven by Eric Hélary did not manage to set a competitive time, resulting in position 27 on the grid. Proteam Motorsport's Giuseppe Cirò completed the best lap of the independent field and was 17th fastest overall.

ROUNDS 13 & 14 QUALIFYING QUOTES

Jörg MÜLLER, BMW Team Deutschland – fastest

“At the first free practice I had a good feeling which carried through to qualifying. I’m quite happy with my performance but of course I will not be on pole tomorrow I will be 11th. Oschersleben is a track where there are a few places to overtake and last year I started 12th and finished 4th in Race 1. Of course I have not given up and I am still working towards the championship. Even though I am a little behind there are still 80 points to give away and I want some of those. In the past Oschersleben has been a good circuit for BMW but in this championship it is very level so it changes with the race situation rather than from track to track.”

James THOMPSON, Alfa Romeo Racing Team – 2nd fastest

“I’m very happy and have to thank the team because after free practice I had a problem with the car and they worked hard to get me ready for qualifying. I managed to sneak in a good time right at the end. Myself, Augusto (Farfus) and Gabriele (Tarquini) all have similar weights and are relatively light. The circuit here becomes very dirty and it is difficult not to make a mistake. The race can be a very different proposition than qualifying and I think it is going to be very difficult.”

Augusto FARFUS, Alfa Romeo Racing Team – 3rd fastest

“I used my second set of new tyres and decided to keep the third set for tomorrow. I start in 2nd place and aim to get a good start to be up there with James. The focus here is to get maximum points so we can finish in the top 5 of the championship. Tomorrow we will have two long races and I predict the front wheel drive cars will be faster at the beginning, but in the middle and the end the BMWs will come through. So if I make a good start I am in the fight for a win.”

Rickard RYDELL, SEAT Sport – 6th fastest

“I was quite happy with that last run; I was in third place at the end of the lap, but dropped to sixth by the end of the session. I’m actually quite pleased, though; I’m carrying quite a lot of weight and yet I’m still the quickest of the SEAT Sport drivers. Obviously, I’d have liked to be higher up the grid but I’m far from disappointed. We know that the Oschersleben circuit suits the car and I’m really positive about our chances in the races.”



Stéphane ORTELLI, Team Oreca Playstation – 7th fastest

“We knew we had a good car for this track and it felt good to drive so I am not really surprised. Perhaps I was a bit too safe and conservative and could have been a bit more extreme on the exit of the corners but we still have things to develop. We have used just two sets of tyres and saved one set for tomorrow, I’m not sure if this was a good decision because I think if we had used the last set I would have a better qualifying position. However, we are a new team and so for now we can say ‘C’est la vie’.”

Jordi GENÉ, SEAT Sport – 10th fastest

“I’m actually very pleased with tenth position, because it’s still a learning experience with the León. I was fifth and fourth in the two practice sessions this morning, but that was on used tyres. The team put new tyres on the car for qualifying and it was completely different. We worked to try and improve things throughout the session, but we clearly still have a lot to learn about that particular aspect of the car! The León has already shown its potential, though.”

Alain MENU, Chevrolet Racing – 13th fastest

“I am very happy. The car was not too bad on balance. We put on four new tyres but we thought it could go faster so we tried with new tyres just on the front and then on the back, and it went better. On my last out lap I was held up by two cars, otherwise I think a 1:32.5 would have been possible.”

Michael FUNKE, Ford Hotfiel Sport – 16th fastest

“On my best lap I made a mistake and lost half a second which meant I did not make it in the top ten. However, 16th for Ford is good and with Thomas (Klenke) 10th if everything works perfectly maybe there is a chance to score points.”

Giuseppe CIRÒ, Proteam Motorsport – 17th fastest

“Honestly I did not expect to be the fastest of the Independents today. It is my rookie season and I’m here to learn, but I also wish to do well. This result is really encouraging for me and for the team. We have worked very well this morning to find the right set-up for the qualifying, and I have to say that I took a few risks.”

Marc HENNERICI, Wiechers-Sport – 19th fastest

“The last races were really terrible for me and I hope to come back for the rest of the season. It is important for me to score well here and at Istanbul because Valencia is a hard track for the BMWs and every point counts when we head to Macau.”

Eric HÉLARY, Peugeot Sport Denmark – 26th fastest

“We have improved the car a lot since this morning. And yet it was not enough to be competitive. We have started with a lot of understeer in cornering, that changed to oversteer at the exit. Now the car is not sufficiently balanced, but it’s not quick. We will work again to change something before the warm-up. We’ll try another differential and we hope to improve. But definitely we cannot improve by two seconds, which is the gap we have from the pole.”