



ROUNDS 15 & 16 RACE REPORT

Weather: sunny and hot, with a dry track.

Crowd: 21,000 in the weekend.

ALFA ROMEO DRIVERS WIN BOTH RACES PRIAULX IS THE NEW CHAMPIONSHIP LEADER

Alfa Romeo drivers literally dominated the two races at the Istanbul Park today, and finished 1-2 in both the 15th and 16th FIA WTCC rounds. In Race 1 Fabrizio Giovanardi and James Thompson crossed the line first and second, while their team mates Gabriele Tarquini and Augusto Farfus suffered from flat tyres on the last lap while they were lying second and fourth. They both made up for it in the second race, with Tarquini claiming his second victory of the season from Farfus.

Two BMW men completed the podiums: Andy Priaulx was third in Race 1 and the amazing Alessandro Zanardi added a third place to the win he claimed three weeks ago in Oschersleben.

The Müllers had a difficult weekend, as they were both involved in collisions during the first race. Jörg remained scoreless and Dirk managed to claim a fifth place in the second race that might prove crucial in the title fight.

After the results of the Turkish event, three drivers are in a close fight to become World Champion: Andy Priaulx, Dirk Müller and Fabrizio Giovanardi, all covered by only four points. Among them Priaulx, the winner of the 2004 FIA European Touring Car Championship was the big winner today, as he managed to steal the leadership by one point from Dirk, who had topped the point table since the very first race of the season in Monza. The Manufacturers Championship is also wide open, as Alfa Romeo managed to cut their gap from 29 to 15 points behind BMW.

RACE 1 – GIOVANARDI WINS FROM THOMPSON AND PRIAULX

What looked set to be an Alfa 1-2-3-4 from lights to flag was not to be, when on the last lap both Tarquini and Farfus suffered front right tyre failures. The former was lying 2nd behind the eventual race winner Fabrizio Giovanardi, when he went wide and continued at a slow pace to cross the line in 7th. Farfus' problem was far more evident as parts of his tyres came flying off with the remaining rubber ripping the bodywork. But the Brazilian determinedly finished the race in 8th to begin Race 2 from pole. With two of the Alfas out, BMW man Andy Priaulx was left to pick up the final podium position behind Thompson.

At the start Priaulx squeezed between the SEAT cars of Ortelli and Terting to jump up to 5th. Within a matter of seconds Ortelli went wide at a corner and clashed with Terting as he re-joined the track, both retired to the pits later in the race. Dirk Müller's cars was also involved and damaged. A further incident occurred during the first lap as Hennerici and Larini made contact collecting Jörg Müller on the way. On lap two, García overtook Gené to claim 7th and Zanardi overtook Dirk Müller for 9th. Meanwhile, the four Alfas were pulling away with Giovanardi 2nd until lap 3 when he overtook Tarquini for the lead.



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After making fantastic progress at the opening stages, Coronel came from the back of the grid to challenge Menu for 11th spot. However the Dutchman retired with an engine failure, just like his Turkish team-mate Kizilirmak. Ahead of them, García mounted another attack on a SEAT, overtaking Rydell for 6th. Over the next two laps García continued his rapid pace and eventually got past Priaux for 5th. However, Priaux reclaimed the position from García on the last lap.

Lap 9 saw Menu battling with Rosenblad. The Chevrolet man took 11th from the Swede and eventually finished 10th as Gené's SEAT León was the third car that suffered a tyre failure and dropped from 8th to 17th in the closing seconds. All was not lost for Rosenblad however as 11th was good enough for him to claim the independent win.

RACE 2 – ZANARDI ON THE PODIUM AGAIN

Alfa Romeo encored in the second race as they achieved another 1-2 result. This time however it was Gabriele Tarquini who took victory, with Farfus just 0.263 of a second behind. Zanardi made his second podium appearance of the season as he fought off challenges and maintained 3rd position for the entire race.

Funke's Ford and the two GR Asia SEAT cars of Coronel and Kizilirman did not make the grid after their engine failures in the first race. Farfus began from pole but was overtaken by Tarquini on lap 1. Lap 2 saw Giovanardi pass Thompson for 6th and Dirk Müller overtook Menu for 9th. Cirò then challenged for 9th spot but Menu kept his ground.

Rydell and García were racing side by side and it was not long before the SEAT driver lost 4th position. On lap 3, both García and Giovanardi passed him. Shortly afterwards, Giovanardi attempted to overtake Zanardi and García went round the outside of the pair. Contact ensued, sending García spinning off the track where he remained, while Giovanardi managed to continue. Dirk overtook Priaux on lap 4 with the Briton subsequently losing positions to Rydell and Menu to finish 9th and just out of the points. At one stage the racing was so close for the final point position, Rydell's SEAT, Menu's Chevrolet and Priaux's BMW were within one second of each other. It was eventually Menu who finished 8th with Rydell 0.129 of a second ahead.

In lap 5 Giovanardi regained the positions he had lost in the incident with García, but not for long. Rydell was overtaken by Dirk who continued his fight through the field and followed Thompson as they passed Giovanardi, demoting him back to 6th. Dirk finished the race in 5th while Rydell headed the SEAT Sport drivers with a 7th place finish.

Farfus and Tarquini, who had broken away from the rest of the field had their own battle on the final lap as Farfus took the lead for a matter of seconds before his team-mate pulled back ahead coming into the home straight and secured his second victory of the season.

Cirò had lead the independent category for most of the race and was in a brilliant 10th position when he was hit by Terting on the last lap. This caused him to spin and lose four places while Hennerici went on to claim the Independent win finishing 11th overall.



ROUNDS 15 & 16 RACE QUOTES

Fabrizio GIOVANARDI, Alfa Romeo Racing – 1st in Race 1 and 6th in Race 2

“Our car was great this weekend and we did a good job in qualifying which put us in a fantastic position and it meant it was quite easy for me to win the first race. Starting from 8th on the grid in Race 2 is always difficult because you have so many cars to overtake. It was not an easy race for me. I tried to overtake Zanardi and did not see García. The braking was very difficult with three cars entering the corner and I just touched Antonio (García) but I think it was a normal race incident. The title fight is really getting exciting. Four points is not a lot especially over the next two races where in Valencia in particular the Alfas are very quick. I am confident and will push for the win.”

Gabriele TARQUINI, Alfa Romeo Racing – 7th in Race 1 and 1st in Race 2

“Race 1 was very unlucky for me because if it were not for the tyre failure I could have scored more points and helped Giovanardi in his fight for the title. It was a shame but I am happy the same problem did not occur in Race 2. The circumstances were different because Farfus and I had a gap from the others so I was not fighting as hard as I was in race 1. As for my championship chances, I think I am out of fight but I will be doing my best in Valencia and Macau to ensure the team gets both the driver and manufacturer titles. I want to dedicate this victory to my first daughter Gulia who was born in May, I would have liked to do it sooner in the season though!”

James THOMPSON, Alfa Romeo Racing – 2nd in Race 1 and 4th in Race 2

“It would have been such a fantastic result if we had managed a 1-2-3-4 in the first race; for the team and the championship. But it wasn’t to be the case which is a shame. The car was brilliant in the second race after we made a few quick changes. I thought I could catch Alex (Zanardi) at the end but picked up a little vibration so decided to ease off slightly in order to avoid a puncture and finish the race.”

Augusto FARFUS, Alfa Romeo Racing – 8th in Race 1 and 2nd in Race 2

“As a whole, this weekend was good for the team. It was unlucky what happened to me and Gabriele (Tarquini) in the last lap of Race 1 but starting on pole for Race 2 made it quite easy to manage and we did a good job. Last year I started on pole in Valencia and I hope to do that again and turn it into my first FIA WTCC win. I am always fighting for the top positions so I don’t see why it can’t happen.”



Alessandro ZANARDI, BMW Team Italy-Spain – 6th in Race 1 and 3rd in Race 2

“Today I was fortunate in Race 2 which got me on the podium again whereas my team-mate García was not so lucky and I think he was fast enough to go out there and win the race. I am not really focusing on my championship position because we are still progressing and I am happy that we have been able to get a good race pace but we still need to work on qualifying.”

Andy PRIAULX, BMW Team UK – 3rd in Race 1 and 9th in Race 2

“I may be in the lead for the Championship but I am a bit disappointed in general because Race 2 was disastrous for me. My balance hadn’t really felt right all weekend and so I asked the team to make a big change in between the races because I was desperate. It turned out to be the wrong decision. However, I will continue and do my very best as it is important to still be in the running for the title when we go to Macau because in the past the Championship has been decided in the last race. Valencia is not an ideal circuit for the BMWs and I take the challenges of the Alfas very seriously, but I enjoy it there and will work hard.”

Carl ROSENBLAD, Crawford Racing – 11th in Race 1 and 18th in Race 2

“I have led races five or six times this season so now I am happy and proud to get this win. We have struggled to pull everything together so far but today I feel as though I am in the positions I should be. I wanted a double victory but in Race 2 I broke my steering which was unlucky. On the other hand it is lucky Coronel did not score any points because that helps me in the Independent Trophy.”

Marc HENNERICI – Wiechers Sport – 13th in Race 1 and 11th in Race 2

“I’m so happy to have achieved a win because I had just one set of new tyres left at the start of Race 1 and I was involved in the crash with Larini and Jörg Müller. So when I lined up for Race 2 I didn’t think it would be possible to win. I was a lucky man today and am looking forward to the next races where I hope to secure the championship win.”