



ROUNDS 19 & 20 PRACTICE AND QUALIFYING

Weather: sunny, with a dry track.

PRACTICE 1 – LARINI AND CHEVROLET ON TOP

Nicola Larini set the fastest lap. The Chevrolet man flew round the track in 2:33.465 followed by Rickard Rydell in his SEAT - 0.198 seconds slower, and the BMW of Jörg Müller 0.787 seconds off the best pace.

Championship leader, Dirk Müller improved on yesterday's times and achieved the fourth quickest lap. Out of the Alfa Romeo drivers it was Farfus who was fastest with a lap in 2:34.679. Again, Tom Coronel was the best of the independent field and 9th overall. Ford Hotfiel Sport's Michael Funke was 11th fastest.

The session had to be red flagged after Macanese driver Ao Chi Hong crashed at the Dona Maria bend. Shortly after resuming, Giovanardi repeated the events of yesterday and smashed into a barrier. This time it was at the Paiol bend, the fastest part of the circuit's uphill section. *"The brakes locked and I went into the barrier. Perhaps it was a mistake on my part and perhaps the track was slippery,"* he said. As for Andy Priaulx, he came back to pits well before the end of the session due to a slow puncture.

PRACTICE 2 – PRIAULX AND COUTO FASTEST

Local man André Couto had his best practice session so far and looked as though he had set the best time until Andy Priaulx bettered it on his last lap. Priaulx's 2:33.341 demoted the Alfa man to second by 0.223 seconds. Gabriele Tarquini was also consistently fast throughout the session and posted the third best time of 2:33.842. Nicola Larini was fourth fastest in his Chevrolet Lacetti followed by Jorg Müller, Antonio García, Duncan Huisman, Dirk Müller and Augusto Farfus. All of the top eleven drivers' times were within just one second.

Giovanardi took part in the practice after the damage he obtained in the earlier session was repaired. He posted the 13th best time. Peter Terting crashed into the barriers at turn 16 and returned to the pits. Alessandro Zanardi also made contact with a wall but he managed to set the 11th fastest time overall.

Tom Coronel was again the fastest independent and 14th overall in this session, however Simon Harrison and his Honda Integra were close. Peter Scharmach was the best of the Asian Touring Car drivers despite he also hitting a wall.

QUALIFYING – VALUABLE POLE FOR PRIAULX

Andy Priaulx will begin from pole position on Sunday, the perfect position in his bid to become World Champion. His time of 2:31.712 broke the previous Guia Race record by four thenths; it was set on the opening lap and numerous periods under red flag conditions meant nobody was able to challenge it. André Couto



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claimed second position, 0.622 seconds behind Priaulx. On the second row there will be a further two Alfas driven by Augusto Farfus and Gabriele Tarquini, providing the team manages to repair the latter that was involved in a massive crash. The other title contenders, Dirk Müller and Fabrizio Giovanardi are placed 6th and 9th respectively.

All three of Chevrolet's drivers made it onto the top ten. Nicola Larini had the best time of 2:32.808 placing him 5th for Sunday's Race 1 while Alain Menu and Robert Huff are 8th and 10th. Rickard Rydell set a time of 2:33.238 to place his SEAT 7th on the grid. Patrick Bernhardt set a time of 2:36.338 which placed the Ford Hotfiel Sport driver 20th, three positions ahead of team-mate Michael Funke. Tom Coronel led the independent pack from 13th position but starting alongside him is another potential Independent trophy winner, Giuseppe Cirò.

The session suffered many disruptions. Red flags were issued after Peter Scharmach crashed coming into the uphill section after the Melco Hairpin, his car stranded across the track. Then, local driver Ao Chi Hong went wide at Fishermen's bend after eleven minutes. It was his first lap and the position of his car meant that the red flags made another appearance. The session was stopped for a third time due to a dramatic collision between Tarquini's Alfa and Rydell's SEAT. Tarquini went straight ahead at turn 16 and Rydell, unable to see, crashed straight into the back of him. The impact of the crash meant the two cars were wedged between the barriers. The Italian driver was hospitalized and underwent X-ray examinations for an aching shoulder. In the final few minutes there was an incident involving Farfus and Paul Poon, which caused the red flags to come out again, this time the session was not resumed. Simon Harrison was another victim of this dramatic session, hitting the wall after Turn 1.



ROUNDS 19 & 20 QUALIFYING QUOTES

Andy PRIAULX, BMW Team UK – fastest

“It’s fantastic. The car has been great from the very first drive yesterday. In qualifying I had a good rhythm and new tyres so I pushed for a fast time. It really paid off because it was only the guys who were confident enough to push straight away who managed to post quick times before all the accidents occurred. My lap was nearly perfect, I went for it and I had a great slipstream so I’m not sure if could have been any better. However, I was not confident enough to get out of my car and finish the session early. My position is probably now a little better than the other title contenders (Dirk Müller and Giovanardi) and I hope to finish Race 1 in the top two positions to grab big points. We must remember the reverse grid however and this is where things get serious. Traffic, the safety car, blind corners, these and many more things mean that things won’t be easy for me out there. I am very happy the WTCC has come to Macau. This type of circuit can make or break a driver so I think it’s important to drive here in order to increase your skill. The circuit is controversial but it is great for the viewers and spectators and so far it has been good to me.”

André COUTO, Alfa Romeo Racing Team – 2nd fastest

“At the beginning of this event things were not easy because I had no experience in the Alfa Romeo 156. I was struggling to be quick and perhaps I was being too conservative and conscious of safety. In qualifying however I pushed hard, perhaps too hard because I hit the wall. I have to say it is an honour to be driving for Alfa Romeo, especially considering I am in the front row in my home event of Macau.”

Augusto FARFUS, Alfa Romeo Racing Team – 3rd fastest

“There were so many accidents my last chance for an even faster lap was on the very last one. But it was not to be because Paul Poon braked in front of me and although I tried, I couldn’t avoid him. It is my first time here and I am still learning all the corners. I am having great fun. It’s a good track, very fast, very tight and unforgiving if you make a mistake. I think I will wait until Sunday evening to say whether I like it though! In terms of the championship, my teammate Fabrizio (Giovanardi) will need luck, considering it is so hard to overtake. Of course I will be supporting Alfa Romeo and I want us to win but all I know is I will do my best and I have to race for myself.”



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Dirk MÜLLER, BMW Team Deutschland – 6th fastest

“We knew before we went out that it was going to be a gamble and for me it didn’t pay off. However, I know I could have gone much faster if I had not been in traffic. I think there was some careless driving by others and that cost me some time on a couple of laps. After that it was chaos. On the last lap I was going really well on new tyres but again the red flags came out so I had a lot of potential I couldn’t show. We are still trying to work on the car and sixth place is almost as good as second at Macau. I expect there to be a lot of yellow flags so the field will bunch together. For the championship, I think it is looking quite good.”

Fabrizio GIOVANARDI, Alfa Romeo Racing Team –9th fastest

“Macau is Macau and today we have seen that everything could happen here! Therefore I feel in the same position as Dirk (Müller); nothing is lost yet. However I have to say that Andy (Priaulx) managed to be very fast and moved a big step towards the title. Unless he’s hit by bad luck on Sunday, is difficult to imagine him losing the championship. I could have been faster, but I have to blame my two incidents in practice that I wasn’t. The team worked very well to repair my car, but they had to do it in a hurry and the final result was a car a bit out of balance. They will change something tomorrow and hopefully we will be more competitive on Sunday.”