

ROUNDS 1 & 2 – CURITIBA, BRAZIL QUALIFYING REPORT

Weather: sunny spells with a breeze in the morning, sunny and warm in the afternoon; the track remained dry.

MULLER AND RYDELL GIVE SEAT FRONT ROW

Yvan Muller placed his SEAT León TDI on pole position following an eventful qualifying session in Curitiba, with a time of 1:24.295, the fastest time of the weekend so far, half a second faster than Jörg Müller's pole from last year.

His SEAT Sport team-mate Rickard Rydell followed closely in second with a time of 1:24.404, and BMW Team Germany's Augusto Farfus qualified third, 0.187 behind the leader.

Gabriele Tarquini set the fourth fastest lap, completing SEAT's great day as the Spanish manufacturer occupied three of the top four positions, while Nicola Larini emerged as the fastest Chevrolet driver claiming the fifth spot.

Farfus' team-mate Jörg Müller clocked the sixth best lap and then failed to improve it when he spun near the end of the session in front of three other BMW cars (Farfus', Zanardi's and Porteiro's) who missed him by inches.

The action-packed qualifying began with some of the drivers not immediately joining the track. Once everyone was out Ibrahim Okyay ran wide at turn 9 and Olivier Tielemans spun at turn 3 but rejoined.

Seventeen minutes into the session Alain Menu came off the track at the last corner and his Chevrolet crashed into the wall. Menu escaped unharmed but shocked; the first checks at the tracks medical centre were all negative, but as a precaution he was transported to the closest hospital for scans.

The session being red-flagged meant that Menu's team-mate Robert Huff and Farfus, amongst others, had to abort some very promising fastest laps.

Ten minutes later the qualifying resumed, but Müller's spin caused a yellow flag that prevented many drivers to improve further.

Larini was amongst those who succeeded and moved up to fifth.

Pierre-Yves Corthals qualified his Exagon Engineering SEAT on pole position in the independents' class with a time of 1:25.363, which placed him in 15th position overall.

BULLET NEWS

PRACTICE 1 – MÜLLER JUMPS ON TOP AT THE END

Jörg Müller went fastest on a track that still had some puddles after a rainy night. With a time of 1.24.566 he popped his BMW into the top spot in the final moments of the session, ahead of Alain Menu with a time of 1.24.893, and Augusto Farfus 0.337 behind the leader.

Pierre-Yves Corthals headed the Independents with a time of 1.25.982, which put him in 15th position overall.



PRACTICE 2 – CORONEL LEADER OF THE PACK

Tom Coronel took the top spot in a surprise finish with a time of 1.25.036. He led from Augusto Farfus, only 0.002 seconds behind the Dutchman, with Nicola Larini in third with a gap of 0.207.

The second session was even closer than the previous one with the first fourteen drivers covered by just 7 tenths of a second.

SEAT Sport driver Gabriele Tarquini missed the second half of the session due to hitting the kerb at turn 2 on his sixth lap and breaking the suspension.

Pierre-Yves Corthals headed the Independents' class once again with a time of 1.26.051, an improvement of nearly a second from this morning's session.

CHEVROLET'S ARGENTINE GUESTS

The Chevrolet Elaion team – the reigning champion in the Argentine TC2000 championships – paid a visit to their fellow WTCC colleagues in Curitiba.

Drivers Marcelo Bugliotti, Christian Ledesma and Ricardo Risatti, together with team manager Jorge Málquez spent a lot of time visiting Chevrolet's garage and talking to Alain Menu, Nicola Larini and Robert Huff.

THEY SAID, THEY SAID...

Yvan MULLER

"It's a very good start to the season, but qualifying is one thing and the race is another thing. We can be very competitive on one lap but the race is much harder on the tyres. Last year we were nowhere as BMW finished 1-2-3 in both races. I hope we can do better this year. The forecasts say it will be warm tomorrow, but for us rain would be better."

Rickard RYDELL

"I'm really pleased to come back to SEAT. I like the championship and having tried other categories I really enjoy the World Touring Cars. To be on the front row together with Yvan is a really good start. But just like Yvan said doing more laps with the tyres will be different. The turbo-diesel car makes a little bit harder to go through the race as we have to cope with the front wheel drive."

Augusto FARFUS

"Qualifying was a bit strange with the red flag in the middle of the session that disturbed everybody. I was on my fast lap so I had to abort and on following attempt I Jörg spun in front of me so it wasn't a perfect situation, but to be third on the grid is good. We know that we will be quite strong in the race. We expected SEAT to be ahead in the qualifying, so let's see for the race and try to fight for the podium."

Pierre- Yves CORTHALS

"It is good for me to come here and be competitive straight away, because we did not test during the winter so I am happy. Our petrol-powered cars has a different set-up compared to the other SEAT so we'll see the way it will behave during the race."

Robert HUFF

'We should have been right up the front, but on the lap where I had my good first sector Alain had an incident, quite a big incident, and I had to abort. It was a shame. The last lap was an improvement but we had a yellow flag at turn 7 so again I had abort. The car has the potential, last year there were a lot of problems with the understeer, and this year we have worked very hard on this and we've come here and had the opposite."

2008 FIA World Touring Car Championship QUALIFYING - PROVISIONAL CLASSIFICATION

| POS | NO | CL | DRIVER | NAT | CAR | TIME | LAPS | GAP | KPH |
|-----|----|----|----------------------|-----|-------------------|----------|------|-------|--------|
| 1 | 12 | | Yvan MULLER | FRA | SEAT Leon TDI | 1:24.295 | 10 | | 157.80 |
| 2 | 10 | | Rickard RYDELL | SWE | SEAT Leon TDI | 1:24.404 | 9 | 0.109 | 157.59 |
| 3 | 3 | | Augusto FARFUS | BRA | BMW 320si | 1:24.482 | 14 | 0.187 | 157.45 |
| 4 | 11 | | Gabriele TARQUINI | ITA | SEAT Leon TDI | 1:24.527 | 11 | 0.232 | 157.37 |
| 5 | 6 | | Nicola LARINI | ITA | Chevrolet Lacetti | 1:24.579 | 12 | 0.284 | 157.27 |
| 6 | 2 | | Jorg MULLER | GER | BMW 320si | 1:24.659 | 11 | 0.364 | 157.12 |
| 7 | 18 | | Tiago MONTEIRO | POR | SEAT Leon TDI | 1:24.730 | 9 | 0.435 | 156.99 |
| 8 | 7 | | Robert HUFF | GBR | Chevrolet Lacetti | 1:24.738 | 10 | 0.443 | 156.97 |
| 9 | 9 | | Jordi GENE | ESP | SEAT Leon TDI | 1:24.785 | 11 | 0.490 | 156.89 |
| 10 | 20 | | Tom CORONEL | NED | SEAT Leon | 1:24.987 | 12 | 0.692 | 156.51 |
| 11 | 8 | | Alain MENU | SUI | Chevrolet Lacetti | 1:24.993 | 4 | 0.698 | 156.50 |
| 12 | 1 | | Andy PRIAULX | GBR | BMW 320si | 1:25.046 | 13 | 0.751 | 156.40 |
| 13 | 5 | | Felix PORTEIRO | ESP | BMW 320si | 1:25.166 | 15 | 0.871 | 156.18 |
| 14 | 4 | | Alessandro ZANARDI | ITA | BMW 320si | 1:25.175 | 13 | 0.880 | 156.17 |
| 15 | 23 | I | Pierre-Yves CORTHALS | BEL | SEAT Leon | 1:25.363 | 11 | 1.068 | 155.82 |
| 16 | 31 | I | Sergio HERNANDEZ | ESP | BMW 320si | 1:25.721 | 11 | 1.426 | 155.17 |
| 17 | 26 | I | Stefano D'ASTE | ITA | BMW 320si | 1:25.806 | 11 | 1.511 | 155.02 |
| 18 | 16 | I | Olivier TIELEMANS | NED | BMW 320si | 1:26.003 | 16 | 1.708 | 154.66 |
| 19 | 42 | I | Franz ENGSTLER | GER | BMW 320si | 1:26.437 | 13 | 2.142 | 153.89 |
| 20 | 43 | I | Andrey ROMANOV | RUS | BMW 320si | 1:27.813 | 12 | 3.518 | 151.48 |
| 21 | 13 | I | Ibrahim OKYAY | TUR | BMW 320si | 1:28.412 | 13 | 4.117 | 150.45 |

QUALIFICATION MAXIMA 1:30.195

Weather/Track: Sun 27°/Dry 38°

Curitiba
Circuit Length = 3.6950 km.
Start: 15:00 End: 15:40

Race Director:

Steward:

Timekeeper: