

A FIELD OF 35 FOR THE FIA WTCC OPENING

35 drivers will make an impressive field on next Saturday and Sunday, for the 2006 FIA World Touring Car Championship's opening meeting at Monza.

25 out of the 27 competitors who entered the full season will take part in the WTCC Race of Italy; all but the two LADA Racing cars that are due to join the championship later in the season. The 8 competitors of the Italian Superturismo Championship and two race-by-race entries – Jiří Janák in the CSMS Alfa Romeo and Jens Edman in the PSD Peugeot 407 – will complete the field.

THE 2006 FIA WTCC LAUNCHED IN MONZA

On Tuesday, the world's motorsport media gathered in a busy Monza press room as the FIA WTCC 2006 season was launched in front of more than 200 people. Jacques Behar, Chairman of KSO and Vice President of Eurosport was joined on the stage by Marcello Lotti, General Manager of KSO. The attendants were treated to a dramatic video review of the 2005 season before attentions turned to the forthcoming year.

"I would like to thank the participants of last year and warmly welcome those who join us for 2006," stated Jacques Behar. *"Last year TV audiences increased five fold and this year we are set to expand even further to 450 million viewers worldwide. Among our other exciting steps forward are the new FIA WTCC website, which will be available in 6 languages, and the development of an official video game."*

Marcello Lotti said: *"This time last year we launched the FIA WTCC's maiden season and people had questions about whether it would work. In the past, other world touring car championships have lasted only one year, but here we are on our second. In Monza we will have 35 cars indicating the success of our regulations and the championship."*

REIGNING CHAMPION FASTEST IN OFFICIAL TESTING

Andy Priaulx, the reigning World Champion, posted the fastest lap in the two-day official testing that was held at Monza on Tuesday and Wednesday.

35 drivers took part in the six one-hour sessions under different conditions. Rain soaked the track on the first day, but gave way to sunshine and bright skys on the second. Therefore all the fastest times were set on Wednesday.

THE TOP TIMES

Tuesday 21 March – wet	Wednesday 22 March – dry
1. Augusto Farfus; Alfa Romeo; 2:11.498	1. Andy Priaulx; BMW; 2:00.688
2. Andy Priaulx; BMW; 2:12.241	2. Salvatore Tavano; Alfa Romeo; 2:01.173
3. Gianni Morbidelli; Alfa Romeo; 2:2.291	3. Augusto Farfus; Alfa Romeo; 2:01.237
4. Salvatore Tavano; Alfa Romeo; 2:12.594	4. Jörg Müller; BMW; 2:01.247
5. Rickard Rydell; SEAT; 2:12.770	5. Marcel Costa; BMW; 2:01.396
6. Jörg Müller; BMW; 2:12.835	6. Tom Coronel; SEAT; 2:01.398
7. Dirk Müller; BMW; 2:13.178	7. Alessandro Balzan; Alfa Romeo; 2:01.500
8. Alain Menu; Chevrolet; 2:13.432	8. Emanuele Naspetti; BMW; 2:01.540
9. Robert Huff; Chevrolet; 2:13.436	9. Stefano D'Aste; BMW; 2:01.643
10. James Thompson; SEAT; 2:13.447	10. Peter Terting; SEAT; 2:01.747

ANDY PRIAULX IS AIMING FOR A HAT TRICK

Next week in Monza Andy Priaulx starts the defense of his FIA WTCC title. His aim for 2006 is a title hat trick, as his World title came a year after the 2004 FIA ETCC. In a series where success brings extra ballast and there are reverse grids to make winning even tougher, Andy has proved consistent and has beaten some of the best and most experienced drivers in the world.

"It is going to be a massive season. The opposition strengthens every year with leading manufacturers entering more and more cars. All the BMW drivers have a new car and engine which have shown great potential in pre-season testing, but the likes of SEAT have not stayed still, and you just have to look at their line-up to know how tough it will be. My prediction is, as has happened to me in 2004 and 2005, it is going to be the last race of the year before the title is settled. It is great from a spectator point of view both at the track and on tv but it is always maximum pressure for us all year," he said.

RYAN SHARP TO DRIVE FOR JAS MOTORSPORT

JAS Motorsport have completed his line-up with the arrival of Ryan Sharp. The 26-year old Scotsman has joined Pierre-Yves Corthals in the team, and will drive the second Honda Accord Euro R.

Sharp, who tested the car for the first time on Wednesday in Monza, comes from a successful racing career in karting and singleseaters. He won a number of national and regional karting titles before moving through Formula Ford (3rd in the British Championship), Formula Renault (1st in the German Championship), and Formula Renault V6 (2nd in the European Championship) up to the GP2 Championship.

CARS AND DRIVERS IN PIAZZA DEL DUOMO

On Thursday, March 30, the FIA WTCC will finally land in downtown Milan to promote its first race meeting in Monza. From 2.00 PM to 6.00 PM the racing cars will be exhibited in Corso Vittorio Emanuele, alongside the Duomo, the gothic cathedral which is the city's landmark. From 5.00 PM to 6.00 PM drivers will meet fans in an autograph session.

Such an event was also organised last year, but it was cancelled at the last minute in sign of respect for the death of the Pope John Paul II.

DRIFTING ALONG THE AUTODROMO

The "crazy" drivers of the Italian SuperDrift Series will entertain the crowd in Monza as a prelude to the FIA WTCC opening races.

Half a dozen super-tuned cars – Nissan S14, BMW M3 and M6, Subaru Impreza – will drift along the autodromo in two different 5-lap exhibitions. Among them is the brand new Maserati GT Light driven by former biker Graziano Rossi, father of multi-World champion Valentino.

COUNTDOWN: - 8 DAYS



to the 2006 FIA WTCC HP Race of Italy – 1st/2nd April, in Monza

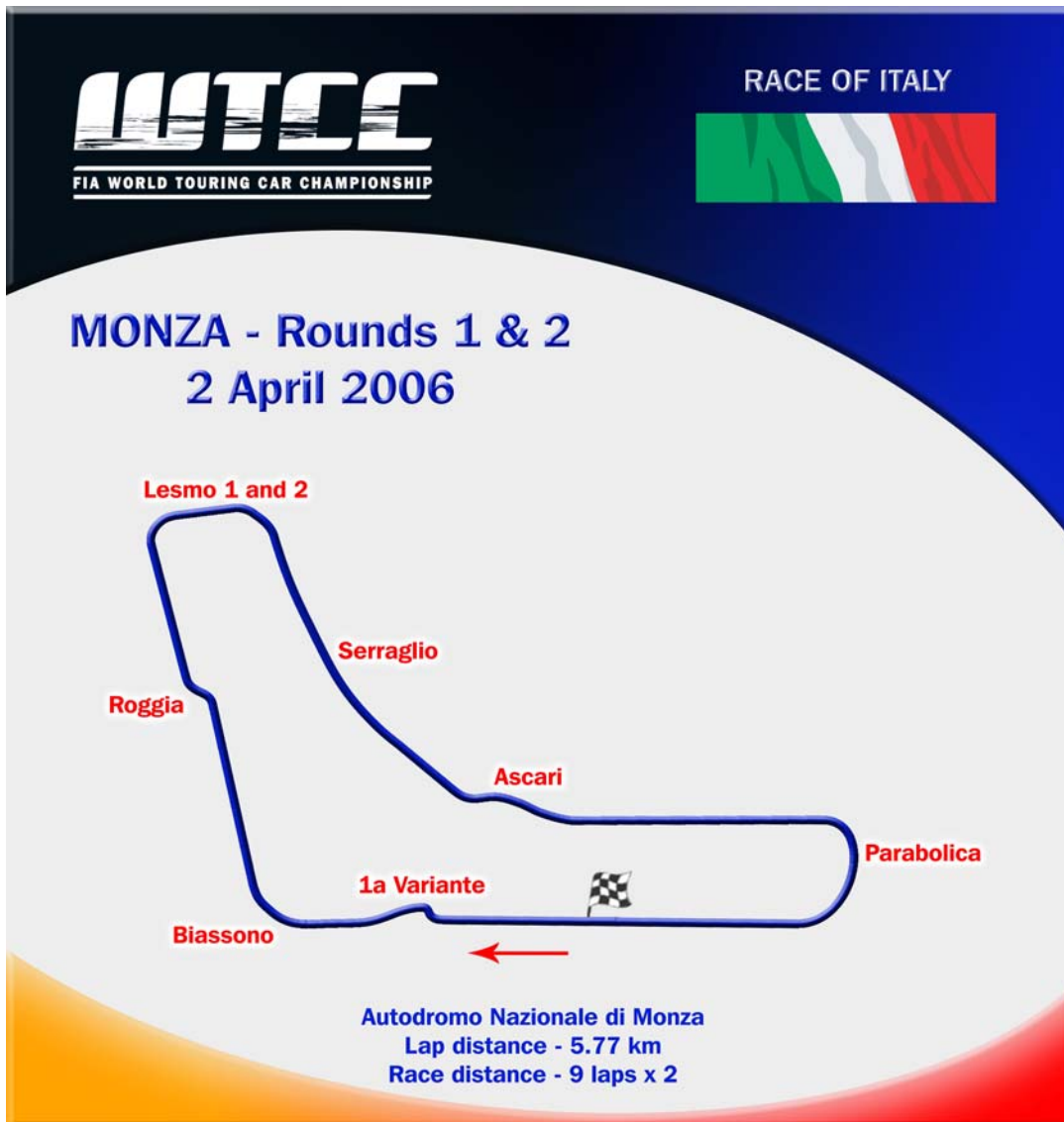
2006 FIA WORLD TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP



ROUNDS 1 & 2 - MONZA, APRIL 1/2 - ENTRY LIST

#	class	entrant / team	driver	car
1		BMW Team UK / RBM	Andy Priaulx (GBR)	BMW 320si
2		SEAT Sport Italia	Gabriele Tarquini (ITA)	SEAT León
3		SEAT Sport Sverige	Rickard Rydell (SWE)	SEAT León
4		BMW Team Italy-Spain / Roal Motorsport	Alessandro Zanardi (ITA)	BMW 320si
5		BMW Team Italy-Spain / Roal Motorsport	Marcel Costa (ESP)	BMW 320si
6		Chevrolet / RML	Robert Huff (GBR)	Chevrolet Lacetti
7		Chevrolet / RML	Nicola Larini (ITA)	Chevrolet Lacetti
8		Chevrolet / RML	Alain Menu (SUI)	Chevrolet Lacetti
9		SEAT Sport España	Jordi Gené (ESP)	SEAT León
10		SEAT Sport Deutschland	Peter Terting (GER)	SEAT León
11		SEAT Sport UK	James Thompson (GBR)	SEAT León
12		SEAT Sport France	Yvan Muller (FRA)	SEAT León
15		N.technology	Augusto Farfus (BRA)	Alfa Romeo 156
16		N.technology	Gianni Morbidelli (ITA)	Alfa Romeo 156
18		N.technology	Salvatore Tavano (ITA)	Alfa Romeo 156
19	I	GR Asia	Maurizio Ceresoli (ITA)	SEAT Toledo Cupra
20	I	GR Asia	Tom Coronel (NED)	SEAT Toledo Cupra
23	I	JAS Motorsport	Pier-Yves Corthals (BEL)	Honda Accord Euro R
24	I	JAS Motorsport	Ryan Sharp (GBR)	Honda Accord Euro R
30	I	Proteam Motorsport	Luca Rangoni (ITA)	BMW 320si
31	I	Proteam Motorsport	Stefano D'Aste (ITA)	BMW 320i
33	I	Wiechers-Sport	Emmet O'Brien (IRL)	BMW 320i
34	I	Wiechers-Sport	Diego Romanini (ITA)	BMW 320i
42		BMW Team Germany / Schnitzer Motorsport	Jörg Müller (GER)	BMW 320si
43		BMW Team Germany / Schnitzer Motorsport	Dirk Müller (GER)	BMW 320si
44	I	Československý Motorsport	Jiří Janák (CZE)	Alfa Romeo 156 Gta
46	I	Peugeot Sport Denmark	Jens Edman (SWE)	Peugeot 407
51	I	DB Motorsport / Antonelli Sport	Alessandro Balzan (ITA)	Alfa Romeo 156
52	I	DB Motorsport / Antonelli Sport	Adriano De Micheli (ITA)	Alfa Romeo 156
53	I	Scuderia La Torre	Riccardo Romagnoli (ITA)	Alfa Romeo 156 Gta
54	I	GDL Racing	Emanuele Naspetti (ITA)	BMW 320i
55	I	Zerocinque Motorsport	Stefano Valli (RSM)	BMW 320i
56	I	Zerocinque Motorsport	Kristian Ghedina (ITA)	BMW 320i
57	I	SEAT Sport Italia / Scuderia del Girasole	Davide Roda (ITA)	SEAT León
58	I	SEAT Sport Italia / Scuderia del Girasole	Gianni Calabrese (ITA)	SEAT Toledo Cupra

I = Yokohama Independents' Trophy



Contacts: S.I.A.S. S.p.A. – via Vedano 5, Parco di Monza, 20025 Monza (MI)
Tel: +39 039 24821, fax: +39 039 320324, email: autodromo@monzanet.it

Official website: www.monzanet.it

Press officer: Gianni Cattaneo – tel: +39 02 7745239, fax: +39 02 7745201, email: stampa@acimi.it

Airports: Milan-Linate “Forlanini” (25 km), Bergamo-Orio al Serio (30 km), Brescia (55 km), Milan-Malpensa (60 km), Verona-Villafranca (130 km)

S2000 lap records: Qualifying - 1:58.395/176.14 kph, Gabriele Tarquini (Alfa Romeo 156), 28 Mar 2004
Race - 1:59.058/175.16 kph, Jörg Müller (BMW 320i), 10 Apr 2005

Previous winners: 2003 FIA ETCC Race 1: James Thompson (Alfa Romeo 156 Gta)
2003 FIA ETCC Race 2: Jörg Müller (BMW 320i)
2004 FIA ETCC Race 1: Gabriele Tarquini (Alfa Romeo 156)
2004 FIA ETCC Race 2: Jörg Müller (BMW 320i)
2005 FIA WTCC Race 1: Dirk Müller (BMW 320i)
2005 FIA WTCC Race 2: James Thompson (Alfa Romeo 156)



Rounds 1 & 2 - Monza (ITA)

Friday, March 31

14.00 – 14.45	International GT Open	Free Practice 1
15.00 – 15.45	F3000 International Masters	Free Practice
16.00 – 16.45	International GT Open	Free Practice 2
17.00 – 18.00	Trofeo Maserati	Free Practice

Saturday, April 1

09.00 – 09.30	FIA WTCC	Free Practice 1
09.45 – 10.30	F3000 International Masters	Qualifying
10.40 – 11.00	SuperDrift Series	Practice
11.15 – 11.30	International GT Open B	Qualifying 1
11.30 – 11.35	International GT Open B + A	Qualifying 1
11.35 – 11.50	International GT Open A	Qualifying 1
12.00 – 12.30	FIA WTCC	Free Practice 2
12.50 – 13.50	Trofeo Maserati	Qualifying
14.05 – 14.20	International GT Open B	Qualifying 2
14.20 – 14.25	International GT Open B + A	Qualifying 2
14.25 – 14.40	International GT Open A	Qualifying 2
15.00 – 15.30	FIA WTCC	Qualifying
16.00 – 16.30	F3000 International Masters	Race 1 (15 laps, max 30 min.)
17.00 – 18.00	Int. GT Open	Race 1 (24 laps, max 60 min.)

Sunday, April 2

09.00 – 09.15	International GT Open	Warm up
09.25 – 09.40	FIA WTCC	Warm Up
10.10 – 10.40	F3000 International Masters	Race 2 (15 laps, max 30 min.)
10.50 – 11.00	SuperDrift Series	Exhibition
10.45 – 11.35	Autograph session in pit lane – FIA WTCC Promotional laps	
12.00 – 13.00	International GT Open	Race 2 (24 laps, max 60 min.)
13.25 – 14.15	Trofeo Maserati	Race (max 50 min.) Rolling start
15.05 – 15.30	FIA WTCC	Race 1 (9 laps,)
15.35	FIA WTCC	Podium Race 1
15.45 – 16.00	FIA WTCC	Repair Time
16.15 – 16.40	FIA WTCC	Race 2 (9 laps,)
16.45	FIA WTCC	Podium Race 2