

FIA WTCC: FROM MONZA TO MAGNY-COURS

The 2006 FIA WTCC's season opening in Monza resulted in a successful event, with 35 cars on the grid and a crowd of 45,000 (+12.5% compared to 2005).

Both races were spectacular and all the four registered Manufacturers had reasons to rejoice. BMW and Alfa Romeo claimed one victory apiece, with Andy Priaulx in Race 1 and Augusto Farfus in Race 2. Chevrolet obtained their first podium result, with Alain Menu, third in the second race. SEAT took a provisional lead in both the Drivers' (with Yvan Muller) and Manufacturers' Championships.

The second meeting will be held at the French track of Magny-Cours, on April 29/ 30.

65 EXTRA KILOS FOR YVAN MULLER

Most of the drivers have already lost the automatic 20-kg ballast they carried in Monza and got back to the minimum weight fixed by the technical regulations.

On the other hand, eight men will have extra weight onboard their cars, with championship leader Yvan Muller already on + 65 kg..

Driver	handicap for results in the previous meeting	handicap for the championship points	total handicap
Yvan Muller	20 kg + 40 kg	5 kg	65 kg
Augusto Farfus	20 kg + 30 kg	5 kg	55 kg
Andy Priaulx	20 kg + 20 kg	5 kg	45 kg
Gabriele Tarquini	20 kg + 10 kg		30 kg
Alain Menu	20 kg + 0 kg		20 kg
James Thompson	20 kg + 0 kg		20 kg
Dirk Müller	20 kg – 10 kg		10 kg
Alessandro Balzan	20 kg – 10 kg		10 kg

MAN OF THE WEEK: ALAIN MENU

After his 3rd place finish in Race 2 at Monza, Alain Menu is sitting 5th in the drivers' championship. Chevrolet scored 12 points, marking their presence in the series from the outset. We spoke to the Swiss man about his great start to the season.

How did it feel to be on the podium?

"Great! Considering I lost my 3rd place in Macau at the end of last year, it felt twice as nice to be up there in Monza and it was so unexpected. The crowd were on the track which was fantastic. Yvan Muller and I looked at each other and said it looks like F1."

There were a lot of crashes ahead of you in Race 2, was 3rd position luck?

"No, we have definitely made an improvement from last year. Yes, it helped me that these things happened but at the same time I was consciously waiting back because the first meeting of the season is always eventful. At the end of the day the car was competitive."

You head to Magny-Cours with ballast, how will you prepare for this?

"It is worth remembering my team-mates Nicola Larini and Robert Huff have no ballast. Hopefully they can get in the top 10 in qualifying and if I am behind them I will help them. I really don't know how the ballast is going to affect me, I'm sure it won't help though!"

A PROMISING DEBUT FOR NEW HONDA ACCORD

The first event of the 2006 FIA WTCC also marked the debut of the JAS Motorsport's new Honda Accord Euro R, which was homologated a few days earlier. The new car features a brand new aerodynamic kit as well as a new engine compared to the 2005 version, and both evolutions proved to be effective.

Both Pierre-Yves Corthals and Ryan Sharp reported to be happy with the performance of the car, although for various reasons final results were below their expectations.

"It was a pity that a gearbox problem stopped me on the last lap of Race 1," commented the Belgian driver. "But I am happy as I was able to keep the same pace of Menu and Balzan who eventually finished 3rd and 4th in the second race. Meaning that I am already in the position to fight for the top ten. I'm confident for the next races."

On his first outing in a Touring Car competition, Sharp spent most of the weekend getting used to the car rather than trying to set good lap times. However he drove his car to the end of both races in 18th and 14th respectively. In Race 2 he also set an impressive best lap, only 0.386 seconds from the race winner Farfus'. *"My confidence is growing,"* said the young Scotsman. *"I was very apprehensive during the weekend aiming not to make mistakes. Monza was definitely a good start and I look forward for better results already in Magny-Cours."*

THE ITALIAN SUPERTURISMO BACK ON TRACK

The competitors of the Italian Superturismo Championship will again join their fellow FIA WTCC drivers in Magny-Cours.

Race victories in Monza went to Alessandro Zanardi in Race 1 and Alessandro Balzan in Race 2. The latter, who also managed to win twice in the FIA WTCC Independents' Trophy and claimed an outstanding 4th overall in the second race, leads the championship with 18 points, followed by Simone Iacone (14) and Zanardi (12).

MEDIA ACCREDITATION FOR THE SECOND MEETING

Rounds 3 and 4 of the 2006 FIA World Touring Car Championship will take place at Magny-Cours, France, on 29th and 30th April.

The deadline to apply for media credentials is Tuesday, 18 April.

Accreditations Procedure and Accreditation Form may be downloaded from the websites www.fia.com and www.fiawtcc.com.

- **International Press** must send applications to:
Fabio Ravaioli – FIA WTCC Media Delegate
tel +39 06 39729497, fax +39 06 39729470, email: media@fiawtcc.com
- **French Press** must send applications to:
Hubert Arriat – Circuit de Nevers Magny-Cours
tel: +33 3 86218254, fax +33 3 86218209, email: h.arriat@magnyf1.com
- **TV and Radio** must send applications to:
Julien Boinet – Eurosport
Tel +33 1 40938213, Fax +33 1 40938169; email: jboinet@eurosport.com

COUNTDOWN: - 23 DAYS

to the 2006 FIA WTCC Race of France – 29th/30th April, in Magny-Cours