

ON THE EVE OF THE FIA WTCC BERU RACE OF FRANCE

The second meeting of the 2006 FIA World Touring Car Championship will get underway tomorrow morning at 9.00, when the 33 cars will hit the Magny-Cours racetrack for the first free practice.

A second free practice session will take place at 12.15, followed by the only 30-minute qualifying session at 3.05 PM that will decide the starting positions for Sunday's Race 1. Qualifying will be broadcast live on Eurosport.

The start of both races on Sunday will be postponed by 10 minutes as opposed to the original schedule, meaning Race 1 at 3.15 and Race 2 at 4.25.

WTCC TEAMS TO STAY IN MAGNY-COURS FOR TESTING

When all the activities are over in Magny-Cours not everyone will be leaving the venue. Yokohama will remain at the French track to conduct a one day test session involving the SEAT León of Jordi Gené and one of the Müllers' BMW 320si cars.

"We asked all four manufacturers to stay for the test session but Chevrolet and Alfa Romeo decided not to," stated Kazuyoshi Sekiguchi, supervisor for Yokohama.

"Yokohama are happy with the tyre produced for this year but it is important to keep making steps forward and we are already working to develop a new product for the future," Sekiguchi added.

BMW Team Italy-Spain, BMW Team Germany, BMW Team UK, SEAT Sport, JAS Motorsport and Proteam Motorsport will also be staying at the French track for private testing at the same time.

A BRAND NEW CAR FOR ANDY PRIAULX

The damage to Andy Priaulx's BMW 320si obtained in the high speed collision with Dirk Müller in Race 2 at Monza was so severe that the body shell has been replaced for this weekend's Magny-Cours meeting.

From analysing the car data, it has been calculated that the force of the impact was a massive 4Gs. *"There simply wasn't enough time for us to re-build the existing car in time for Magny-Cours,"* commented Bart Mampaey, team manager of BMW Team UK. *"It took us 19 days of very hard work to build the new car and has compromised our testing programme."* Reigning champion, Priaulx, sits 3rd in the drivers' championship entering the second round of the season.

ENGINES: CHECKS AND PENALTIES

After the collision between Dirk Müller and Andy Priaulx in Monza, BMW Team Germany and BMW Team UK applied for authorisation from the Stewards to check the engines.

The FIA WTCC Sporting Regulations state each engine must be sealed and used in four consecutive races, however, permission was granted, the checks were made under the supervision of the FIA Technical Delegate and no penalties were issued.

On the other hand, Elio Marchetti of DB Motorsport will be dropped 10 positions on the grid for Race 1 on Sunday due to an engine change on his Alfa Romeo 156.

ROBERT HUFF WINS IN HIS OLD MG B

Robert Huff returned to his racing roots last week. The 26 year old Briton took to the wheel of the very car that cemented his desire to be a racing driver seven years ago. He won his class in the MG Car Club BCV8 Championship at Cadwell Park last weekend and came 5th overall. The car, an MG B, is owned by a family friend who will not allow anybody but Huff to compete in it.

SKI RACER GHEDINA SWITCHES TO MOTOR SPORT

Kristian Ghedina who was the patron of the FIA WTCC race of Monza in 2005 is once again present in the paddock. One of the most successful Italian downhill racers ever, he announced his retirement from ski competitions three days ago and will make his car racing debut at Magny-Cours in the Formula 3000 International Masters which supports the WTCC.

As well as this, the 39 year old born in Cortina, Italy is set to join the Italian Touring Car Championship for selected rounds. The man with 13 world cup race victories in his belt said: *'When I was young my father wouldn't let me get involved in motorsport because I was too crazy! The importance of lines and carrying speed is the same in racing and skiing. I hope to make a name for myself as a talent in motorsport not just Kristian Ghedina, 'the skier'.'*

COUNTDOWN: - 2 DAYS



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