



ROUNDS 13 & 14 RACE REPORT

Weather: overcast, with a dry track.
Attendance: 46,000.

ANDY PRIAULX BACK IN THE LEAD WITH A 9-POINT MARGIN

Jörg Müller of BMW Team Germany and Robert Huff of Chevrolet shared victories in the seventh meeting of the 2006 FIA WTCC. Huff's result makes it nine different winners so far this season.

However Andy Priaulx of BMW Team UK emerged as the actual winner of the weekend. The reigning world champion collected a 5th and a 2nd that, due to the fact that James Thompson did not score, resulted in Priaulx reclaiming the championship lead with a 9-point margin ahead of Thompson.

But the title fight is still wide open, with three meetings to go and 60 points to be awarded. Eight drivers are covered by only 17 points, from Priaulx (58) down to the Rydell-Tarquini duo (41).

In the Manufacturers Championship the battle is even closer, with BMW edging SEAT by one.

In front of a record crowd – the largest for a car race since the new circuit was inaugurated in 1987 – the WTCC drivers staged in a great show, plenty of overtaking and clashes.

The FIA WTCC will resume in Istanbul, Turkey, on September 23rd and 24th.

RACE 1 – JÖRG MÜLLER LEADS BMW 1-2

Jörg Müller claimed his second victory of the season after promoting himself two positions off the line and taking the lead into the first corner. He then drove solidly to finish ahead of Alessandro Zanardi for BMW and Yvan Muller for SEAT. Pole man Gabriele Tarquini didn't survive the first lap after contact was made with Andy Priaulx entering a corner, sending the Italian wide and into the gravel where he could not resume. The Stewards considered the collision a normal race incident.

Augusto Farfus too went off on the first lap. At the start his Alfa Romeo 156 and Duncan Huisman's BMW 320si made contact to avoid Rickard Rydell's car, stalled with an engine problem.

Drama in the first lap continued when Priaulx was overtaken by Yvan Muller and Jordi Gené for 3rd and 4th. The battle between Gené and Priaulx continued throughout the race creating some superb entertainment. The SEAT man defended to the end though and crossed the line 4th and 0.448 seconds ahead of the reigning champion.



Another fight for positions was being contested slightly further down the field. In the opening lap Alain Menu overtook Tom Coronel for 6th. The latter appeared to be closing the gap until lap 4 when Menu edged away. Persistence was a virtue for Coronel however as he eventually re-gained 6th position on the last lap, also winning the independent race.

Menu passed the chequered flag 7th with his Chevrolet team-mate Robert Huff in the position behind. Huff impressively worked his way through the pack after starting 24th on the grid. The reward for his efforts was pole for Race 2.

Just missing out on the points was Dirk Müller. On laps 6 and 7 he and independent driver Luca Rangoni from Proteam Motorsport jostled for 8th position. It was top class racing but neither of them secured the position as Rangoni made a mistake and strayed off into the gravel and Dirk was soon overtaken by Huff.

RACE 2 – FIRST VICTORY FOR ROB HUFF

Robert Huff was victorious in the FIA WTCC for the first time. At the wheel of his Chevrolet Lacetti he led the race from start to finish. Fellow countryman Andy Priaulx came home second. Yvan Muller claimed the third podium spot after an action-packed last lap.

Rickard Rydell's and Maurizio Ceresoli's SEAT cars were both missing from the grid. At the start Jörg Müller jumped from 8th to 5th and then proceeded to overtake Tom Coronel for 4th. Yvan Muller also overtook his fellow SEAT driver to lye 5th. Jörg appeared to have a second podium appearance in his sights as he was racing side by side with Alain Menu. On lap 4 the pair had a clash and Menu went off and eventually retired. This allowed Zanardi to move up to 3rd (he had previously overtaken Coronel and Yvan Muller) while Jörg slotted back in 5th place behind Yvan Muller.

Coronel dropped down the field over the next few laps and eventually came to a halt off the track at turn 5 due to an engine problem. This meant that the independent win went to Stefano D'Aste of Proteam Motorsport who finished 11th overall, with his own team mate Luca Rangoni and Maurer Motorsport's newcomer Vincent Radermecker immediately behind.

The penultimate lap saw Yvan Muller chase Zanardi for 3rd spot. Coming out of the pit straight the pair collided and Zanardi shot across onto the gravel. With this action happening Jörg mounted a final challenge on Yvan Muller out of the last corner but to no avail. He finished 4th ahead of his BMW Team Germany companion Dirk Müller. Jordi Gené and Peter Terting claimed 6th and 8th positions separated by Nicola Larini. Gianni Morbidelli crossed the line 14th which was the best of the Alfa Romeo squad.

Investigations regarding the collisions between Y. Muller and Zanardi and between J. Müller and Menu resulted in no further actions; while Rangoni was considered guilty of colliding with Sharp and was given a penalty of 5 positions on the starting grid for the next race; however the penalty is suspended for the next two race meetings.