



## **ROUNDS 19 & 20 PRACTICE AND QUALIFYING**

*Weather:* partly sunny and hot, with a dry track during the free practice sessions; qualifying started on a dry track but finished on the wet.

### **PRACTICE 1 – RYDELL FASTEST, DIRK CRASHES**

The fastest man in the first free practice session was Rickard Rydell. The SEAT Sport Swede set the best lap of 2:34.315 in the 10<sup>th</sup> minute of the session with nobody able to top it. Andy Priaulx was second best with a time 0.642 of a second shy of Rydell's. Fastest man from yesterday, Nicola Larini, posted the third best time today for the Chevrolet team, completing a trio of different cars on top of the time sheet.

BMW Team Germany drivers Jörg and Dirk Müller posted the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> quickest laps respectively. Dirk had his session cut short when he touched the wall at Paiol which caused his front right wheel to fly off at the Faraway turn. His car remained static on the track until the end of the session.

*"I don't know what happened,"* he said. *"I suddenly lost the car and hit the wall. I'm not sure the team will be able to make repairs in time for the next session."*

Current championship leader Augusto Farfus was the best of the Alfa Romeo drivers but only 17<sup>th</sup> overall. He was the worst placed of the drivers who are fighting for the world title.

Local men André Couto set the 10<sup>th</sup> fastest lap, while BMW newcomer Jan Magnussen the 14<sup>th</sup>.

Tom Coronel's best lap was 13<sup>th</sup> fastest overall and 8 positions ahead of the next best independent driver, Luca Rangoni. Diego Romanini closed the timesheet in 26<sup>th</sup> position, after the Wiechers-Sport team spent most of the night repairing his BMW 320i after yesterday's crash.

### **PRACTICE 2 – HERE COMES THE CHAMPION**

The reigning World Champion has risen to the top in the second free practice. In the second part of the session Andy Priaulx completed a lap of the Macau circuit in 2:34.335 at the wheel of his BMW Team UK car. *"I'm quite happy. We have found a very good balance,"* said the man from Guernsey.

A pair of Chevrolets followed. After being the fastest for most of the session, Alain Menu was ousted by Priaulx by only 0.143 seconds, with Nicola Larini third, 0.250 off. In fact, the top nine drivers were within just half a second.

Rickard Rydell once again led the SEAT Sport squad and posted the fourth best time overall. Rydell's team-mate Gabriele Tarquini only managed a few minutes of the session before crashing at Moorish Hill, which damaged his front left tyre and led to the red flags being deployed as the León limped back to the pits. *"It was my mistake. The same place where I crashed last year,"* he admitted.



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Another driver who suffered from a crash was Jan Magnussen: *“It was a brain fade. A stupid mistake that may have serious consequences, because it cost me some important track time.”*

Dirk and Jörg Müller set the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> best times. The pair was split on the timesheet by GR Asia independent driver Tom Coronel who is showing his experience on the Macau track.

Duncan Huisman, Augusto Farfus and André Couto appeared to still be searching for that extra something as their were only 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> quickest of the field. Fabrizio Giovanardi did not take part in the session because of gearbox problems.

### **QUALIFYING – PRIAULX ON POLE AGAIN**

Andy Priaulx has placed himself in the best possible position to retain his title - on pole, for the second consecutive year. The Briton originally topped the timesheet with a 2:33.557 before improving it to 2:33.318 later in the session. Dirk Müller will line up alongside his BMW companion on the front row of the grid, followed by SEAT Sport’s Yvan Muller.

There were two red flags during the session. The first was due to Nicola Larini crashing his Chevrolet Lacetti into the wall at ‘R’ bend. On resuming there was a surge of drivers who improved their times. These included multiple Macau Guia Race winner Duncan Huisman, current championship leader Augusto Farfus and Fabrizio Giovanardi who eventually qualified 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>.

The action was not to stop there. James Thompson re-created the crash that Larini had suffered just minutes before and again the red flags were deployed. As the session went underway for the third time the rain began and thus effectively ended the proceedings because almost no drivers improved their positions and many remained even outside the qualification maxima.

As a consequence of the events Rickard Rydell was only able to post two laps in the wet and therefore qualified 22<sup>nd</sup>. The same bad luck also struck local boy André Couto (18<sup>th</sup> fastest) and Chevrolet drivers Robert Huff and Alain Menu who only managed 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>. Menu’s misfortunes continued further as he will be demoted to the back of the grid due to the incident he had with Luca Rangoni in Istanbul. Potential title contender Gabriele Tarquini qualified 9<sup>th</sup> while Jörg Müller, who is just one point off the championship lead qualified 5<sup>th</sup>. BMW new comer Jan Magnussen completed the top-ten.

GR Asia’s Tom Coronel set an outstanding 6<sup>th</sup> fastest lap and easily topped the Independents’ classification.

Saturday will be a day off for the WTCC competitors, who will hit the track again on Sunday morning at 7.30 for the warm up that will be followed by the two final races of the season (at 11.10 and 12.30 local time), both on 9 laps.