

FIA WTCC NEWSLETTER

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RECORD CROWD ATTENDED MACAU EVENT

A record crowd attended the 54th Macau Grand Prix event that included the FIA WTCC finale.

According to the figures released by the Macau Grand Prix Committee last Monday, 55,000 spectators gathered on the grandstands along the Guia Track over the weekend, while an estimated 200,000 more watched the races from hotel rooms, flats and restaurants' terraces around the track.

PRIAULX: STORY OF A PHENOMENON

Andy Priaulx began his route to become one of the most successful touring car drivers ever four years ago when he clinched the 2004 FIA European Touring Car Championship crown in Dubai.

2004: ETCC, DUBAI – He arrived in the Emirate state with a 12-point gap behind fellow BMW driver Dirk Müller and finished second in both races, equalling Müller's 111 points but beating him by the dead heat (5 wins against 3).

2005: WTCC, MACAU – In the following season, the first of the new World Touring Car Championship, Müller and Priaulx arrived to the last round in Macau separated by only one point, with Alfa Romeo's Fabrizio Giovanardi third with a 5-point gap. Again two second places enabled Priaulx to overturn the situation.

2006: WTCC, MACAU – No less than nine drivers arrived in Macau still in contention for the 2006 world championship. Alfa Romeo's Augusto Farfus was leading before the final round, only one point ahead of the Priaulx-Jörg Müller duo. Priaulx set pole position and won the first race, with Müller sixth; as the German won the second race a fifth place was enough for Priaulx to grab his third title by one point.

2007: WTCC, MACAU – The rest is recent history. For the first time Priaulx arrived at the season's finale as the leader of the classification, although on equal points with Yvan Muller. This did not affect the final result with Priaulx champion once again.

"I have never given up but I knew I needed something special this season. Yes, you need luck to win the championship but you also need to be there to take the luck. Sunday was my lucky day, but I also had some unlucky days during the season, like at Brno and Monza. Now I look forward and not back and that will be the motivation to win again next year. Sometimes you have to dig deep for motivation but I hope I continue to feel as I do and keep winning races," commented the triple World Champion.

Andy Priaulx was born in Guernsey 33 years ago. During his three WTCC seasons with BMW UK and Bart Mampaey's RBM Team he finished 55 out of the 62 races held (47 of them in the points), claiming 9 victories, 25 podium results, 4 pole positions and 4 fastest laps.

ALAIN MENU TOPPED SEASON'S STATISTICS

Alain Menu emerged as the fastest man during the current season. Chevrolet's Swiss driver occupied the 6th position in the championship's final classification, but topped most of the statistics. Menu claimed 5 victories (only Priaux had managed to do so last year), set 5 pole positions out of 11 rounds (a new record for the series) and led 64 laps out of the 293 raced (only Priaux had done better last year, leading 65 laps out of 253). However, Menu lacked consistency and remained scoreless in 50 per cent of the rounds, which eventually cut him out on the title fight, whereas Priaux and Yvan Muller scored in all the rounds but five.

Eleven drivers claimed at least one win during the season, with Farfus and Priaux scoring three each, Yvan Muller, James Thompson and Jörg Müller two apiece.

MANUFACTURERS FOUGHT A CLOSE FIGHT

The 2007 Manufacturers' Championship was the closest so far since the FIA revived the WTCC in 2005. Thanks to Andy Priaux's victory in Macau's second race BMW claimed their third consecutive title with a 6-point slim margin ahead of SEAT. All the four Manufacturers were represented in the top-five of the Drivers' Championship.

The BMW men won nine out of the 22 races and led 128 laps out of 293. Behind Priaux, Augusto Farfus classified fourth in the points.

SEAT fought for the title until the end. Their drivers claimed 5 victories and Yvan Muller finished runner up, the best result ever for the Spanish marque since they joined FIA touring cars in 2003.

Chevrolet classified third in the Manufacturers' Championship. Their drivers won 7 races and for the first time one of them – Nicola Larini – had the chance to secure the world title. He finished fifth in the championship, on equal points with Farfus.

James Thompson successfully defended Alfa Romeo's honour and gave the Italian make an unexpected third place in the Drivers' Championship.

D'ASTE INDEPENDENT CHAMPION BY TWO POINTS

Proteam Motorsport's Luca Rangoni won both races in Macau, but this was not enough to beat his fellow countryman Stefano D'Aste in the fight for the Independents' Trophy. At the wheel of his Wiechers-Sport BMW 320si D'Aste grabbed the title with a margin of only two points.

The third contender, Pierre-Yves Corthals saw his hopes vanishing when his Exagon Racing SEAT León crashed into the wall at the start of Macau's first race.

These three men dominated the season and altogether won 15 out of the 22 races: 9 Rangoni, 5 Corthals and 3 D'Aste; the remaining five victories were collected by SEAT Sport Italia drivers Roberto Colciago (3) and Massimiliano Pedalà (2).

COUNTDOWN: - 99 DAYS



to the 2008 FIA WTCC Race of Brazil – 1st / 2nd March, in Curitiba

more information and pictures: www.fiawtcc.com