



ROUNDS 3 & 4 RACE REPORT

Weather: overcast sunny and warm, with a breeze

Crowd: 36,000 in the weekend.

BMW DOMINATE, AS SEAT CLAIM FIRST PODIUM

Jörg Müller took both wins at Magny Cours in Rounds 3 and 4 of the FIA WTCC. The weekend began well for Jörg as he qualified on pole for the first race and didn't allow anyone to pass him. In the second, he fought remarkably from 8th on the grid to take another win.

BMW continued their Championship success with Jörg and Priaux finishing 1st and 2nd in the first race and Jörg, Dirk, Priaux and García making it a BMW 1-2-3-4 in the second. Alfa Romeo and SEAT fought hard to spoil this BMW festival. Rydell gave SEAT the first podium result of the season as he finished 3rd in Race 1. In Race 2, Gené was the best for SEAT with a 6th place. Tarquini and Farfus led the Alfa Romeo Racing Team quartet. Tarquini passed the chequered flag 4th in Race 1 and Farfus was 5th in Race 2.

Chevrolet are clearly learning fast as Nicola Larini finished 13th in race 2, the best result so far for the Lacetti. Ford are also making progress as both the new Focus cars finished the second race.

The weather was superb throughout the whole weekend and many spectators camped overnight waiting for the gates to open; official figures reported a clear increase compared to last year's 22,000. The FIA WTCC drivers definitely put on a good show, particularly in the second race as there were vast amounts of overtaking and bumper to bumper moments.

The FIA WTCC will now head to Silverstone for Rounds 5 and 6 on 15th of May.

BEFORE THE START – 32 CARS ON THE GRID

Both GR Asia and DB Motorsport teams worked hard to repair Tom Coronel's and Andrea Larini's cars, which had been extensively damaged in shunt during the morning warm-up. Their efforts made possible to have – like in Monza three weeks ago – 32 cars on the starting grid for the first race, with only one missing: Frank Diefenbacher's Ford Focus.

RACE 1 – JÖRG FROM LIGHTS TO FLAG

Another Müller occupied the top spot of the podium, but this time it was Jörg who won Race 1 at Magny Cours. Jörg started from pole and stayed ahead of the field for the entire race. Fellow BMW driver, Andy Priaux had a spectacular start, overtaking Augusto Farfus and Rickard Rydell before entering the first corner. The 2004 FIA ETCC title holder did not surrender this advantage and crossed the line in second place 2.882 seconds behind the winner.

Rydell represented SEAT Sport on the podium by finishing third in his SEAT Toledo Cupra after an exciting duel with Gabriele Tarquini's Alfa Romeo. Antonio García, Dirk Müller, Jordi Gené and Farfus filled the other point positions, while



Rounds 3 & 4 – Circuit de Nevers Magny-Cours – 30th April / 1st May 2005

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Peter Terting made a daring move on the very last corner of the race to overtake Fabrizio Giovanardi, meaning the rookie German claimed ninth place.

Early in the race Chevrolet's Alain Menu was involved in an incident with Stefano D'Aste which resulted in a premature finish for both; almost at the same time Adam Lacko went off into the gravel trap. Menu's team-mates, Nicola Larini and Robert Huff however, kept team spirits high by finishing 17th and 19th.

Ford Hotfiel Sport are still suffering with difficulties as Thomas Klenke only completed 8 laps of the race due to a contact with another car. His team-mate Thomas Jäger managed all 12 laps and finished 24th. The third Ford in the race, Sascha Plöderl old Focus, retired with a broken driveshaft.

Marc Hennerici continued his success as an independent driver and obtained maximum points by overtaking rival Carl Rosenblad on the penultimate lap. He crossed the line 13th overall. Alessandro Zanardi overcame a gearbox problem that occurred during qualifying to secure his third consecutive win of the Italian Superturismo Championship, finishing 15th overall.

RACE 2 – FOUR OF A KIND FOR BMW

BMW have yet again been victorious at Magny-Cours. Not only did they take the race win; the first four to finish were BMW 320i cars. Jörg Müller was first, making it two consecutive wins. The 35 year old German started from 8th on the grid and drove a superb race. After gradually overtaking the seven drivers ahead of him, he edged away and finished just over 5 seconds ahead of the rest. The battle behind provided great entertainment for spectators, with non stop action.

In the early stages Augusto Farfus, who had started on pole, took the lead. On lap 4, under pressure from BMW drivers, the young Brazilian made a mistake and went wide dropping to fifth. Dirk Müller inherited the lead, chased by Antonio García, but on lap 5 Jörg Müller managed to overtake both.

Behind the three leaders Andy Priaulx made some impressive manoeuvres to overtake Farfus and García. Finally he had Dirk Müller in his sights but despite many efforts was unable to capture second spot. Dirk finished just 0.168 seconds ahead of Priaulx and caused some drama on the start/finish grid as he spun. Farfus, who was the best placed of the Alfa Romeo drivers with fifth position, could not swerve in time and hit him. SEAT Sport had two drivers in the top 10 with Gene sixth and Terting tenth.

Positive steps have been made by Ford Hotfiel Sport this weekend as round 4 saw both Ford Focus cars crossing the chequered flag for the first time. Thomas Jäger and Thomas Klenke finished 22nd and 23rd respectively. Chevrolet too had an improvement with Nicola Larini moving closer obtaining a top 10 finish. He finished 13th, whilst team-mate Robert Huff was 16th.

Tom Coronel emerged as the winner of the Independents' race in his GR Asia SEAT Toledo Cupra. The Dutchman took 14th place overall just ahead of Carl Rosenblad, while his team-mate Valle Mäkelä's pursuit for points was put to an end after contact was made with Alessandro Zanardi's BMW during a fight for the leadership of the Italian Championship. Proteam Motorsport's Giuseppe Cirò finished the race 18th overall and inherited win in the Italian Superturismo Championship.

After the race Coronel was excluded, his car failing to comply with the ride height, meaning that Rosenblad was promoted to first of the Independents.

ROUNDS 3 & 4 RACE QUOTES

Jörg MÜLLER, BMW Team Deutschland – 1st in Race 1 and 1st in Race 2

“When we tested in March we discovered a great setup which is particularly effective here at Magny-Cours. I had an old set of tyres in the first race and managed to keep the others behind me, so I was sure that with a new set of tyres in the second I could do even better. In the first race I took a good start and managed to pull away, leaving the fighting to the others. The second race was much harder for me because I had to overtake, and overtaking means taking risks. It is only the fourth race of the Championship so it is much too early to be making speculations about the final outcome. All I can say is that I look forward to the next race, although it will be difficult with the extra weight.”

Dirk MÜLLER, BMW Team Deutschland – 6th in Race 1 and 2nd in Race 2

“The weight that I was carrying here made it very difficult, it felt like I was driving a little truck. It was important for me to adjust my driving here but we found a good setup and that helped a great deal. I feel totally satisfied with both the races. At the end of the second race I don’t really know what happened, it felt a little light at the rear but it didn’t appear to be a problem so I crossed the line. Then I lost control of the rear, braked very hard and spun.”

Andy PRIAULX, BMW Team UK – 2nd in Race 1 and 3rd in Race 2

“We have had some work to do this season, we need to make the big step up in winning races. We have learned a lot this weekend and will be working hard to do well at Silverstone. It’s a long Championship made especially tough with the reverse grid and ballast. The competition was very hard but very fair today and I think that we will all see some fantastic racing if this standard continues.”

Antonio GARCÍA, BMW Team Italy-Spain – 5th in Race 1 and 4th in Race 2

“I have mixed feelings. I’m happy for my championship position, but not really with the result of the second race. I could have finished second if I had managed to overtake Dirk. We had a great fight, struggling against the extra weight. Then Jörg came and overtook us very easily. I desperately tried to get past Dirk, but I flat-spotted my front tyres and this enabled Priaulx to steal the third position from me.”

Rickard RYDELL, SEAT Sport – 3rd in Race 1, 11th in Race 2

“I am satisfied with third in Race 1, but to be honest we were expecting more for this meeting. It is clear that BMW have the advantage and we need to look into the difference in performance. In the second race I was caught in a pack with lot of cars changing positions which prevented me from fighting for another podium place.”



Marc HENNERICI, Wiechers-Sport – 13th in Race 1 and 16th in Race 2

“I really felt that it would be possible for me to reach the top ten this weekend but during qualifying we had a technical problem. The first race was amazing, I didn’t think it was going to be possible to overtake Rosenblad on the penultimate lap but I left my braking so late that I had no other option but to pass him. In the second race I had a good start. I overtook Giovanardi but he pushed me into the barriers.”

Tom CORONEL, GR Asia – 23rd in Race 1 and DSQ in Race 2

“It was unbelievable what SEAT achieved to repair my car after what happened in the warm up. It was like they working in ‘fast forward’ mode, everything was done so quickly. In the first race however I had big engine problems so thought it best to change my car because there was nothing to loose. I’m very happy with that decision, it was a good car.”

Mauro SIPSZ, Alfa Romeo Racing Team principal

“It was a negative weekend for us. We expected we had to struggle, because this has always been a difficult track for our cars. However, BMW supremacy today was disarming. We could not keep their pace, not even of the cars with the handicap weight on board. This is a fantastic championship and it shouldn’t be spoiled by the domination of a single manufacturer. It needs balanced performances, but the regulations are too much in favour of the rear-wheel drive. Six manufacturers are involved, and the five running front-wheel drive cars are not competitive.”

Eric NÈVE, Motorsport Manager of Chevrolet Europe

“Today’s races showed that we have to continue to improve our form. For the time being we’re stuck in the second half of the field, where the driving ethics are very poor. Today this cost us a second car in two race weekends. Alain (Menu) wasn’t able to start in today’s second race, physically as well as technically, which deprived us of a lot of valuable data for the Lacetti’s further development. Fortunately, Nicola’s (Larini) and Rob’s (Huff) races showed us that we are working in the right direction and that a top ten finish might be closer than we initially expected.”

Eberhard BRAUN, German motorsport manager of Ford TeamRS

“We saw that our development work on the rear suspension really paid off here. The fact that we were suffering from understeer was mainly caused by the very hot track temperatures. All the front wheel drive cars had to do with a certain amount of understeer today. The massive improvement in lap times from Race 1 to Race 2 showed that we are working in the right direction. We just need time and kilometres to fully understand the car and the requirements of the championship format, and to make full use of the car’s potential.”