

FIA WTCC NEWSLETTER

48 – 13 December 2008

WTCC CHANGE QUALIFYING FORMAT

The FIA World Touring Car Championship will change its qualifying format from next season to adopt a system similar to Formula One.

The new format was proposed by the FIA Touring Car Commission and approved yesterday by the FIA World Motor Sport Council in Monaco.

The 30-minute qualifying session will be split into two parts: Q1 and Q2. All competitors will take part in the 20-minute Q1; at the end of this period they will return to the pits for a five-minute pause.

Only the drivers who have set the ten fastest laps in Q1 will participate in the 10-minute Q2. Their times in Q2 will determine the first ten grid positions for Race 1.

The grid positions from 11th downwards will be determined by the lap times set during Q1 by the other drivers.

Q1 and Q2 will be extended to 30 and 15 minutes respectively in the events held on street circuits, for a total qualifying duration of 45 minutes.

The grid for Race 2 remains based on Race 1 results, with the top eight drivers classified placed in reverse order.

YVAN MULLER CROWNED AT THE FIA GALA

Yvan Muller has been officially named 2008 FIA World Touring Car champion during the traditional FIA prize giving gala last night in Monaco.

In the sumptuous setting of the Sporting d'Eté's Salle des Etoiles, the FIA honoured all its champions. In a progression from Karting to Formula One, the FIA World Touring Car Championship's prize giving took place between the FIA GT's and the World Rally Championship's.

After SEAT Sport's Gabriele Tarquini and Chevrolet's Robert Huff – second and third in the championship respectively – had received the runner up trophies, a sequence of spectacular pictures introduced the WTCC champions.

The curtain rose, unveiling Yvan Muller and SEAT Sport director Jaime Puig on the stage, with the SEAT León TDI winning car between them. Muller was awarded with the World Champion's trophy, while Puig collected SEAT's first Manufacturers' Championship trophy.

At the end of the ceremony Muller joined Lewis Hamilton (Formula One) and Sébastien Loeb (World Rally Championship) for the traditional picture of the three FIA World Champions.

POULSEN JOINS ENGSTLER FOR 2009 WTCC

After taking part in selected rounds of the 2008 FIA World Touring car Championship, Kristian Poulsen will race the 2009 season with the Liqui Moly Team Engstler.

Poulsen is the first Danish driver to commit for a full WTCC season: *"I have only been driving circuit racing for two years, so it will be an enormous challenge, which I am really looking forward to,"* he commented.

After a long career in international rallying, Poulsen switched to circuit racing in 2007. Next year he will race alongside team-owner Franz Engstler, the runner up in the 2008 WTCC Independents' Trophy. *"I got to know Franz and found him a nice guy. He rented one of our BMW cars for the European Touring Car Cup, and now I will rent a car from him. 2008 has been a pretty good year, but I believe that 2009 will bring even more success,"* said Poulsen.

LARINI BEATS MÜLLER IN BOLOGNA

Nicola Larini repeated his 2007 victory at the Bologna Motor Show. The Italian driver and his Chevrolet Lacetti won the Yokohama World Touring Car Show tournament last Monday, beating in the final round Jörg Müller's Schnitzer BMW 320si.

Müller emerged as the best driver in the preliminary phase, with nine victories out of ten rounds against the other five competitors, but in the final he met Larini – the only one capable to beat him in the preliminary phase. The Italian won both rounds, with margins of 0.55 and 1.68 seconds respectively.

Duncan Huisman's RBM BMW 320si defeated Engström's Honda Accord in the final for the third place; both SEAT drivers – Gabriele Tarquini (SEAT Sport León TDI) and Oscar Nogués (SUNRED León TFSI) were eliminated in the preliminary phase.

COUNTDOWN: - 85 DAYS



to the 2009 FIA WTCC Race of Brazil – 7th / 8th March in Curitiba