



GRAND PRIX MACAU



PREVIEW | FIA GT WORLD CUP

Mercedes-AMG Driving Academy team heads the field

Renato Marques

ALTHOUGH a field of 23 cars is set to take the streets of Macau by storm for the second season of the FIA GT World Cup, the battle for the win is likely to be restricted to two out of the four manufacturers in competition.

The favorite is definitively the Mercedes-AMG Driving Academy team with the German two-time Macau winner and reigning champion Maro Engel heading the field alongside his teammate Renger van der Zande.

Experienced and driving one of the best cars from the lineup, the Mercedes drivers seem to have an easy path to victory. To challenge the Mercedes team, Audi is bringing their best hand; the Italian winner of the title of “Mr Macau,” Edoardo Mortara. Mortara will team up with another great driver, Belgium’s Laurens Vanthoor. Both will be driving Audi Sport Team WRT Audi R8’s LMS.

If the Mercedes and Audis are set to take the lead, surprises may arise for the Porsche side, who has former Le Mans winner and Porsche protégé Earl Bamber together with Frenchman Kévin Estre taking their 997 GT3Rs up the field.

Although the odds are not so much on their side, Bamber and Estre may use all their experience to secure an unexpected win. For the first time, Lamborghini will be participating in the World Cup. The Italian manufacturer will bring their factory driver Mirko Bortolotti and local driver André Couto to drive the Huracán GT3s. Lam-

orghini has stated that it expects good results from pairing the car know-how of Bortolotti with the circuit experience of Couto. The decision certainly seems like a logical one if the manufacturer has their sights set on the manufacturer’s title.

From the manufacturers league there will be other machines and their drivers that special notice should be paid to; the Ferrari 488 GT3 driven by the Thai Pasin Lathouras, the Bentley Continental GT3 driven by HK’s Adderly Fong, and the BMW M6 GT3 dri-

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ven by Dutch Nicky Catsburg. These standouts will try to battle their way to a podium finish amid a group of other Porsches, Audis, Ferraris and BMWs.

The big disappointments came over the poor results from Bentley last year, despite racing a good group of Continental GT3, as well as the miss of the Aston Martin raced by Craft-Bamboo Racing who this year will instead race two Porsche 997 GT3R.

Last year Craft-Bamboo took the two Aston Martins to third and fifth places overall thanks to the fancy footwork of Stefan Mucke and Darryl O’Young. This time without Mucke, the wheel of the second Craft-Bamboo car will be in the



The mighty new Mercedes-AMG GT3 were exhibited at Tap Seac Square before the race

PREVIEW

FIA GT World Cup – Mercedes Driving Academy team head

hands of another great racer, the British Richard Lyons.

In addition to the more familiar faces, newcomers Fabian Plentz and Tommy Tulpe will race under the colors of another newcomer, German Team HCB-Rutronik-Racing. HCB-Rutronik-Racing will present

two more Audi R8 LMS to the grid, which is already dominated by seven cars from the German manufacturer.

This year, the FIA has changed the rules in terms of how the title of the FIA GT World Cup for manufacturers will be decided, abandoning the 2015

point system. This year, the prize will be decided by a more standard overall classification.

The GTs will start to roar on Friday (November 18), when the qualifying session for the Macau GT Cup - FIA GT World Cup will be held. It is a session that will be decisive, since the

Future of Guia Race on the line as TCR pulls out

Renato Marques

THE announced departure from the TCR Series

after only two years of its presence on the Macau Grand Prix program is raising questions about the fu-

ture of the “Guia Race.”

Although rumored already for some time, the confirmation of the removal of Macau

from the TCR Series came during the unveiling of the 2017 TCR Asia Series calendar. In it there are several changes that include a removal of the Macau round as well as two new visits to mainland China during the months of August and September next year for the races of Zhejiang (brand-new circuit) and the Season Finale which will happen in Shanghai.

“TouringCarTimes,” which specializes in Touring Car racing series, citing sources from within the TCR Series, said the key reasons for pulling out of Macau are the rule changes which came into force for this year’s edition which allowed the inclusion of cars from other series, namely the CTCC (China Touring Car Championship).

At the TCR Asia 2017 Ca-



The WTCC series could be back to Macau (pictured: 2012 race)

endar unveiling the CEO of the event promoter WSC Asia Ltd, David Sonenscher said: “We’re proud to have been the first TCR regional championship and to be continuing to break new ground in Asia with a concept that has proven especially successful around the world.” He concluded by noting, “with the expansion of TCR around the

world this year and the recent announcements about the inclusion of such iconic marques as Audi, Peugeot and Kia alongside incumbents like Volkswagen, Honda, Ford, Alfa Romeo, Opel and Seat things for TCR are just going to continue to improve and with that, TCR Asia will become one of the fastest growing categories in the region.”

ONE SHOT NEWS



Racers took part in the four headline races of the 63rd Macau Grand Prix interact with local students during a visit to the Anim’Arte Nam Van, taking part in a pedal boat race.



Maro Engel (left) and Renger van der Zande

Mercedes-AMG leads the field

size of the cars means that it is almost impossible to overtake throughout most of the circuit (an exception being the braking point at the Lisboa bend).

Before the qualifying session there will two 30-minute sessions of free practice.

A qualification race of 12 laps, or a maximum of one hour, takes place on Saturday (November 19) with the results deciding the grid for the final and main event to be held on Sunday (November 20), which includes an 18-lap, or maximum 75 minute race.

The third season of the series will begin in Sepang, Malaysia, moving onto South Korea, before two events in Thailand; the first at the Chang International Circuit and the second at the famous street circuit of Bangsaen (a circuit with many similarities to Macau's). TCR made its appearance in Macau in 2015, replacing the WTCC (World Touring Car Championship) category which, after ten-year racing in the region as a "Season Finale", decided to switch the last event of the season with a night-race at the Losail circuit in Qatar.

The move from TCR opens the door to FIA (which has been more involved in the organization of the Macau Grand Prix this year) to add to the current two-series "World Cup." A third race could be dedicated to touring cars

Other reports speculate that WTCC might consider a return to Macau.

MACAU Post will issue a set of commemorative stamps celebrating the 50th edition of the Macau Motorcycle Grand Prix. The stamps will be available for purchase from tomorrow.

The postage stamps will feature five former champions of the competition; Michael Rutter riding his Ducati 998 to victory in 2003, inaugural winner Hiroshi Hasegawa on his winning Yamaha in 1967, Mick Grant on his Kawasaki 750 in 1977, Ron Haslam, who won six times, on his Roc Elf Honda 4 in 1987, and 1988 winner and former 500cc World Champion Kevin Schwantz on his Suzuki 500 RGR.

The limited edition stamps were announced at a press conference attended by the president of Sports Bureau, Pun Weng Kun, and the director of Macau Post, Lau Vai Meng.

The stamps are one of many

other special initiatives to commemorate the race's golden jubilee.

One of these, a commemorative Macau Pass package of two cards will feature designs depicting 2015's winner Peter Hickman on his charge to victory and a picture from last year's Motorcycle Grand Prix showing 2013 winner Ian Hutchinson, Michael Rutter and John McGuinness at the famous Lisboa Bend.

The two-card package retails for MOP110 and is available from Macau Pass vendors from today.

Leather workshop Worker Playground is separately marking the golden jubilee of the road race with a new merchandise collection that includes a leather motorcycle jacket, a hooded sweatshirt, leather key chain and gloves, and a range of t-shirts emblazoned with vintage images of the Grand Prix. A stand located around the Guia Circuit will be selling the items.

Q&A ANDRÉ COUTO

'I always try to win; that is the team's objective'

MACAU driver André Couto is already a veteran participant in the Macau Grand Prix, having won the F3 race in 2000. The Macanese hero is back, this time behind the wheel of a Lamborghini Huracán GT3s. On the eve of the race's beginning, Couto was interviewed by Macau journalists and talked about his objectives for the upcoming race.

– **What do you expect of your participation in the GT race this year?**

André Couto (AC) – Let's see how I will adapt to the car. I have never raced with this car. It's not going to be easy but the team is well prepared. Let's see if I can do something good.

– **Which result would be satisfactory?**

AC – I always try to win, that is the team's objective. This must be gradual work, starting with the practice, then the qualifying, the races.

– **Have you tested the Lamborghini?**

AC – I tested it in Italy for around one hour. It's better than no training at all. But it was a short time to test the limits of the car. However, it was enough to make an impression about the car. I liked it. At first sight it is more pleasant to drive than the McLaren [which Couto drove last year].

– **Are Mercedes and Audi the favorites for the GT race?**

AC – I think so, bearing in mind the history that they have in Macau, those are the main teams that are usually fast in Macau. Porsche has a line up of four racers and then there's Lamborghini. Let's see what we can pull out.

– **How do you assess track conditions?**

AC – The tarmac is not good, it is very uneven. If it rains a lot it creates puddles, which don't help. The tarmac also causes a lot of spray. Nowadays it is possible to choose the type of tarmac. There are circuits that use top quality tarmac, which absorbs the water and reduces the spray. That is safer. Since Macau is dangerous, because it is a city track, I guess it could have top quality tarmac.



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– **What is your take on the future of motor racing in Macau?**

AC – The Macau Grand Prix is a large event and I wish that the best Macau racers could be placed in the main categories. That is not happening a lot. Macau drivers must do a lot of 'gymnastics' to be able to be here. I think that is why, for example, Rudolfo [a local driver, surnamed Ávila] will not race this year.

Grand Prix stamps to be issued



Michael Rutter (left) and Mick Grant are two of the former winners featuring on the commemorative stamp set

PREVIEW

TCR International Series - A four-way 'tango'

Renato Marques

THE battle for the second season TCR International Series title will be decided on Macau's street circuit.

Two pairs of teammates – James Nash and Pepe Oriola of Craft-Bamboo Lukoil, and Stefano Comini and Jean-Karl Vernay of Leopard Racing – will face off in a four-way “tango” on the way to the championship finale. SEAT's Nash goes into the last two rounds of the season with a lead of 17 points over last year's champion, Comini. In third and fourth, with 16 points of difference between them are Oriola and Vernay the latter of whom is 39 points off the lead. Both Oriola and Vernay know that the title will probably escape them this year, and so both will likely be tasked with helping their teammates try to secure the title. But mathematic possibilities are not real possibilities, and in a circuit like Macau where a small race event might result in a serious complica-



tion, it is expected that Oriola and Vernay think that they are not out of the fight yet, and they will be waiting for the right opportunity to prove it.

Comini sees a big task ahead of him, as the current championship leader Nash will be the only driver carrying “Success Ballast” during the Macau events. Nash will see 30 extra kilos added to his SEAT León as he emerged as scored the best in the previous race meeting held in Sepang, Malaysia.

Nash's SEAT will weigh 1345 kg, against the 1315 kg of the

Honda Civic and other SEAT cars, while the Volkswagen Golf cars weigh only 1285 kg.

Last year, Comini was crowned the first ever TCR champion in a thrilling final round during which plenty of action was seen both on the track and in the pits.

As on previous occasions, the Season finale will attract guest drivers. This time Portugal's Tiago Monteiro will leave his other Civic (WTCC) to be in the third WestCoast Racing Honda while British driver Josh Files will bring to Macau the Target Competition Honda with which he won

this year's TCR Germany title. TCR cars are set to hit the Guia Circuit this morning

(November 17) for a 30-minute free practice session. A second practice session will follow tomorrow, while the qualifying session will run on the morning of Saturday with a Q1 session of 25 minutes followed by a Q2 session of 15 more minutes (reserved for the 12 fastest during the Q1).

The two back-to-back races will take place on Sunday morning with the finishing order of Race 1 determining the grid for Race 2. The prize will be the 50 points that will determine the 2016 Season King.

ONE SHOT NEWS



Former winners of the Macau Motorcycle Grand Prix pose for a group photograph during a celebration event yesterday to mark the 50th edition of the race.

NOVEMBER 17 - 20

17th of November (Thursday)

06:00 Circuit Closed
06:30 - 07:00 Circuit Inspection
07:30 - 08:30 Suncity Group Macau Motorcycle Grand Prix - 50th Edition - Practice
08:50 - 09:20 Suncity Group Chinese Racing Cup - Practice
09:35 - 10:15 Suncity Group Formula 3 Macau Grand Prix - FIA F3 World Cup - Practice
10:30 - 11:10 Suncity Group Macau Road Sport Challenge - Practice
11:25 - 11:55 Suncity Group Macau Guia Race 2.0T - Practice
12:30 - 13:00 SJM Macau GT Cup - FIA GT World Cup - Practice
13:20 - 14:00 CTM Macau Touring Car Cup - Practice
14:20 - 15:00 Suncity Group Formula 3 Macau Grand Prix - FIA F3 World Cup - Qualifying
15:45 - 16:30 Suncity Group Macau Motorcycle Grand Prix - 50th Edition - Qualifying
18:00 Circuit Opened

18th of November (Friday)

06:00 Circuit Closed
06:30 - 07:00 Circuit Inspection
07:30 - 08:15 Suncity Group Macau Motorcycle Grand Prix - 50th Edition - Qualifying
08:40 - 09:10 Suncity Group Chinese Racing Cup - Qualifying
09:35 - 10:15 Suncity Group Formula 3 Macau Grand Prix - FIA F3 World Cup - Practice
10:40 - 11:10 SJM Macau GT Cup - FIA GT World Cup - Practice
11:35 - 12:05 Suncity Group Macau Road Sport Challenge - Qualifying
12:30 - 13:00 Suncity Group Macau Guia Race 2.0T - Practice
13:55 - 14:25 CTM Macau Touring Car Cup - Qualifying
14:55 - 15:25 SJM Macau GT Cup - FIA GT World Cup - Qualifying
15:55 - 16:35 Suncity Group Formula 3 Macau Grand Prix - FIA F3 World Cup - Qualifying
18:00 Circuit Opened

19th of November (Saturday)

06:00 Circuit Closed
06:30 - 07:00 Circuit Inspection
07:30 - 08:30 Suncity Group Macau Guia Race 2.0T - Qualifying
09:00 - 09:50 Suncity Group Macau Road Sport Challenge - 10 laps
10:20 - 11:10 Suncity Group Chinese Racing Cup - 10 laps
11:20 - 11:40 Suncity Group Macau Motorcycle Grand Prix - 50th Edition - Warm Up
12:10 - 13:10 SJM Macau GT Cup - FIA GT World Cup - Qualification Race 12 laps
13:50 - 14:40 Suncity Group Formula 3 Macau Grand Prix - FIA F3 World Cup - Qualification Race - 10 laps
14:40 - 15:05 Parade
15:30 - 16:30 Suncity Group Macau Motorcycle Grand Prix - 50th Edition - 12 laps
18:00 Circuit Opened

20th of November (Sunday)

06:00 Circuit Closed
06:30 - 07:00 Circuit Inspection
07:00 - 07:30 Safety and Rescue Cars - Testing laps
08:30 - 09:30 CTM Macau Touring Car Cup - 12 laps
10:00 - 12:00 Suncity Group Macau Guia Race 2.0T - 2 Races of 10 laps each with 15 minutes break between Races
12:55 - 14:15 SJM Macau GT Cup - FIA GT World Cup - 18 laps
14:15 - 14:40 Parade
15:10 - 15:25 Lion Dance
15:30 - 16:30 Suncity Group Formula 3 Macau Grand Prix - FIA F3 World Cup - 15 laps
18:00 Circuit Opened