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GT WORLD CUP

BIG NAMES SEEKING MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

PREVIEW

GT World Cup – Big names seeking major

Renato Marques

THIS year's FIA GT World Cup, one of the headline events of the Macau Grand Prix, will count as participants many of the big names that made history on the Guia Circuit and beyond.

Seven former winners, some of whom have won Macau races multiple times, will take part in this year's event.

Big names like "Mr Macau", Edoardo Mortara, a living legend of the street circuit with no fewer than 10 wins under his belt, will rub side mirrors with well-known challengers and previous winners including Maro Engel, Augusto Farfus Junior, Darryl O'Young, Laurens Vanthoor and Earl Bamber.

Despite the noticeable reduction in participating brands – from seven in 2017 to only five this year – the event looks promising, with major manufacturers such as the "four German giants" Mercedes-Benz, Audi, Porsche, and BMW, who will throw their hat in the ring. For the first time, the challenger Japanese manufacturer Nissan will participate via KCMG, which had previously also represented it in the Blancpain GT Series Asia.

KCMG is not relying on luck to put the GT-Rs in the spotlight. Its line-up includes Nissan factory driver Tsugio Matsuda, Alexandre Imperatori – who has already conquered two podiums in the Macau GT Cup – and Oliver Jarvis who will return to the streets of Macau 11 years after claiming victory in the 2007 For-

mula 3 Macau Grand Prix.

Moreover, Mercedes will be returning to Macau to fight for the title earned last year by Mortara in the AMG Racing Academy car.

This time, Mercedes' bid will be in the hands of Mortara, Engel and Raffaele Marciello in a three-car field by Mercedes-AMG Team GruppeM Racing. Marciello won the overall Blancpain GT Series title in Europe this year.

If Mercedes wants to defend its crown, they must beat the competition presented by "heavyweight" contenders. This year's participants, for example, include Audi, which is known as the most successful manufacturer in the history of the competition and will be represented by three cars in two factory-backed teams: Audi Sport Team WRT Speedstar, which won the race back in 2016 and will bring two cars to Macau, and Zun Motorsport Crew customer team, with Hong Kong driver Adderly Fong racing in the third car. Following the severe damage caused by the "famous" Moorish Hill corner crash pileup on Laurens Vanthoor's car last year, which was removed from the competition due to damage to the safety roll cage, Porsche is well-prepared for its return with a collaboration between the Manthey Racing team and Craft Bamboo Racing.

Manthey will list a pair of 911 GT3-Rs which will be in the hands of Laurens Vanthoor and Earl Bamber, Porsche's House driver and two-time Le Mans winner.

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Featuring a total of four cars, Porsche's field will be completed by Craft Bamboo's entries with Hong Kong's Darryl O'Young and Frenchman Mathieu Jaminet, one of

the most successful Porsche "youngsters".

Despite sending only one car, expectations are high for BMW's 2018 run after an ac-

claimed debut last year. For the second run, the German manufacturer chose the trusted Schnitzer team, a multiple winner of the Macau Guia Race, to bring

PREVIEW

WTCR to continue the 'legacy' of Guia Race

Renato Marques

DEBUTING in the first running season of the FIA World Touring Car Cup (WTCR). The series comes to plug the gap left by the extinction of the former WTCC (World Touring Car Championship), merging and adopting the TCR Series regulations that features 2.0 liter turbo-charged engine touring cars.

Macau was immediately granted the status of Season Finale, where the final rounds that will award the season titles for drivers and teams will be carried out.

The racing competition is set to follow in the footsteps of the world-



Gabriele Tarquini

famous "Guia Race" first held in 1972 and with a history spanning almost half a century.

As the main worldwide competition for touring cars, the WTCR has all the ingredients to become one of the best racing events of the programme

and one of the major highlights of this year.

The championship teams and drivers competing in the race have been racing in the four corners of the world, from Morocco to Japan, passing through Western, Central and East-

ern Europe and with two racing events held in mainland China.

Macau will be given all the final decisions: firstly the overall team winners, where the BRC Racing Team (Hyundai) leads the table with just eight points more than

MRacing-YMR (Hyundai), keeping all the possibilities open.

The third best qualified team currently is All-Ink.com Münnich Motorsport (Honda), and although its 401 points keep them well apart from the first two (510

and 502 points respectively), Münnich position is also still under fire, just 36 points behind, Sebastian Loeb Racing (Volkswagen), who is followed, 49 points behind the third, by Audi Sport Leopard Lukoil Team.



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the BMW M6 GT3. The BMW M6 GT3 will be driven by Brazilian racer Augusto Farfus Junior, who has promised not to fall short of the high expectations placed upon him.

The FIA GT World Cup will be on track starting tomorrow, with the qualifying session to take place on the following day. The race action will start with a

two-lap Qualifying Race on Saturday that will determine the final grid line-up for the Macau GT Cup - FIA GT World Cup, which is currently expected to be

run over 18 laps at lunch hour on Sunday.

In line with this year's regulations, the manufacturer's title will be attributed directly to the

manufacturer of the car driven by the winning driver, as the five competing manufacturers will be represented by varying numbers of cars and drivers.



If things are unpredictable for teams, it's even more complex for drivers.

Currently, the super experienced Italian driver Gabriele Tarquini leads the championship,

driving a Hyundai from BRC Racing Team with 291 points.

Keeping Tarquini not more than an arm's length from victory is another of the veterans of this championship, the

French Yvan Muller, who, like Tarquini, has clocked many kilometers around the Guia Circuit over his many career years.

As in the case of the Italian, Muller is also ra-

cing a Hyundai, but from MRacing-YMR team, which places him behind with a margin of 39 points.

In third place, we have the Swedish racing driver Thed Bjork, teammate of Muller at MRacing-YMR team. He stands just 14 points away from Muller, making the Frenchman keep one eye up front to attack Tarquini's position and another on the side mirrors, to defend himself against the Swedish.

If this was not enough to make this race super interesting, we must recall a few other names that will also be on the grid for this triple-race event, drivers like Pepe Oriola, Jean-Karl Vernay, Esteban Guerrieri, Norbert Michelisz and, of course, the most successful driver in touring cars around Guia, the Briton Rob Huff.

But that is not all; we must also count the experience of drivers such as Mato Homola and Tom Coronel.

On top of all these championship runners and for the Macau event, we need to add a group of local wildcards led by André Couto and that features other important names of local motorsports such as Lam Kam San, Filipe Souza, Billy Lo, Rui Valente and Kevin Tse.

If, theoretically, all the locals, with maybe the exception of Couto, start with a bigger handicap due to less experience and preparation on their cars, the fact is, there are many experienced drivers in the WTCR pack but there are also a lot of drivers who will try Macau for the first time.

Macau is well known to be merciless with any mistakes, meaning that frontrunners, while com-

peting to the highest level, will face the threat small slips that result in big problems, as the Arco barriers are just centimeters away.

The WTCR racing action starts tomorrow with a 30 minute Free Practice to kick-off around 9 a.m., followed by a second practice on the same day at 1:30 p.m.

On Friday, the programme repeats around the same time, but for the Qualifying general session in the morning and the split qualifying into Q1, Q2 and Q3 in the afternoon.

On Saturday the first race (eight laps) is scheduled to start around 2:30 p.m. and the WTCR programme will finish off the big day of the GP with Race 2 (eight laps) to be held around 8:30 a.m., with the longer and final race (Race 3) to be held at 11 a.m.

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PREVIEW

Greater Bay Area Lotus Cup to make GP debut

RUNNING for the first time, and in lieu of the previously held Chinese Racing Cup, the Greater Bay Area Lotus Cup has made its way into the Macau Grand Prix (GP) programme, returning to the former one-brand series style.

This time, the race will involve a total of 21 Lotus Exige cars raced by drivers from Macau, Hong Kong and Mainland China.

For the first instance of this race, the field will be composed of a large majority of Hong Kong drivers (12) followed by Macau, with six drivers, and only three representatives from the mainland.

When launched in a joint partnership between the Automobile General Association Macao-China (AMMC), Hong Kong Automobile Association (HKAA) and Zhuhai Motorsports Association in July this year, organizers said that the race had the purpose of promoting the creation of Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area Development Plan.

The organizers at the time also announced that the competition would be held as two racing events; the first, in Zhuhai during the Pan Delta Super Racing Festival, held last September,

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and the second, in Macau during the Macau Grand Prix. It was also said that in future they intend to promote this category as a permanent event of the Macau Grand Prix, with more events to be added to the

racing season and events to be held on the mainland.

This race completes the programme of the GP and as a one-brand series, in which the cars are subjected to a limited level of preparation, putting the fo-

cus almost exclusively on the skills and talent of the drivers.

Notably, some experienced drivers will participate this year – including Hong Kong's Alexander Au and Yu Kam Cheong, among others. Macau will also

be represented by very experienced competitors included in the group of the favorites, such as Mak Ka Lok who already raced in Macau in several series, including WTCC and Eurico de Jesus just to name a few.

AD

NOVEMBER 15 - 18

15 November (Thursday)

06:30 ~ 07:00	Circuit Inspection
07:30 ~ 08:30	Suncity Group Macau Motorcycle Grand Prix - 52nd Edition - Free Practice
09:05 ~ 09:35	Suncity Group Macau Guia Race - FIA WTCR - Free Practice 1
09:55 ~ 10:35	Suncity Group Formula 3 Macau Grand Prix - FIA F3 World Cup - Free Practice 1
10:50 ~ 11:20	Suncity Group Greater Bay Area Lotus Cup - Free Practice
11:35 ~ 12:05	FOOD4U Macau Touring Car Cup - Free Practice
12:25 ~ 12:55	SJM Macau GT Cup - FIA GT World Cup - Free Practice 1
13:30 ~ 14:00	Suncity Group Macau Guia Race - FIA WTCR - Free Practice 2
14:20 ~ 15:00	Suncity Group Formula 3 Macau Grand Prix - FIA F3 World Cup - Qualifying 1
16:00 ~ 16:45	Suncity Group Macau Motorcycle Grand Prix - 52nd Edition - Qualifying

16 November (Friday)

06:30 ~ 07:00	Circuit Inspection
07:30 ~ 08:15	Suncity Group Macau Motorcycle Grand Prix - 52nd Edition - Qualifying
08:50 ~ 09:30	Suncity Group Macau Guia Race - FIA WTCR - Qualifying
09:50 ~ 10:20	Suncity Group Greater Bay Area Lotus Cup - Qualifying
10:40 ~ 11:10	FOOD4U Macau Touring Car Cup - Qualifying
11:30 ~ 12:10	Suncity Group Formula 3 Macau Grand Prix - FIA F3 World Cup - Free Practice 2
12:30 ~ 13:00	SJM Macau GT Cup - FIA GT World Cup - Free Practice 2
13:35 ~ 14:50	Suncity Group Macau Guia Race - FIA WTCR - Q1, Q2, Q3
15:10 ~ 15:50	Suncity Group Formula 3 Macau Grand Prix - FIA F3 World Cup - Qualifying 2
16:10 ~ 16:40	SJM Macau GT Cup - FIA GT World Cup - Qualifying

17 November (Saturday)

06:30 ~ 07:00	Circuit Inspection
07:10 ~ 07:50	Safety, Rescue and Extrication Cars - Testing laps
08:00 ~ 08:40	Special Event
09:00 ~ 10:00	Suncity Group Formula 3 Macau Grand Prix - FIA F3 World Cup - Qualification Race - 10 laps
10:25 ~ 11:25	FOOD4U Macau Touring Car Cup - 12 laps
11:50 ~ 12:10	Suncity Group Macau Motorcycle Grand Prix - 52nd Edition - Warm Up
13:05 ~ 14:05	SJM Macau GT Cup - FIA GT World Cup - Qualification Race - 12 laps
14:25 ~ 15:15	Suncity Group Macau Guia Race - FIA WTCR Race 1 - 8 laps
15:55 ~ 16:55	Suncity Group Macau Motorcycle Grand Prix - 52nd Edition - 12 laps

18 November (Sunday)

06:30 ~ 07:00	Circuit Inspection
07:10 ~ 07:50	Safety Rescue and Extrication Cars - Testing laps
08:20 ~ 09:10	Suncity Group Macau Guia Race - FIA WTCR Race 2 - 8 laps
09:35 ~ 10:35	Suncity Group Greater Bay Area Lotus Cup - 12 laps
11:00 ~ 12:00	Suncity Group Macau Guia Race - FIA WTCR Race 3 - 11 laps
12:25 ~ 13:40	SJM Macau GT Cup - FIA GT World Cup - 18 laps
14:00 ~ 14:35	Special Event
15:10 ~ 15:20	Lion Dance
15:30 ~ 16:30	Suncity Group Formula 3 Macau Grand Prix - FIA F3 World Cup - 15 laps