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GRAND PRIX MACAU

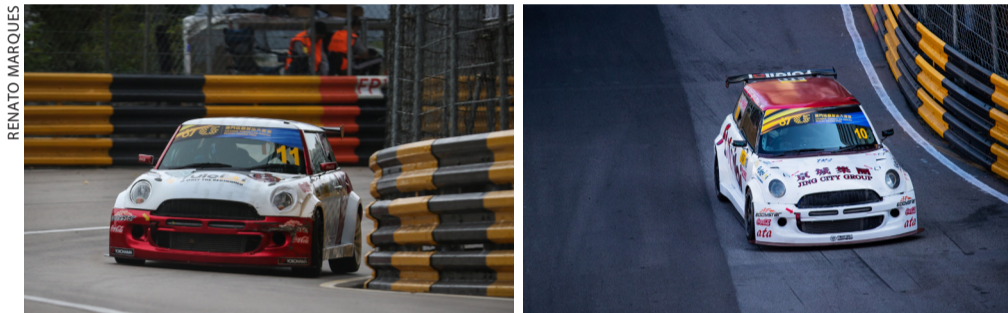
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SUPPLEMENT

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F4 LEONG FAVORITE TO WIN



MTCC: LOCAL RACE GAINS 'NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE'

RENATO MARQUES

HISTORICALLY the most local of all the Macau Grand Prix races, the Macau Touring Car Cup (MTCC) this year gains a more national perspective with the participation of a large number of drivers from the mainland.

In the old days, the race was popular, and notorious, for being an annual moment of rivalry between Macau and Hong Kong racers.

This year, the sides have changed. With Hong Kong drivers choosing to participate in other races, the MTCC will be a two-sided-play between Macau and the mainland, with a total of eight mainland racers joining a 30-car grid.

This year, the MTCC will return to being of a single category race, as it was until 2017 when the Macau Touring Car Cup and Macau Road Sport Challenge were merged into a single event.

The return to a split race between the two categories is likely to increase competitiveness. In the past three

years, the race has included a combination of cars with different specifications, ranging between 1.6 and 2.0-liter turbocharged and higher displacement engines.

The introduction of mainland drivers coming from several regional touring car competitions also means the Guia circuit will welcome some never-before-seen car models.

Among these is the GTMC Yaris, a sedan car model derived from the popular Toyota model often found at racing events in Southeast Asia — especially in Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines.

This year, two of these models will be raced with Lei Jun Bin and Li Jing Feng at the wheel.

Even more unfamiliar for the public will be the EADO Plus, a popular family car in the mainland, produced by the Chinese manufacturer Changan Auto.

Favored in several provinces of the mainland, the EADO Plus has attempted to raise its international profile through touring car

races, such as the China Touring Car Championship and races in Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

The last set of cars making their debut on the streets of Macau will be from Dongfeng Honda, who are bringing three Civics and one Fit.

All of these cars will be equipped with 1.6-liter turbocharged engines.

Last year, the category was won by the Jerónimo Badaraco in a Chevrolet Cruze, followed by Cheong Chi On in a Ford Fiesta ST and Rui Valente in a Mini Cooper S.

With the former two racers opting for different categories this year — Badaraco in the Macau Challenge Cup and Cheong in the Macau GT Cup — the door is open for local veterans to shine, including Valente, Célío Alves Dias and Lam Weng Kuai — all in Mini Cooper S's.

With experience picked up from his previous participation, we also expect to see Sabino Osorio, in a Ford Fiesta ST, playing an important role in this race.

RENATO MARQUES

THE introduction of this year's Macau Challenge Cup, to include a special event from the Porsche Carrera Cup Asia, was initially one of the significant motifs of interest for watching this year's Grand Prix (GP).

Unfortunately, the event suffered the last-minute setback of insufficient entries, as the Times reported.

With just two weeks until the GP, the Macau Grand Prix Organizing Committee (MGPOC) has had no alternative but to split the two categories in the Macau Touring Car Cup, moving the racers competing with 1950cc and above engine cars to the Challenge Cup to fill the grid.

The group once

CHALLENGE CUP: From headliner to plunging ev

known as the Road Sport Challenge is taking over the event that has just 17 cars and drivers listed to participate, in a grid almost exclusively comprised of local racers.

The exceptions are the three entries from mainland drivers Hu Heng, Hu Zuo Liang, and Chen Da Xing, who will certainly have a difficult time racing with some of the most experienced racers of the Guia circuit, such as Jerónimo Badaraco, Ng Kin Veng, Eurico de Jesus, Luciano Lameiras and Martin Sou.

Alongside these stalwarts, we must not forget Wong Wan Long and Summer Chan, driving the two Mitsubishi Lancer Evo-

lutions 10 and 9, that were respectively first and second last year.

As in previous editions, to win this race you need a combination of two things. One, a good qualifying time, so you can start at the front of the grid and avoid the middle of the pack where most trouble is likely to happen; and two, a reliable car. We have seen on many occasions that these highly tuned road vehicles often suffer from reliability issues and mechanical problems, which have caused likely winners to lose the race and their comfortable time leading gaps.

With 12 out of 17 cars being Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution mo-

dels from either the 9 or 10 generations, this race will be as close to a single-maker race as you can get, which may add some interest to a racing class that has seen better days. The Evolution 9 is a car that dates back from 2005, and the tenth, and last, generation of this car was launched in 2007 and has been out of production since early 2017.

Although competitive, fun to drive and to watch racing, the time that has passed since the production models were discontinued also contributes to the general sag in interest in this racing category, indicating the urgent need for a revamp.



RENATO MARQUES

F4: Charles Leong favorite to win

THIS is the second year that the Chinese Formula 4 (F4) will take to the streets of Macau with the heavy responsibility of replacing the race dubbed the “queen” of the Macau races – the F3.

As we all know, the F4 is not a choice but a last resort solution in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, and Macau’s border restrictions that prevent the F3 paddock from traveling here. Under the present circumstances, the paddock sadly cannot follow in the footsteps of the most celebrated names in world motorsport, as they have since 1983.

This time, a grid comprising an eclectic group of 17 drivers will take their best shot at the challenging Guia circuit, striving not to disappoint the many spectators expected in the stands.

As in last year’s edition, local driver Charles Leong is the favorite to win the race. The local racer not only has demonstrated better skills than the rest of the grid, but is also in better form despite not racing for almost a year.

Last year, as predicted, Leong showed total dominance as the fastest driver on the track throughout the weekend, winning the race with a comfortable lead over the closest opponent.

As in 2020, Andy Chang, another local racer, is expected to be seen in Leong’s rearview mirrors. Chang finished second last year and was the only racer to challenge Leong’s lead in the weekend’s races.

During the first races of the Chinese F4 Championship, held at the

Zhuhai International Circuit late last month, Leong confirmed his favored position by winning all four races.

Leong did not face much difficulty in besting the opposition, taking his Mygale-Geely F4 to the checkered flag and the highest step of the podium.

Considering the performance of the other racers in this category, including Chang, a good racing performance is also expected from mainland driver Li Si Cheng, who is returning to Macau after securing third-place last year.

In the first round of races held in Zhuhai, Li also performed well, taking one second and one fourth place in two of the races.

It will also be interesting to see what two Macau’s most veteran racers will be able to do in an F4 car as racing veterans Lei Kit Meng and Mak Ka Lok have surprisingly joined this formula race after many years away from the open-wheels.

The last time that 53-year-old Lei raced in the Macau formula race was 2007, in the now defunct FIA Formula 3 Intercontinental Cup during the 54th edition of the Macau Grand Prix.

56-year-old Mak has no recorded performance in formula cars, having spent his long race-driving career in the Touring Car categories only.

Last year both Lei and Mak raced in the Greater Bay Area GT Cup, with Lei taking third place and Mak finishing seventh.



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RENATO MARQUES

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HELD every year as part of the official opening ceremony of the Macau Grand Prix, the Car Show in Tap Seac Square has yet again attracted many local car fans over the past weekend.

Encircled by many Covid-19 pandemic prevention and control measures, the event could not enjoy the crowds of previous years. Nonetheless, there were still many attendees waiting patiently for their turn to enter the venue and photograph some of the cars that will be racing from Friday on the streets of Macau.

Another staple of the event are the racing simulators, which allow fans of different ages to experience racing on the Guia circuit virtually.

Alongside the racing machinery, the two-day Car Show also included a display of some of both the official and rescue vehicles, and a GP merchandising pop-up store.

Off-track events will continue from Monday, including the so-called GP outreach program that will take a touring photography exhibition to several local schools during this month, so as to increase the students' knowledge about the history and the details of the Macau Grand Prix.

As part of this program, as in previous years, the Macau Grand Prix Organizing Committee (MGPOC) is cooperating with the Education and Youth Development Bureau to invite students from several institutions to visit the Grand Prix event on Friday



OFF-TRACK

CAR SHOW ATTRACTS ATTENTION OF LOCAL FANS

(November 19) to experience the atmosphere of live motorsport.

During the inauguration ceremony held last Saturday, the president of the Sports Bureau and Coordinator of the MGPOC Pun Weng Kun called on the po-

pulation of Macau to support the event. He stated that it is one of the local brands "promoting Macau abroad [with the idea of] Macau as a safe tourism city, and [an event] that can boost the number of visitors."

"We hope that, through the hosting of more sports events, Macau can be a lively city," Pun added.

In the previous weekend, the same venue has hosted a series of activities catering to the you-

nger generations and their families, with a mini-Guia circuit assembled in the Square where children could experience racing in self-propelled karts, as well as other games related to the Grand Prix.

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19th of November (Friday)

- 6:00 Circuit Closed
- 6:30 ~ 7:00 Circuit Inspection
- 8:00 ~ 8:25 Wynn Macau Challenge Cup - Free Practice Edition - Qualifying
- 8:40 ~ 9:05 Melco Macau Touring Car Cup - Free Practice
- 9:20 ~ 09:45 MGM Greater Bay Area GT Cup - Free Practice
- 10:00 ~ 10:25 SJM Formula 4 Macau Grand Prix - Free Practice
- 10:40 ~ 11:05 Galaxy Entertainment Macau Guia Race - Free Practice
- 11:20 ~ 11:45 Sands China Macau GT Cup - Free Practice
- 12:10 ~ 12:35 Wynn Macau Challenge Cup - Qualifying
- 12:55 ~ 13:20 Melco Macau Touring Car Cup - Qualifying
- 13:40 ~ 14:05 MGM Greater Bay Area GT Cup - Qualifying
- 14:25 ~ 14:55 SJM Formula 4 Macau Grand Prix - Qualifying
- 15:10 ~ 15:35 Galaxy Entertainment Macau Guia Race - Qualifying
- 15:55 ~ 16:20 Sands China Macau GT Cup - Qualifying
- 18:00 ~ ** Circuit Opened

20th of November (Saturday)

- 6:00 Circuit Closed
- 6:30 ~ 7:00 Circuit Inspection
- 7:45 ~ 8:00 Wynn Macau Challenge Cup - Warm Up
- 8:15 ~ 8:30 Melco Macau Touring Car Cup - Warm Up
- 8:45 ~ 9:00 MGM Greater Bay Area GT Cup - Warm Up
- 9:25 ~ 9:55 Wynn Macau Challenge Cup - Race 1 - 8 laps
- 10:20 ~ 10:50 Melco Macau Touring Car Cup - Race 1 - 8 laps
- 11:15 ~ 11:45 MGM Greater Bay Area GT Cup - Race 1 - 8 laps
- 12:20 ~ 12:35 SJM Formula 4 Macau Grand Prix - Warm Up
- 12:50 ~ 13:05 Galaxy Entertainment Macau Guia Race - Warm Up
- 13:20 ~ 13:35 Sands China Macau GT Cup - Warm Up
- 14:00 ~ 14:30 SJM Formula 4 Macau Grand Prix - Race 1 - 8 laps
- 14:55 ~ 15:25 Galaxy Entertainment Macau Guia Race - Race 1 - 8 laps
- 15:50 ~ 16:20 Sands China Macau GT Cup - Race 1 - 8 laps
- 18:00 ** Circuit Opened

21st of November (Sunday)

- 6:00 Circuit Closed
- 6:30 ~ 7:00 Circuit Inspection
- 8:30 ~ 9:10 Wynn Macau Challenge Cup - Race 2 - 12 laps
- 9:35 ~ 10:15 Melco Macau Touring Car Cup - Race 2 - 12 laps
- 10:40 ~ 11:20 MGM Greater Bay Area GT Cup - Race 2 - 12 laps
- 12:05 ~ 12:45 Galaxy Entertainment Macau Guia Race - Race 2 - 12 laps
- 13:10 ~ 13:50 Sands China Macau GT Cup - Race 2 - 12 laps
- 14:00 ~ 14:35 Special Event
- 15:10 ~ 15:20 Lion Dance
- 15:30 ~ 16:10 SJM Formula 4 Macau Grand Prix - Race 2 - 12 laps
- 18:00 ** Circuit Opened