

ROUNDS 3 & 4 – MARRAKECH, MOROCCO QUALIFYING REPORT

Weather: sunny and hot, with a dry track

REIGNING WORLD CHAMPION CLAIMS POLE POSITION

Gabriele Tarquini claimed his eleventh WTCC pole position – the first of the season for him – taking the top spot for SR-Sport on the streets of Marrakech with a 1:45.830 that improved the existing lap record by nearly four seconds. The Italian dominated proceedings in Morocco today, topping both practice sessions and taking pole by over half a second from the rest of the field.

Following a qualifying session filled with action and red flags, Chevrolet's Rob Huff (1:46.364) will start alongside him on the front row with SR-Sport team mate Jordi Gené (1:46.375) in third.

Franz Engstler (1:48.027) was the quickest Independent in ninth while Michel Nykjær (1:46.375) was the top rookie in sixth after the final red flag of the day. Rookie Challenge racer, Michélsz was quickest in Q1 but crashed out and was unable to start Q2.

Q1 - In an extended 30-minute Q1, given when racing on street circuits, the cars took to the track with Chevrolet's Huff quickly getting on the pace.

Gené was quick to respond in his SEAT León TDI before Yvan Muller posted his quickest time of the session to move ahead.

Muller led as the red flag came out when his Chevrolet team mate Alain Menu crashed into the wall exiting Turn 14. Menu was on a quick lap, having just set the fastest sector 2 time so far, when he spun across the circuit hitting the barrier. Michélsz narrowly avoided hitting the Chevrolet Cruze while also on a quick lap on new tyres.

When the session restarted, Tarquini jumped into P1 before posting a quicker time of 1:46.748 to remain at the top of the timesheets. As the clock ticked down he was demoted by Michélsz, who recorded a 1:46.437 on new tyres. After posting the quickest time of the session however, the Hungarian youngster then crashed into the wall at Turn 3 bringing out the red flag again and ending the session early.

The BMW Team RBM cars of Augusto Farfus and Andy Priaulx were both caught out by the action as they dropped out of the top ten just before the session was red flagged. While Tom Coronel's final run allowed him to move up to eighth and advance into Q2.

After crashing out early, Menu will start 13th for Race 1 tomorrow while Mehdi Bennani will start 16th on the grid. The Moroccan crowds were also in good voice, cheering loudly from the stands for both Bennani and fellow Moroccan racer Ismail Sbaï.

Q2- After less than 5-minutes the session was halted by another red flag, this time due to oil on the track at Turn 2 left by Franz Engstler's BMW after hitting the wall.

When the green flag came out Tarquini was quick to get on the pace, moving up to P1 with a time of 1:46.830. Gené also put in a good lap to jump from fourth to second. As the cars slipstreamed through the streets, Huff put a great lap together to move from sixth to second with only a few minutes remaining.



The session was then stopped once more as Michel Nykjær crashed his SEAT León TDI into the wall through the chicane at Turn 10. The session did not restart meaning Tarquini had another comfortable lead, this time 0.534s, ahead of Huff and Gené.

Tiago Monteiro finished fourth with a best time of 1:46.696 ahead of Muller. Coronel (1:47.044) will line up seventh in his SEAT León TDI.

It was an impressive showing from the rookies with three, Michelisz, Fredy Barth and Nykjær making it into the top ten for tomorrow's Race of Morocco. Despite crashing out, Nykjær (1:46.751) will start sixth while Barth's time of 1:48.027 was good enough for eighth. With the Zengö-Dension Team unable to repair the earlier damage, Michelisz will start from P10 despite being fastest in Q1.

Franz Engstler (1:48.994) was the best of the Independents and will start ninth. After clipping the wall early in Q2 he pitted with damage and did not restart after the first red flag.

FLASH NEWS

GRID PENALTY FOR STEFANO D'ASTE

Proteam Motorsport applied for an engine change on Stefano D'Aste's BMW 320si car.

The Stewards of the meeting authorized the change but imposed a 10-position grid penalty to the Italian driver.

Therefore he will be demoted to last on the grid for tomorrow's Race 1, losing his 14th qualifying position.

MOROCCO TEAM LOSE TWO CARS OUT OF THREE

The Maurer Motorsport team withdrew the Chevrolet Lacetti cars of Moroccan drivers Youssaf El Marnissi and Larbi Tadlaoui. While the former took part in yesterday's testing and crashed, obtaining damage that was not possible to fix, the latter did not drive at all due to personal problems.

Morocco Team's surviving car of Ismaïl Sbaï qualified in 20th position.

MICHEL NYKJÆR RECOVERS AFTER SURGERY

Sunred Engineering's Michel Nykjær is managing to drive his SEAT León racing car in spite of the consequences of a recent surgical operation.

The Danish driver broke the Achilles tendon of his left foot while playing badminton. After undergoing surgery he is currently forced to walk on crutches and to wear a leg cast.

FÉLIX PORTEIRO OFFERS F1 RIDES

Félix Porteiro who was a WTCC regular in the three previous seasons re-appeared in the paddock at Marrakech as the driver of the three-seater Formula One car used to offer rides around the track to guests and fans.

"It is good fun, but this is also important to me because it gives me the opportunity to meet the teams and try to find a deal to rejoin the championship as soon as possible," the Spanish driver said.

THEY SAID, THEY SAID...

Gabriele TARQUINI, pole position: *"I don't know why we are so far ahead. I am very happy with the car, it's easy to drive and I surprised myself as I can push a lot. I saw I had a gap so was able to save my tyres as the lap time was there. The configuration here is much better for us than last year. If the conditions don't change, I feel very optimistic for tomorrow."*

Rob HUFF – 3rd fastest: *“It’s a step back from last year but the car is quite hard to drive here so I’m pleased to still be on the front row. Last year Chevrolet had the advantage over the SEATs but we were 60kg lighter back then. With Menu crashing out early we also had to quickly restructure our session as it’s much harder with just two cars. Fortunately we managed to come out behind the SEATs and get in their slipstream. There is a fairly big gap to Tarquini but from second back it’s pretty close.”*

Jordi GENÉ – 2nd fastest: *“I’m very happy with the result. I made a few little mistakes with slipstreams and set up but it’s been a good start. I hope to have two good races tomorrow to maximise the circuits where we have an advantage over Chevrolet. This is not a place to take risks though. I don’t want to make any mistakes like in Brazil as there are a lot of chances to hit the wall here and I don’t want that.”*

Franz ENGSTLER – fastest Independent: *“I set a good lap in Q1 as the car was great all alone on track without a slipstream. Unfortunately I made a mistake at the start of Q2 getting on the throttle too early and ending in the wall. I then had to stay in the pits. I am very happy to be the fastest BMW though and the team have done a great job.”*

Michel NYKJÆR – fastest rookie: *“I just touched the kerb and just went into the wall. It is another new track for me but I’m very happy to be in sixth. The team are working hard to fix the car for tomorrow and I’m hoping I can be in the top eight in Race 1 and then see what I can do from the reverse grid in Race 2.”*

Norbert MICHELISZ – fastest in Q1: *“I didn’t know I was P1 as my engineer had agreed to tell me after sector 1 so I was still pushing hard. As I went through the chicane the car felt ok and then suddenly went sideways. It caught me off guard and I went into the wall. The main problem was I hit the wall head on so the front absorbed all the impact. It wasn’t very high speed but it was enough to kill the car for the rest of the session.”*

**2010 FIA World Touring Car Championship
COMBINED QUALIFYING RESULT**

POS	NO	CLS	DRIVER	NAT	CAR	Q1	Q2
1	1		Gabriele TARQUINI	ITA	SEAT Leon TDI	1:46.626	1:45.830
2	7		Robert HUFF	GBR	Chevrolet Cruze	1:46.662	1:46.364
3	4		Jordi GENE	ESP	SEAT Leon TDI	1:46.675	1:46.375
4	3		Tiago MONTEIRO	POR	SEAT Leon TDI	1:47.601	1:46.696
5	6		Yvan MULLER	FRA	Chevrolet Cruze	1:46.891	1:46.705
6	17		Michel NYKJAER	DEN	SEAT Leon TDI	1:46.942	1:46.751
7	2		Tom CORONEL	NED	SEAT Leon TDI	1:47.139	1:47.044
8	18		Fredy BARTH	SUI	SEAT Leon TDI	1:46.899	1:48.027
9	15	I	Franz ENGSTLER	GER	BMW 320si	1:47.541	1:48.994
10	5		Norbert MICHELISZ	HUN	SEAT Leon TDI	1:46.437	N / S
11	10		Augusto FARFUS	BRA	BMW 320si	1:47.616	
12	11		Andy PRIAULX	GBR	BMW 320si	1:47.752	
13	8		Alain MENU	SUI	Chevrolet Cruze	1:47.761	
14	26	I	Stefano D'ASTE	ITA	BMW 320si	1:48.252	
15	25	I	Sergio HERNANDEZ	ESP	BMW 320si	1:48.556	
16	21	I	Mehdi BENNANI	MAR	BMW 320si	1:48.854	
17	19	I	Harry VAULKHARD	GBR	Chevrolet Lacetti	1:49.028	
18	20	I	Darryl O'YOUNG	HKG	Chevrolet Lacetti	1:49.313	
19	16	I	Andrei ROMANOV	RUS	BMW 320si	1:51.014	
20	30	I	Ismail SBAI	MAR	Chevrolet Lacetti	1:53.195	

Marrakech

Circuit Length = 4.5450 km.

Start: 14:15 End: 15:36

Steward:	Steward:	Steward:	Issued at:
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