

#### THE NIGHT OF WTCC AWARDS

The 2009 FIA World Touring Car champions were honoured last Sunday in Macau, during the traditional party at Fisherman's Wharf. One after the other all the major players of the season were called on to the stage to collect their awards.

The prize giving ceremony began with the Advan Yokohama trophies. For the second time after 2006 Tom Coronel collected the Independents' Trophy for driver, while SUNRED Engineering's principal Joán Orus received the Teams' Trophy.

The ceremony continued with the Manufacturers' Championship: Ray Mallock for Chevrolet, Mario Theissen for BMW and Jaime Puig for SEAT were awarded with the third, second and first prize respectively.

The evening culminated with the Drivers' Championship awards that went to Augusto Farfus (third), Yvan Muller (second) and to the new champion Gabriele Tarquini.



Jaime Puig and his wonder boys with Eurosport Events' vice president Jacques Raynaud

#### REVIEW OF THE 2009 FIA WTCC SEASON

##### TARQUINI: EXPERIENCE AND CONSISTENCY

Recovering from two major crashes on Thursday and Friday, Gabriele Tarquini claimed the 2009 FIA WTCC crown at Macau and in the process set a couple of new records becoming the oldest FIA World Champion ever and scoring the highest number of points for a WTCC season.

*"Experience is a crucial factor to survive touring car tough racing. So the age is not so important. And I still feel young enough to be competitive,"* the new champion said.

Consistency was also a factor. Tarquini claimed only three victories against Augusto Farfus' six and Yvan Muller's four, but scored points in 22 races out of 24.

*"WTCC is such a competitive championship that you have to focus on scoring points. In the past I paid scoreless races dearly. So I changed my approach, focusing on qualifying (he took five pole positions this year) and then looking to convert the pole in a win or a podium position in Race 1. Finally I tried to score points in the second race. It worked, but to beat Yvan and Augusto I had to collect 127 points, which is a record... 13 more than Yvan's last year's score!"*

### FARFUS AND MULLER TOOK THE MOST WINS

Yvan Muller and Augusto Farfus completed the championship podium in second and third position respectively, but they claimed the majority of race victories.

The 2008 champion lost the title to his team-mate Tarquini by only four points before moving to Chevrolet for next year. Muller claimed four race wins and collected ten points more than in his winning season, however the incidents in which he was involved at Brands Hatch and Oschersleben cost him valuable points.

Farfus established a new WTCC record with six victories in one season (Priaulx and Menu claimed five in 2006 and 2007 respectively). Although he proved to have fully grown up as a top driver, the Brazilian youngster lacked consistency and scored nil or one point in nine races, mainly because of early accidents. In spite of this he fell out of contention only after the first race in Macau and finished third with a gap of 14 points.

### SEAT BEAT BMW BY 3 POINTS OUT OF 314

SEAT did it again. Like last year the Spanish Manufacturer won both the WTCC titles with its León TDI cars. Gabriele Tarquini dethroned his team mate Yvan Muller and SEAT beat BMW in the Manufacturers' Championship fight.

However, if in 2008 SEAT secured both championships at the penultimate event, this year had to wait until the second race in Macau. And the 3-point winning margin (out of the 314 scored) says clearly how close the battle in the Manufacturers' Championship was.

BMW won ten of the 24 races, while SEAT won eight, but Jaime Puig's wonder quintet (Tarquini, Muller, Gené, Rydell and Monteiro) was extremely consistent at scoring points.

*"Winning two championships for the second year was the reward for a fantastic year and I want to thank the whole team for their efforts and their solidarity. The races in Macau have shown that we are a team in which everybody works for everybody,"* Puig said.

BMW Motorsport Director Mario Theissen echoed: *"Congratulations to SEAT and Tarquini on winning both championships. As expected the finale was dramatic, and this was somewhat symbolic of how the season had been for us. The first part of the year was especially difficult for us before we were able to close the gap."*

### CHEVROLET READY TO FIGHT FOR 2010 CROWN

Seven victories and three pole positions were the respectable booty won by the Chevrolet Cruze on its maiden racing season that ended on a high note with Robert Huff's win in Macau's Race 1.

Chevrolet Europe's Motorsport Director Eric Nève commented: *"We are very happy with what the Cruze has shown. Moreover it has proven to be the best car on street circuits and grew steadily on all kind of tracks. 2010 is starting now. We are delighted to have Yvan Muller joining our team and preparing a busy work plan for the winter. We really want to be fighting for the title next year!"*

### LADA PROGRESSED CONSTANTLY OVER THE YEAR

The maiden season of LADA as a registered manufacturer ended in the worst possible way at Macau, with Kirill Ladygin's and James Thompson's cars demolished in two massive crashes on Thursday and Friday. However the Russian team showed consistent progress during the year, especially after the new Priora car hit the track and Thompson joined them.

Team principal Viktor Shapovalov stated: *"This season was full of ups and downs. But our goal at the beginning of the year was to improve and start scoring points by the end of the year. We are completely on schedule as James took two fantastic sixth places at Imola and Jaap was very close to fifth in Oschersleben. Also in Okayama we were heading for fifth and eighth. We know that we still have a long way to go, but we will keep on working hard and I am sure that next year will be very interesting for us."*

### SECOND INDEPENDENTS' TITLE FOR CORONEL

Tom Coronel clinched the Independents' Trophy for the second time. The Dutchman and his SUNRED petrol-powered SEAT León achieved five race victories, two short of Félix Porteiro's BMW, but scored points in 23 races out of 24.

Even more important were the points he collected thanks to the trophy's new regulations that award three points for each point scored in the Drivers' Championship. Coronel collected 45 points in this way, against Porteiro's 30. And this made the difference as the final gap between them was 13 points.

Franz Engstler (2 victories) classified third from Stefano D'Aste (5 victories) who missed the last two races in Macau after his car was damaged during the qualifying. Tom Boardman (winner at Brands Hatch) and Kristian Poulsen completed the top-six.

A few other drivers proved to be competitive, although taking part in selected races. Morocco's youngster Mehdi Bennani won his maiden race on his home race track at Marrakech, and so did experienced Frenchman Eric Cayrolle at Pau.

A total of 30 drivers scored points, establishing a new record for the Independents' Trophy.

### SUNRED ENGINEERING WON TEAMS' TROPHY

Spain-based SUNRED Engineering clearly emerged as the winner of the Teams' Trophy. The outfit directed by Joán Orus benefitted mainly from Tom Coronel's results, but their second driver Tom Boardman also gave a crucial contribution collecting one race victory at Brands Hatch and several podium results.

More points came from the one-off guest drivers who alternated at the wheel of the third SEAT León, like Eric Cayrolle who surprisingly won in Pau or the different winners of the SEAT Eurocup rounds.

2008 champions Proteam Motorsport finished as runners up despite fielding for most of the season only one competitive car for Félix Porteiro, while Liqui Moly Team Engstler completed the podium.

**COUNTDOWN: - 100 DAYS**



to the 2010 FIA Race of Brazil – 6<sup>th</sup> / 7<sup>th</sup> March in Curitiba