

15 – 30 APRIL 2010

HUNGARIAN ROOKIE LEADS THE WAY IN TEST

Hungarian Rookie Norbert Michelisz led the way with a fastest lap of 1:49.347, as the WTCC Race of Morocco officially got underway today on the streets of Marrakech.

Tom Coronel and his SEAT León TDI (1:49.446) led for the majority of the session but was demoted to second after the restart. Rob Huff (1:49.505) in his Chevrolet Cruze rounded out the top three.

BMW Team RBM's Augusto Farfus (1:49.525) finished fourth ahead of Jordi Gené (1:49.734), Yvan Muller (1:49.885) and reigning champion Gabriele Tarquini (1:49.949). The top six were covered by only 0.6 seconds.

Chevrolet's Alain Menu (1:50.421) ended eighth ahead of Andy Priaulx (1:50.620) in his BMW 320si. Rookie Challenge racer Fredy Barth (1:50.770) rounded out the top ten in his SEAT León TDI. Franz Engstler posted a time of 1:50.880 around the new 4.624-kilometre circuit, ending the session quickest of the Independents in 11th overall.

Morocco's season regular, Mehdi Bennani (1: 52.341) finished 16th in his BMW 320si.

The session was red flagged at half-way after Moroccan series newcomer Ismaïl Sbaï hit the wall at Turn 8 in his Chevrolet Lacetti. The Maurer Motorsport team had a difficult start with their second Moroccan racer Youssaf El Marnissi also stopping out on the track in the closing stages, while the third car of Larbi Tadlaoui did not take part in the session.

Norbert Michelisz ended the day quickest after an earlier collision with Sergio Hernández's BMW 320si at Turn 15. Hernández spun but both continued the session with the Hungarian youngster going on to record his personal best time after the restart and ending the session on top.

A number of drivers were also cautioned for cutting the chicanes as they tried to find the quickest way around the street circuit in the 32°C Moroccan heat.



Zengö Dension Team's Norbert Michelisz was the fastest in today's testing

BERNIE ECCLESTONE VISITS THE WTCC

Formula One supremo Bernie Ecclestone paid an unexpected visit to the FIA World Touring Car Championship paddock in Marrakech today.

Mr Ecclestone was shown around by WTCC promoter Marcello Lotti, the President of the Touring Car Commission Jonathan Ashman and Aly Horma of the event promoter company Marrakech Grand Prix.

"I wanted to visit Marrakech long since, and I took the opportunity to do it while it is hosting an international race meeting. I have to say that I was impressed by the track and facilities they have built, which are very nice and suit the WTCC well," he commented.



Bernie Ecclestone during today's visit at the Marrakech paddock

WTCC TO SUPPORT MOROCCAN CHARITY

On the occasion of the WTCC Race of Morocco, the FIA World Touring Car Championship will support the charity association L'Heure Joyeuse in its action against social exclusion.

Throughout the weekend, WTCC will bring its contribution to the Opération-Vélo, which aims to collect funds to offer bicycles to the most destitute children in the rural world in order to give them easier access to school to help prevent them from abandoning school.

The association L'Heure Joyeuse will be present in the WTCC paddock to collect donations in support of this initiative, with a bingo game being organized to win WTCC-related prizes. Several children selected by the association will also be invited to meet the WTCC drivers, including local hero Mehdi Bennani.

In support of this operation, Moroccan movie star Jamel Debbouze and his wife, TV presenter Mélissa Theuriau, ambassadors of Heure Joyeuse, will pay a visit to the WTCC paddock.

DRIVERS MEET FANS IN MARRAKECH

Moroccan motorsport fans had their first taste of WTCC yesterday evening, during an autograph session that was attended by most of the drivers.

The promotional event took place from 20.00 to 21.30 in Place du 16 Novembre, the heart of the Guéliz district, where a huge crowd queued to get the drivers' autographs and take pictures with them.

Hit Radio provided live music and introduced the drivers to the public before the start of the autograph session.



Alain Menu and Gabriele Tarquini during the autograph session downtown

ELECTRIC BYCICLES FOR THE WTCC PADDOCK

The FIA World Touring Car Championship announces a pioneer deal with electric bicycle supplier "Richard Virenque by Hilltecks", starting from the Race of Morocco in Marrakech. This deal marks a landmark partnership as it represents a significant step forward to a more eco-friendly WTCC paddock.

Cautious about environmental issues, the FIA WTCC aims to be more eco-responsible: following the adoption of second generation bio-fuel and of several other eco-friendly initiatives by, this partnership with Hilltecks Bike confirms the FIA WTCC plan to develop environmental initiatives.

From the season's third round in Monza, the "Richard Virenque by Hilltecks" electric bicycles will become the main means of transportation in the paddock, as every WTCC racing team will be equipped with these eco-friendly vehicles.

"For the last few years, implementing eco-friendly projects has been a priority for WTCC. In parallel to the championship's technical and sporting regulations which have been carefully studied to limit the environmental impact in terms of air and noise pollution, we aim to be the initiators of a more sustainable and responsible development model. This cooperation with Hilltecks Bike is an important step towards greener car racing and we are proud to take the lead in promoting eco-friendly initiatives and technologies," said Marcello Lotti, General Manager of KSO, the promoter of WTCC.

COUNTDOWN: - 2 DAYS



to the 2010 FIA WTCC Race of Morocco – 1st / 2nd May in Marrakech