

A1 Team Monaco – Practice and Qualifying Report, A1GP Chengdu

Chengdu, 7 November 2008: A1 Team Monaco secured a fifth row starting slot for the Sprint Race and seventh place on the grid for the Feature race of round two of the A1GP World Cup of Motorsport Powered by Ferrari at the Chengdu International Circuit today.

Following a frustrating Friday, Team Monaco made progress during this morning's final practice session when Clivio Piccione set the ninth fastest lap time. Working closely with the team studying data overnight, Clivio was able to find a better car balance for tackling the four 15-minute qualifying sessions later in the afternoon.

Clivio kicked started Monaco's China campaign in earnest when he took to the technical and extremely bumpy track for qualifying. It was the first time that Clivio had run in this format as it reverted back to its traditional A1GP Saturday schedule.* The Monegasque squad mirrored its morning's practice performance and secured tenth place on the time sheet with a 1:16.794 in SQ1 (Sprint race Qualifying Session 1). Following a delay to the start of SQ2 due to an incident out on track and a delay in the removal of the cars, the second session was cancelled and the grid for the Sprint race determined by the times from segment one only.

As FQ1, the first qualifying session for tomorrow's Feature race, got underway, Clivio left the Monaco garage with under two minutes of the session remaining. He set a time of 1:16.723 to finish the segment in 13th place with only 8/100ths second separating the closely fought battle between sixth and thirteenth positions. After the five minute respite and a quick study of the data sheets, the final qualifying segment got underway. The session was Red Flagged late into the running when Team France spun and left the track. An extra three minutes of track time was added to FQ2 leaving just under five minutes left on the clock for many of the teams, including Team Monaco, to set a second fast lap time. Clivio went out in the final two minutes of the session and was able to set a 1:16.016, elevating the team to seventh place. Clivio will start the Feature race in Chengdu on the fourth row of the grid tomorrow.

Clivio Piccione: "In the practice session this morning we went straight out and made a few changes. We realised that we were running a heavier fuel load than most of the teams yesterday, so we ran a little lighter in practice and our first flying lap was a lot quicker than our best time yesterday. We spent time fine tuning the car with set-up changes to make it more comfortable for my driving style and we understood the track a lot better. This is also the first race weekend working with my new engineer and so it is a learning curve for both of us. We went out on new tyres for the first Sprint race qualifying, but I was not happy with the way the car handled; it was sliding as the tyre pressure was a little bit too high. After the second outing was cancelled, we put on another new set of tyres for FQ3, but we were still suffering from oversteer into the slow corners and we could not improve on our lap time. So we decided to change a few things again, like the springs, for FQ4 and we put in a really good lap. We had managed to get rid of our traction problem and even though I made a slight mistake into turn six and lost maybe a tenth or so, we improved our time more than 6/10ths. To finish P7 is a good result and I am happy with our improvement compared to how our weekend started."

Graham Taylor, Team Principal: "We made significant progress overnight which allowed us to concentrate on our programme in free practice this morning. It is the first time that we have participated in this qualifying format and it is extremely tough. To lose running time with the cancellation of SQ2 for the sprint race hurt us a little bit, but the team showed in FQ4 that we are making progress and we are very much looking forward to racing at the sharp end tomorrow."

Qualifying – Sprint Race (SQ2 cancelled)

SQ1:
Lap Time: 1:16.794
Grid Position: 10

Qualifying – Feature Race

FQ3:
Position: 13
Lap Time: 1:16.723

FQ4:
Position: 7
Lap Time: 1:16:016
Grid Position: 7

END

* Qualifying runs in four 15 minute segments with a five minute break between each and determines the grid positions for both races. During each of the four segments, each team runs an out lap, one flying lap and an in lap to set one lap time. Each team's fastest lap from the first two qualifying sessions is its qualifying time which determines the Sprint race grid. Each team's fastest lap from the second two qualifying sessions is its qualifying time which determines the Feature race grid.

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