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GRANDE PRÉMIO DE MACAU
MACAU GRAND PRIX

GAZETTE 3

SEVEN DECADES OF DEVELOPMENT

As the Macau Grand Prix celebrates its 70th Edition, we take a look at seven major milestones in its storied history

Turning Professional

As is well documented in the annals of history, in 1954, the Macau Grand Prix was created by a group of local friends with the sole intention of having fun. First conceived as a treasure hunt, it quickly developed into a motor race, an idea triggered by the similarity of the proposed route to that of the Monaco Grand Prix. Although once created, the event was an immediate success in Asia, those friends could never have imagined the global motorsport superstar the Grand Prix would become over the next 70 years.

The first major turning point came in 1966, when Italian-born Belgian racing driver Mauro Bianchi arrived in Macao. At the time, Bianchi, who would later become grandfather of the late F1 driver Jules, was a works driver for the Renault racing team in Europe.

Bianchi would drive the same Renault Alpine he had taken to a top ten finish at the Le Mans 24 Hours, and his inclusion on the grid for the 13th Macau Grand Prix – and subsequent dominant win – marked a turning point for the event. As the first truly professional outfit, he and his team had set a new bar, and brought the Macau Grand Prix firmly into the international motorsport spotlight.

Motorcycle Masterstroke

As remains true today, the popularity of motorcycles as a means of transportation across Asia gives two-wheeled competition a vast – and broad – fan base. Almost from its inception, there were calls for a



THE ARRIVAL OF RENAULT WORKS DRIVER MAURO BIANCHI AT MACAO IN 1966, CHANGED THE FACE OF THE GRAND PRIX FOREVER (IMAGE: DR PHILIP NEWSOME)

motorcycle race to be added to the Macau Grand Prix programme.

The first ever Macau Motorcycle Grand Prix was held in 1967, when 15 bikes raced over a gruelling 30 laps of the Guia Circuit. The race was won by Japan's Hiroshi Hasegawa, winner of the 1966 Japan Motorcycle Grand Prix, on a 250cc Yamaha RD05. His victory paved the way for more than a decade of almost total domination by Japanese riders, his countrymen winning 10 of the 14 Grands Prix between 1967 and 1980.

All that changed with the arrival of British rider Ron 'Rocket' Haslam, who won all six races he entered between 1981 and 1987, a record which still stands today. Since then, each year the Macau Motorcycle Grand Prix has attracted an international field of the finest road racing and endurance riders in the world, with Michael Rutter holding the record of nine victories so far.

The Mighty Macau Guia Race

By the late 1960s, and as it does today, the Macau Grand Prix programme included a wide variety of races for different types of cars. It was decided that a prestige saloon car event would help attract more European teams to Macao, and the Guia Race made its debut in 1972.

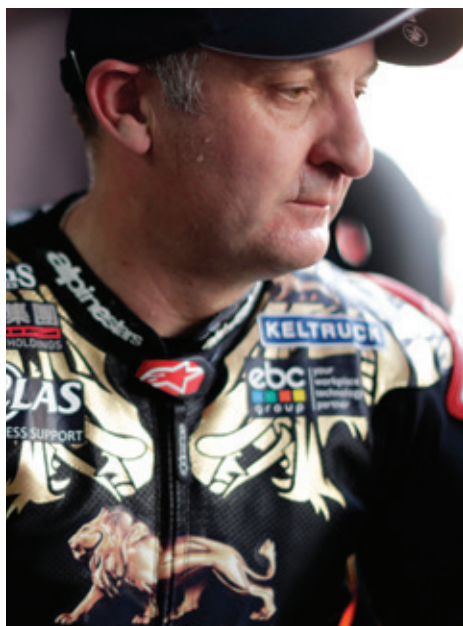
As with the Grand Prix itself, it didn't take long before international teams took notice of the new addition and headed to Macao. In 1980, the race was won by former Formula 1 driver Hans Stuck in a factory-prepared BMW 320. This was a watershed moment, and what followed was a succession of big name drivers run by professional teams vying for increasingly-coveted Macau Guia Race honours and, just as crucially, support from the biggest names in automotive technology.



THE KUMHO TCR WORLD TOUR JOINS THE MACAU GRAND PRIX RACE PROGRAMME IN 2023 (IMAGE: WSC LTD)

From 2005, the race was also designated as a round of the FIA World Touring Car Championship, and subsequently that of its successor, the FIA World Touring Car Cup. This year, the Macau Guia Race counts as the final round of the Kumho TCR World Tour, as TCR machinery continues to dominate global touring car competition.

Along with the evolution of the automobile, Macao's international touring car showcase continues to develop, while its reputation as a showcase for the greatest manufacturers and competitors in the field continues to strengthen.



MICHAEL RUTTER HOLDS THE RECORD FOR THE MOST NUMBER OF MACAU MOTORCYCLE GRAND PRIX WINS (IMAGE: MGPOC)



AYRTON SENNA WON INAUGURAL FORMULA 3 MACAU GRAND PRIX IN 1983 (IMAGE: GCS)

Fantastic Formula 3

Of the many landmark moments which populate the fascinating history of the Macau Grand Prix, the introduction of Formula 3 to the Guia Circuit in 1983 was to have the biggest impact on its reputation as a King Maker.

When it became clear that the original idea to introduce Formula 2 to Macao would have required destruction of several trees and extensive reclamation in order to widen the track, organizers rightly decided an alternative had to be found in order to preserve the city's cherished Guia Circuit. Formula 3 was the perfect solution, not only because it would not require undesirable changes to the circuit and its surroundings, but also because it opened up the possibility of creating an entry as unique as the track itself. This solution proved to be a masterstroke.

The winner of that very first Formula 3 Macau Grand Prix was none other than future triple Formula 1 World Champion and one of the sport's all-time most beloved racing drivers – Ayrton Senna. Since then, no fewer than nine further future Formula 1 World Champions have contested the Formula 3 Macau Grand Prix: Damon Hill, Michael Schumacher, Mika Häkkinen, Jacques Villeneuve, Jenson Button, Lewis Hamilton, Sebastian Vettel, Nico Rosberg and reigning champion Max Verstappen.

This year the race is back, and the latest international field of potential future Formula 1 stars will dice it out for the ultimate prize in the career of any young racing driver.

A Place to Call Home

A decade after the introduction of Formula 3, the Macau Grand Prix Building was opened. Incorporating pits, Race Control, media centre and administrative offices, these purpose-built facilities were unveiled to coincide with the 40th Macau Grand Prix in 1993. The facilities transformed the whole event, and put the Grand Prix firmly on a world-class footing.

So great has been the success of the event since it first moved into the Grand Prix Building that the facilities have further expanded over the years, and every inch of available space is fully utilized.

With four headline races on the programme each year and an ever-expanding grids on the support programme, the pits and the underground carpark – which, like the paddock, provides much-needed public parking when not used for the Grand Prix – were stretched to capacity. The solution was to build additional pits to house the Macau GT Cup cars in the paddock opposite the Grand Prix Building.

Another area where the Grand Prix had exceeded capacity due to its increasing success was the media centre, and this year brand new facilities have been constructed above the GT pits in the paddock. These provide more

space for journalists to work, offices for the various race promoters, and a much-needed multi-purpose drivers' briefing room.

The infrastructure for the 70th edition of the event is a far cry from the shacks of the early days, and a visible reflection of just how far the Macau Grand Prix has come over the last seven decades.

Glorious GTs

As a new century dawned, the popularity of GT racing began its inexorable rise across the world. The category was no stranger to the Grand Prix, where the programme had already contained races for sportscars for decades.

In 2008, organizers decided the time was right for Macao to create its own international GT showcase, as it had for junior single seaters, touring cars and motorcycles, and the Macau GT Cup was born. The new race was received with rapturous glee by fans both at home and abroad.

The very first running of the event was an early indication of what was to come, with former F3 Macau Grand Prix drivers Danny Watts and César Campaniço joining a field of Asia's leading sportscar drivers on 32-strong grid where Aston Martin, Chevrolet, Ferrari, Lamborghini, Lotus and Porsche were represented. Hong Kong SAR driver Darryl O'Young won the inaugural race in a Porsche, while the next two were won by Japan's Keita Sawa in a Lamborghini.

From then on the event really took off, attracting the attention of the world's leading manufacturers. Two-time F3 Macau Grand Prix winner Edoardo Mortara – dubbed Mr Macau for his achievements on the Guia Circuit – has so far won the race a record four times, three times for Audi and once for Mercedes. Germany's Maro Engel has three wins, all for Mercedes, while Augusto Farfus took a memorable maiden win for BMW in 2018. All eyes will be on the Guia Circuit again this year to see who will take the spoils in the 2023 Macau GT Cup.



EDUARDO MORTARA CELEBRATES THE FIRST OF HIS FOUR MACAU GT CUP VICTORIES TO-DATE (IMAGE: JAMES MOY)

Ultimate Recognition

The most recent major milestone in the history of the Macau Grand Prix came in 2015, when the Macau GT Cup was awarded FIA GT World Cup status. The next year, the Formula 3 Macau Grand Prix was designated the FIA F3 World Cup, further cementing the reputation not only of the Grand Prix itself, but of the city's organizational capabilities. The move made Macao the only city to host two official FIA World Cups at the same event, a proud moment for all the countless thousands of local residents responsible for the Grand Prix's success over the decades. 🏁



(LEFT TO RIGHT) THE MODEST INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE EARLY DAYS; THE MACAU GRAND PRIX BUILDING WAS UNVEILED IN 1993; BRAND NEW FACILITIES CONSTRUCTED FOR 70TH MACAU GRAND PRIX