



BMW Motorsport

Alessandro Zanardi goes onto the streets of Baku with his BMW Z4 GT3.

Baku (AZ), 1st November 2014. BMW works driver Alessandro Zanardi (IT) had a strong start to the final round of the 2014 Blancpain Sprint Series. The season finale, the "Baku World Challenge", is being held on the streets of Baku (AZ) on the shores of the Caspian Sea this weekend. Today, Saturday, saw two free practice sessions in the morning and the qualifying practice in the afternoon.

On the tight street circuit in the south part of the city Zanardi was fast from the word 'go'. In the first free practice he set the fastest lap time with his BMW Z4 GT3 entered by ROAL Motorsport. In the late morning, it started to rain but this did not prevent Zanardi again setting a fast time in the second free practice and finishing second.

The weather improved again in time for the qualifying practice in the late afternoon. The mixed conditions on the street circuit proved to be more than tricky. The session had to be red-flagged three times after cars crashed into the barriers. Zanardi, nevertheless, comfortably progressed to Q3. At the beginning of this third and final part of the qualifying he lost a few tenths, but then his times improved again. In the final minute Zanardi was again on the way to set a fast time, which would have secured him a good grid position. But he had no luck, as a car in front of him spun, yellow flags were brought out and he had to interrupt his final attempt. In the end he qualified 14th for the qualifying race, which will be held tomorrow morning. The main race will start in the afternoon.

"It is the way it is, you can't change it now," Zanardi summed up. "I had a small problem braking with my prosthetic leg, had understeer and lost a few tenths. Then I changed the brake balance and that helped. In the first sector I had improved by three or four tenths. I also had a good feeling in the second sector. I did a couple of corners, probably improving – but then I came to the section with the yellow flags so that was it. Anyway, I am confident for tomorrow. I have a very good car underneath me and I am starting on the outside, which helps to avoid any trouble in turn 1. This is the key: to come safely through the first corner. If I manage to do that, I will try my best to get a good result."

The highest placed BMW car in the qualifying practice was the BMW Z4 GT3 of BMW Sports Trophy Team Schubert driven by BMW works driver Jens Klingmann (DE) and Dominik Baumann (AT), who finished sixth. Tomorrow's qualifying race will start at 09:15 local time, the main race will get the green lights at 13:55.

Press contact:

Jörg Kottmeier, Phone.: +49 (0) 170 566 6112, joerg.kottmeier@bmw.de
Danilo Coglianese, Phone: +49 (0) 176 601 72405, danilo.coglianese@bmw.de
Ingo Lehbrink, Phone: +49 (0) 176 203 40224, ingo.lehbrink@bmw.de

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