

ETS Rd. 3 was moved from indoor to the beautiful Riccione outdoor track. For me this was interesting. On one hand last year my results on Asphalt were very good (twice TQ+ 3rd), but on the other hand I had not yet had the chance to test the new car more than a few laps on Asphalt. So I started with some mixed feelings.

Last year I was struggling a bit with front grip in the corners, and rear grip in the braking zones. Many changes to the car can be attributed to these problems. Also the rear grip of the new car should be better because of the new rear pivot system, avoiding all biding in the rear suspension. So in theory the car should be way better than last year's car.

The race began with some nice surprise. Pierluigi Guerrini, an old frind of mine, offered me a helmet painted by some young Italian guy, you can see his work on his facebook page. As it was the helmet of Michael Schumacher, and I have been a big fan of him from his first days in F1 (when I was 10 years old...) I was really happy.

Thursday practice showed that the car worked very well. I found out that the aero balance was slightly too much to the front. This was mainly a problem with old tires, but I could solve it with the lowest setting on the front wing, an old rear wing, and a bit more forward weight bias.

In the first qualification run I set the fastest laptime of the whole weekend with 20.6s. I could win that round although I had two contacts with other cars. After the second qualification round, I was pretty confident to end up in the TQ spot. Unfortunately I had some problem with a loose sensor wire in Q3, which caused some excitement for the final qualification round. I tried a different rear wing in Q4, but this was not an improvement, as I struggled a lot with rear grip. Remember: just because a wing looks more aerodynamic, that doesn't necessary mean it is more aerodynamic.

For the finals I returned to my previous setup, and just tightened the diff. In the first final the rear of my car came loose in the full throttle chicane in front of the drivers stand. Maybe the track and the tires were a little bit too cold for that kind of diff setting, the rear just stepped out without any warning. I lost a few seconds and many places, but later in the run, when the tires were up to temperature, I had a very clean and fast run, many overtakings and some luck, and finished second, just one second behind Michele Romagnoli. One or two laps more and there had been a chance for the win in that round.

A little bit worried by my problem in the first lap of A1, I changed my setup, softened the diff, and put more weight to the front for A2. In addition I drove very careful at the point where the rear stepped out before. Unfortunately I exaggerated it a bit, end I ended up in the grass on the corner outside...

So A3 had to decide. I did not want to finish another race on P3 starting from TQ. So I had to win that round, and I had to win in a better time than Michele Romagnoli in A1 or Martin Hofer in A2. So my strategy was to change back to the old, faster setup, and just drive careful for the first lap, and then push to the limit the rest of the race.













Source:



