

21 June 2015

Rounds 13 & 14 – Sochi Autodrom, Russia – 20/21 June 2015

RACE REPORT

The title fight heats up after Russian races

The first visit of the TCR International Series to Russia provided a completely shake up at the top of the standings and the battle for the first Drivers' title in the series is closest than ever.

With the top four drivers – Stefano Comini, Pepe Oriola, Gianni Morbidelli and Jordi Gené – covered by only twenty points and the fifth (Andrea Belicchi) and sixth (Kevin Gleason) still within striking distance, anything can happen in the four remaining events.

The SEAT cars, as it was anticipated, shone on the Sochi Autodrom, but even beyond expectations, as the Honda cars never could find the right pace. Gené and Comini shared the race wins, with the Swiss driver taking the best advantage in terms of points harvest, as he is now back in the leadership, two points ahead of Oriola. The Spaniard, with a couple of second places, is one of the other happy men at the end of this weekend.

There is little doubt that Morbidelli deserved the title of 'Mr Unlucky'; the former point-leader pocketed only a 7th in Race 1 and was forced to withdraw from Race 2 because of a turbo failure.

Belicchi and Mikhail Grachev took the other podium spots, finishing third in Race 1 and 2, respectively. On home soil, the Russian impressed from the beginning and was rewarded with his first TCR podium in Race 2, where he led the three initial laps. With a fourth and a fifth, Sergey Afanasyev also gave local fans great satisfaction while the TCR International Series community will certainly bring back home a pleasant memory of the Olympic atmosphere surrounding the event and the warm welcome on the shores of the Black Sea. The TCR International Series will resume on July 12th at the Red Bull Ring, Austria, for Round 15 and 16.

Race 1 – Team Craft-Bamboo Lukoil score a one-two finish

Jordi Gené and Pepe Oriola pleased Craft-Bamboo's Russian sponsor, Lukoil, and its many guests by taking an undisputed 1-2 in Race 1 at Sochi Autodrom.

The two red-and-white SEAT cars dominated from start to finish, with the two Spanish teammates running closely but not engaging in serious battle.



The SEAT domination was completed by Andrea Belicchi who took third after a relatively solitary race. In the opening laps, the Italian had to keep at bay the attacks of Mikhail Grachev, who later lost ground progressively and had to concede fourth to Stefano Comini and fifth to Sergey Afanasyev, eventually the first among the Russian drivers. The Honda Civic cars were not in a position to show great pace, with Gianni Morbidelli and Kevin Gleason unable to do better than 7th and 8th, respectively.

Key moments

Grid – Few drops of rain fall on the grid, but the race kicks off on a nearly dry track

Start – Good start for Gené who precedes Oriola, Belicchi, Grachev, Comini and Engström

Lap 1 – Afanasyev passes Morbidelli for 7th after running wide in a corner

Lap 3 – Grachev tries an attack on Belicchi at the braking; Afanasyev and Engström fight for 6th, with some rubbing, as a result the Swede gets passed by Nykjær and Morbidelli

Lap 4 – Belicchi (3rd) takes some breathing space ahead of Grachev who is chased by Comini

Lap 6 – Gené, Oriola and Grachev receive a warning for trespassing the track limits; Morbidelli tries to attack Nykjær

Lap 7 – Grachev is losing ground and gets passed by Comini and Afanasyev, dropping to 6th

Lap 9 – Engström passes Nykjær after going too wide and gives back the 8th position shortly after

Lap 10 – Rakhmatullin stops in the pits with an oil pressure warning, while Afanasyev and Grachev make contact

Lap 11 – In the last lap Gené makes a small mistake but keeps the advantage while Engström gets sideways on a slippery kerb hitting Nykjær and damaging the radiator

Race 2 – Third success of the season for Comini

Stefano Comini took his third win of the season in a lively Race 2 at Sochi and jumped back on the top of the overall standings. The Swiss driver of Target Competition built his success from the beginning, with a great start that put him in P2 behind Mikhail Grachev, the surprising initial leader after a superb start. Comini took the lead in lap 4, being only mildly threatened by Pepe Oriola in the last laps. The Spaniard, with another valuable second, now lies second in the standings only two points behind Comini.

Mikhail Grachev took a well-deserved first podium of the season on home soil, after a weekend where he performed brilliantly, being also the best of local heroes. Sergey Afanasyev and Jordi Gené finished fourth and fifth, ahead of the first Honda driven by Kevin Gleason.

It was a black day for Gianni Morbidelli who could not even take part in Race 2, as the turbo of his Civic broke in the last lap of Race 1 and couldn't be replaced in time despite the efforts of West Coast Racing's crews.



Key moments

Grid – Engström and Morbidelli are demoted to the bottom of the grid due to technical interventions

Start – Comini gets abreast with Gleason and Nykjær, but Grachev pips everybody from the outside at turn 2 and takes the lead; Morbidelli is still in the pit lane, his crew working on the car

Lap 1 – Grachev leads ahead of Comini, Afanasyev, Gleason, Belicchi, Oriola and Gené

Lap 2 – Afanasyev drives sideways and is passed by Gleason, Belicchi and Oriola; Nykjær drops after a contact with Engström

Lap 3 – Morbidelli gets out of the car and gives up; Belicchi and Oriola pass Gleason for 3rd and 4th

Lap 4 – Comini is chasing Grachev; Gleason is attacked by Gené who has passed Afanasyev

Lap 6 – Comini passes Grachev at turn 2 and takes the lead; Belicchi also tries to attack the Russian and the two collide in the last corner, with Belicchi spinning and hitting the wall

Lap 7 – Oriola is second behind Comini and followed by Grachev and Afanasyev who has passed Gené

Lap 8 – Oriola starts chasing Comini, with Grachev a stable third and the rest of the group further aback

Lap 10 – Oriola gets closer to Comini, but doesn't seem in a position to attack him

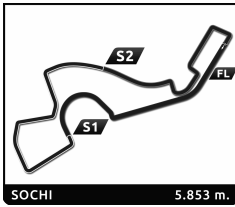
Lap 11 – Comini takes his third success of the year ahead of Oriola, Grachev, Afanasyev, Gené and Gleason

What the race winners had to say

Jordi Gené, winner of Race 1: *"The race was just fantastic, everything went as planned and the SEAT cars seemed to like this track a lot. Having Pepe Oriola behind me gave me some confidence that he wouldn't do anything silly that could jeopardize a good team result, something very important here, in the home track of our sponsor. Still, he was better in some parts of the circuit, and I was in others, so nothing was easy. I think my brakes balance wasn't ideal and that showed mostly in turn 14, where Pepe could brake much later, gaining almost 40 meters. I feared he could take a tow there and pass me but luckily, that didn't happen."*

Stefano Comini, winner of Race 2: *"A great weekend for me, as I was able to retake the leadership in the championship; I am really happy. My objective arriving here was to take heavy points, so I can be happy. Race 2 was really funny, I hope also for those who were watching. I took a perfect start, but Mikhail Grachev did even better, I was really surprised to see him passing everybody at the first corner. I could pass and take the lead a couple of laps later and that was the right moment, as I then started to struggle a bit with my tires. I found the circuit different when you are racing, as opposed to practice or qualifying. It's challenging on tires and it's not so easy to overtake."*





TCR INTERNATIONAL SERIES

SOCHI

RACE 1 (11 laps, 64,4 km.)

Final Classification

Drivers	Nat	Team	Vehicle	Class	Laps	Total Time	Gap	Kph	Best Lap		
									Lap	Time	Kph
1 88 Jordi Gene	ESP	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT Leon		11	26:04.706	-	148.1	6	2:21.260	149.2
2 74 Pepe Oriola	ESP	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT Leon		11	26:05.304	+0.598	148.1	6	2:21.115	149.3
3 33 Andrea Belicchi	ITA	Target Competition	SEAT Leon		11	26:08.151	+3.445	147.8	5	2:21.533	148.9
4 25 Stefano Comini	SUI	Target Competition	SEAT Leon		11	26:12.917	+8.211	147.4	5	2:22.112	148.3
5 77 Sergey Afanasyev	RUS	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT Leon		11	26:15.654	+10.948	147.1	6	2:22.225	148.2
6 8 Mikhail Grachev	RUS	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	SEAT Leon		11	26:16.729	+12.023	147.0	4	2:22.030	148.4
7 10 Gianni Morbidelli	ITA	West Coast Racing	Honda Civic TCR		11	26:19.150	+14.444	146.8	5	2:22.300	148.1
8 24 Kevin Gleason	USA	West Coast Racing	Honda Civic TCR		11	26:23.126	+18.420	146.4	7	2:22.338	148.1
9 17 Michel Nykjaer	DEN	Target Competition	SEAT Leon		11	26:24.968	+20.262	146.3	4	2:22.151	148.2
10 4 Tomas Engstrom	SWE	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	SEAT Leon		11	26:28.397	+23.691	145.9	4	2:21.909	148.5
11 2 Aleksey Dudukalo	RUS	LUKOIL Racing Team	SEAT Leon		11	26:30.500	+25.794	145.7	3	2:22.672	147.7
12 26 Ildar Rakhatullin	RUS	West Coast Racing	Honda Civic TCR		9	21:59.416	2 Laps	143.7	4	2:23.265	147.1
Pole Position					J. Gene		2:20.976			149.5 Kph	
Fastest Lap					Lap 6	Pepe Oriola	2:21.115			149.3 Kph	

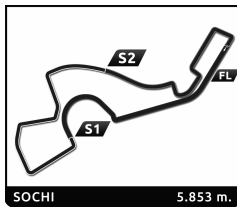
Published at:

Track Status:

WET

Stewards:

Timekeeper:



TCR INTERNATIONAL SERIES

SOCHI

RACE 2 (11 laps, 64,4 km.)

Final Classification

										Best Lap		
Drivers		Nat	Team	Vehicle	Class	Laps	Total Time	Gap	Kph	Lap	Time	Kph
1	25 Stefano Comini	SUI	Target Competition	SEAT Leon		11	26:14.548	-	147.2	3	2:21.520	148.9
2	74 Pepe Oriola	ESP	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT Leon		11	26:15.159	+0.611	147.2	4	2:22.084	148.3
3	8 Mikhail Grachev	RUS	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	SEAT Leon		11	26:18.018	+3.470	146.9	4	2:22.444	147.9
4	77 Sergey Afanasyev	RUS	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT Leon		11	26:22.092	+7.544	146.5	9	2:22.561	147.8
5	88 Jordi Gene	ESP	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT Leon		11	26:22.988	+8.440	146.4	9	2:22.312	148.1
6	24 Kevin Gleason	USA	West Coast Racing	Honda Civic TCR		11	26:23.954	+9.406	146.3	10	2:22.578	147.8
7	17 Michel Nykjær	DEN	Target Competition	SEAT Leon		11	26:24.324	+9.776	146.3	4	2:22.094	148.3
8	4 Tomas Engstrom	SWE	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	SEAT Leon		11	26:25.080	+10.532	146.2	6	2:22.460	147.9
9	2 Aleksey Dudukalo	RUS	LUKOIL Racing Team	SEAT Leon		11	26:31.799	+17.251	145.6	3	2:22.639	147.7
10	26 Ildar Rakhmatullin	RUS	West Coast Racing	Honda Civic TCR		11	26:38.401	+23.853	145.0	4	2:23.042	147.3

Not classified:

33 Andrea Belicchi	ITA	Target Competition	SEAT Leon		6	16:02.132			4	2:22.023	148.4
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Not started

10 Gianni Morbidelli	ITA	West Coast Racing	Honda Civic TCR								
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Pole Position

K. Gleason	148.3 Kph
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Fastest Lap

Lap 3	Stefano Comini	2:21.520	148.9 Kph
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Published at:

Track Status: **DRY**

Stewards:	Timekeeper:
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2015 TCR INTERNATIONAL SERIES - DRIVERS' CLASSIFICATION

position	driver	Sepang MALAYSIA 28 March			Shanghai Jiaxing CHINA 12 April			Valencia SPAIN 3 May			Portimão PORTUGAL 10 May			Monza ITALY 24 May			Salzburg AUSTRIA 31 May			Sochi RUSSIA 21 June			Red Bull Ring AUSTRIA 12 July			Marina Bay SINGAPORE 20 September			Buriram THAILAND 25 October			Macau MACAU 22 November			TOTAL
		Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	
1	25 - Sefano Comini (SUI)	3	25	12	0	12	18	3	8	25	0	10	0	4	0	12	3	18	4	0	12	25													194
2	74 - Pepe Oriola (ESP)	0	18	18	1	0	12	5	25	10	3	0	12	3	18	0	2	8	18	3	18	18													192
3	10 - Gianni Morbidelli (ITA)	0	12	15	5	25	15	0	4	15	0	0	0	5	25	25	4	10	15	0	6	0													181
4	88 - Jordi Gené (ESP)	0	6	25	0	6	1	0	15	0	4	18	15	0	12	18	1	12	1	5	25	10													174
5	33 - Andrea Belicchi (ITA)	4	10	10	0	10	25	4	12	0	0	0	1	1	15	10	0	15	10	4	15	0													146
6	24 - Kevin Gleason (USA)	5	8	6	3	15	8	0	0	12	0	6	18	0	8	0	5	25	8	0	4	8													139
7	17 - Michel Nykjær (DEN)	0	4	0	0	2	10	2	6	18	0	0	25	0	0	0	0	0	25	0	2	6													100
8	77 - Sergey Afanasyev (RUS)	0	15	0	0	1	0	1	18	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	4	12	0	10	12													77
9	8 - Mikhail Grachev (RUS)	0	0	4	2	0	0	0	10	0	0	8	8	0	0	2	0	0	6	1	8	15													64
10	7 - Lorenzo Veglia (ITA)	0	1	0	0	0	4	0	1	6	2	15	0	0	6	4	0	6	0	-	-	-													45
11	23 - René Münnich (GER)	1	0	8	4	18	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-														31
12	3 - Nicki Thiim (DEN)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	25	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-													30
13	22 - Fernando Monje (ESP)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	10	15	0	0	0	-	-	-													25
14	6 - Franz Engstler (GER)	2	0	0	0	8	6	0	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-													16
15	18 - José Monroy (POR)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	4	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-													14
16	9 - Kelvin Van der Linde (RSA)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	12	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-													13
17	20 - Igor Skuz (UKR)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	8	0	0	0	-	-	-													10
18	46 - Zsolt Szabó (HUN)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	4	6	0	0	0	-	-	-	-													10
19	34 - Bas Schouten (NED)	-	-	-	-	-	0	2	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	2	2	-	-	-	-													10
20	32 - David Cebrián (ESP)	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-													8
21	19 - Oscar Nogués (ESP)	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0	2	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-													8
22	4 - Tomas Engström (SWE)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	4														7
23	50 - Francisco Mora (POR)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	1	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-													5
24	47 - Norbert Tóth (HUN)	-	-	-	0	4	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-													4
25	36 - Antonio D'Amico (ITA)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-													3
25	55 - Ferenc Ficzá (HUN)	0	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-													3
27	2 - Aleksey Dudukalo (RUS)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	2														2
27	5 - Tengyi Jiang (CHN)	-	-	-	0	0	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-													2
27	99 - Frank Yu (HKG)	0	0	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-													2
30	16 - Markus Östreich (GER)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	1	0	-	-	-	-													1
30	26 - Ildar Rakhmatullin (RUS)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	1														1
30	71 - Tom Boardman (GBR)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	1	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-													1



2015 TCR INTERNATIONAL SERIES - TEAMS' CLASSIFICATION

position	team	Sepang MALAYSIA 29 March			Shanghai Jiaoding CHINA 12 April			Valencia SPAIN 3 May			Portimão PORTUGAL 10 May			Monza ITALY 24 May			Salzburgring AUSTRIA 31 May			Sochi RUSSIA 21 June			Red Bull Ring AUSTRIA 12 July			Marina Bay SINGAPORE 20 September			Buriram THAILAND 25 October			Macau MACAU 22 November			TOTAL
		Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2				
1	Target Competition	7	35	22	0	27	43	7	25	43	0	13	26	5	15	22	3	33	35	4	27	33												425	
2	Team Craft-Bamboo Lukoil	0	33	43	2	12	16	7	43	12	7	20	27	5	30	18	3	20	30	8	43	30												409	
3	WestCoast Racing	6	20	23	9	43	25	0	10	27	1	10	20	5	33	33	9	35	23	0	14	14												360	
4	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	2	4	8	3	12	14	1	16	6	7	40	8	0	6	6	0	6	8	3	14	21												185	
5	Campos Racing	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	6	6	0	10	15	0	2	0	-	-	-												41	
6	Zengő Motorsport	0	6	4	1	6	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	4	6	0	1	0	-	-	-												30	
7	Veloso Motorsport	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	12	14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-												26	
8	Bas Koeten Racing	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	6	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	4	4	-	-	-												18	
9	JSB Compétition	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	1	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-												9	
10	B.D. Racing Motorsport	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-												3	
11	Proteam Racing	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	1	0	-	-	-	-	-	-												1	

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