

30 March 2016

Rounds 1 & 2 – Sakhir, Bahrain – 1 / 3 April 2016

PREVIEW

The TCR International Series kicks off at F1 Bahrain Grand Prix

The second season of the TCR International Series kicks off this weekend at the Bahrain International Circuit, as support event to the Formula 1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix. TCR competitors will hit the track for the first time on Friday for two twenty-five-minute Free Practice sessions. On Saturday they will take part in a thirty-minute Qualifying; all drivers will run during Q1 and the fastest twelve will be allowed to participate in Q2. The first race of the TCR International Series will take place on Saturday evening, just after the F1 Qualifying. The second race will be held on Sunday in the early afternoon as an appetizer to the F1 GP.

TCR in Sakhir – the event at a glance

Lap distance: 5.41 km

Race distance: 10 laps or 25 minutes

Start: standing

Grids: determined by Qualifying results (Q1+Q2) with top-10 reversed for Race 2

Timetable:	Friday, 12:00/12:25	Free Practice 1
	Friday, 16:50/17:15	Free Practice 2
	Saturday, 13:00/13:30	Qualifying (Q1 + Q2)
	Saturday, 19:30	Race 1
	Sunday, 14:30	Race 2

all times: GMT +3

Three titles are at stake: Drivers', Teams' and Model of the Year

The 2016 TCR International Series will award three titles at the end of the season. Stefano Comini and Target Competition are the reigning champions in the Drivers' and Team's Championship respectively.

New for this season is the introduction of a 'Model of the Year' title that will be awarded by adding the points scored by the best two cars of each model in each qualifying session and race.

The scoring system is the same for all three classifications: 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 points awarded to the best five classified in the Qualifying final results; 25, 18, 15, 12, 10, 8, 6, 4, 2 and 1 points awarded to the best ten classified in each race.

Two Bahraini drivers join TCR for their local event

The entry list of the 2016 TCR International Series opening event in Bahrain consists of nine teams, with twenty-two cars of six different brands: Alfa Romeo, Honda, Opel, SEAT, Subaru and Volkswagen.

The latest additions were two SEAT León cars in 2015 specs, run by the Netherlands-based Bas Koeten Motorsport for local drivers Salman Al Khalifa and Hussain Karimi who are currently ranking first and third respectively in the 2015/2016 Bahrain International Circuit 2000cc Challenge.

Al Khalifa, a former champion in the Batelco 2000cc Challenge (2008), has claimed seven victories out of the twelve races held so far at the wheel of his Honda Civic; Karimi was twice vice-champion in the series (2014 and 2015), having scored several wins in a Honda CRX.

TCR promoter Marcello Lotti said: *"We give a very warm welcome to Sheikh Salman Al Khalifa and Hussain Karimi, the first Middle East drivers to join TCR. The concept we have launched last year is spreading quickly and we are now looking at the Middle East for further expansion."*

Jordi Oriola and Andrea Belicchi to drive the debutante Astra

The opening event of the 2016 TCR International Series in Bahrain will also mark the debut of the new Opel Astra TCR. Two cars will be run by Target Competition for Andrea Belicchi and Jordi Oriola.

The Astra TCR is facing its first major challenge as the forecast temperatures of over 40C will represent a stiff test for the engine cooling system, turbocharger, transmission and brakes. Tyre wear will also be expected to be a major issue.

The technical staff of Opel Motorsport and Target Competition made significant progress in the vehicle set-up during the pre-season test in Valencia.

Opel Motorsport Director Jörg Schrott is excited ahead of the Astra TCR's race debut but is also managing expectations: *"We are a newcomer to the TCR series with our Astra and we will definitely need a bit more time to further optimize the vehicle. Furthermore, the conditions in the desert are unique. Therefore, we should treat the two races in Bahrain as another important test. We aim to learn as much as possible to fine tune the Astra TCR for the coming races."*

Luigi Ferrara at Bahrain in the Top Run Subaru

It will be Luigi Ferrara to drive the Top Run-built Subaru STi TCR in the International Series season opener at Bahrain.

A former champion in the Italian F3 (2005) and Porsche Cup (2008), Ferrari proved his Touring Car skills at the wheel of a Mercedes AMG (also built by Top Run), winning several Superstars races and finishing twice runner up in the International Series (2011 and 2012).

"I'm so excited to race in the TCR International Series that is a top-level championship. I'm also pleased to get back to sprint races, that is where I claimed my best results. It is true that I don't have experience with front-wheel drive cars, but I'm used to adapt myself quickly to any new cars. And I'm not like a fish out of water, because I know the team and I know the track, where I claimed a fourth place in the 2009 Porsche Supercup. My only regret is not to have time to test the Subaru before, but I am optimistic and my goal is to finish in the points," said Ferrara.

Team manager Renato Russo added: *"Bahrain will be another important test on the way to develop the Subaru TCR, and in this respect we are happy that Ferrara agreed to drive, because we have worked very well with him in the past."*

Both races to be streamed live from Bahrain

Fans will be able to watch live on the Internet both the TCR International Series opening races from Bahrain International Circuit.

Live streaming will be available on the series' official website www.tcr-series.com.

Streaming of Race 1 will begin at 19.25 local time (18.25 in Central Europe) on Saturday, while Race 2 will be shown from 14.25 local time (13.25 CET) on Sunday.

TCR fans to vote on special award in 2016

Fans of the TCR International Series will, via social media, play a vital part in awarding a special prize after each pair of TCR races.

Following each TCR race weekend, a panel comprising of the International Series' Promoter and the promotional and media team will decide a shortlist of two candidates (not necessarily drivers) they feel are deserving of the award. The names will then be posted on the TCR International Series Facebook page and fans will have 24 hours in which to 'like' either candidate. The 'TCR Fans' Award' will then be given to the candidate with the most likes.

press release



A new TV website for the TCR community worldwide

The TCR promoter, WSC Ltd., has launched today a brand new website that is dedicated to showcasing videos from the different TCR championships and series worldwide.

The new free-on-air portal – www.tcr-series.tv – is divided into three main sections: one for the TCR International Series, one for the TCR Regional championships and one for the National championships in which TCR cars are eligible to race.

Each series has been given an account to upload their own videos and a dedicated page that gathers together all videos and news from that series: full races, highlights and spectacular clips.

The home page features the latest and most-liked videos, plus windows for live timing and live streaming, a summary table of the upcoming TCR events worldwide and a 'news brief' section.