

7 May 2016

Rounds 5 & 6 – Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium – 5 / 7 May 2016

RACE 2 REPORT

The championship heats up after the Belgian round

The 2016 TCR International Series' first visit to Spa-Francorchamps resulted in an exciting weekend that heated up the championship further.

After Aku Pellinen had claimed his maiden TCR victory in yesterday's Race 1 at the wheel of a WestCoast Racing Honda Civic, today it was Jean-Karl Vernay's turn to score a first win for himself and Leopard Racing. It was also the first success of a Volkswagen Golf Gti in the current season.

These results meant that five different drivers and three different brands of car manufacturers have won in the six races held so far.

Quite obviously the Drivers' championship's classification is extremely close. After Gianni Morbidelli had managed to jump on top of the standings at the end of Race 1, Pepe Oriola retook the leadership after Race 2. The Spaniard has now a two-point margin ahead of James Nash, while Morbidelli is third, two further points adrift.

But the others are not far away. Pellinen, Stefano Comini, Vernay, Sergey Afanasyev, Mat'ò Homola and Dušan Borković fill the positions from fourth to ninth, with the latter having a gap of 37 points from the leader.

The championship will resume at Imola, Italy on May 22, for rounds 7 and 8.

A triumphant day for Vernay and Leopard Racing

For a maiden win, it was a real triumph! Leopard Racing conquered its first TCR success very close to its Luxembourg headquarters and signed a stunning 1-2-3 with its three drivers: Jean-Karl Vernay, Stefano Comini and guest TCR Germany racer Antti Buri.

It was also the first victory of the year for the Volkswagen Golf Gti cars and the maiden TCR success for Vernay. The Frenchman has proven a quick adaptation to touring car racing and took a well-deserved victory after a close duel with teammate and reigning champion Comini.

Mat'ò Homola and Aku Pellinen took fourth and fifth respectively after a relatively trouble-free race, while James Nash, Pepe Oriola, Kevin Gleason and Sergey Afanasyev animated the final laps with a close fight for sixth position. Local hero Pierre-Yves Corthals took the last point in a race that saw much action at the back of the field, with the Peugeot 308 cars shining in the first part of the race, when Jimmy Claret ran as high as eighth.

Following today's races, the situation in the championship is closer than ever, with the three first drivers (Oriola, Nash and Morbidelli) covered by only 4 points.

Key facts

Start – the Leopard Racing cars take a brilliant start, with Vernay ahead of Buri (they make contact before La Source) and Comini

Lap 1 – Vernay leads but is chased Buri; Comini, Homola, Pellinen, Nash, Oriola, Afanasyev and Clairet follow

Lap 2 – Comini passes Buri for second; Borković and Morbidelli make contact: the Serbian retires in the pits while the Italian loses a tyre and stops on the track

Lap 3 – Homola passes Buri for third at Les Combes, but goes wide and hands the position back to the Finn; Gleason passes Clairet for ninth

Lap 4 – Comini steals the lead from Vernay with a beautiful move at Les Combes; Kajaia hits Tassi at Blanchimont during a three-way fight with Hezemans

Lap 5 – Vernay retakes the lead from Comini with the same manoeuvre at Les Combes; Grachev outbrakes himself and goes straight at the bus stop

Lap 6 – Kajaia and Tassi are given a drive-through for trespassing the track limits

Lap 7 – Grachev retires in the pits with brake problems

Lap 8 – Tassi, Clairet, Hezemans and Guilvert are in a close fight for 11th

Lap 9 – Vernay wins from Comini, Buri, Homola and Pellinen; Nash claims sixth beating Oriola by a small margin, while Gleason overtakes Afanasyev for eighth

Race 2 – Quotes from the podium finishers

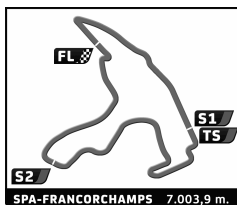
Jean-Karl Vernay (winner): *“It was a great day for the team. We knew victory was going to come, but now it's done and this will release pressure and encourage us for the forthcoming races. It's a very good team, very professional and very motivated. You see it in the way we are making the car progress outing after outing. This first win is great for me too, adaptation to touring car racing and front-wheel drive cars has been smoother than expected, thanks also to the support from the team and my teammate. The race has been lively: I took a good start, the contact with Buri was completely accidental, I was looking in my mirrors and probably moved, then I had a good fight with Stefano. He passed me but I could repass him, it was all very fair and I could stay in front.”*

Stefano Comini (second): *“A very good team effort and a brilliant success. We needed something like this and I am very happy for everybody. The fight with Jean-Karl at the beginning was fun, but I did not want to push too much not to kill the tyres. I knew that otherwise I would be penalized in the second part of the race because of the 20-kg ballast. Now comes Imola and I really want to win there!”*

press release



Antti Buri (third): *“It was a good result and a good race for me. My start wasn’t very good, once again, and soon after that Homola passed me too, with a great move, but I could pass him again. Then, I mostly tried to protect my podium position. The car felt good but it was my first time with the Golf and find it different from the León despite they share the same basis. My main programme this season is TCR Germany but I hope there will be other opportunities to come to the International Series, which I enjoyed very much.”*



6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps

TCR International Series

Race 2 (9 laps, 63,0 km.)

Final Classification

Drivers	Nat	Team	Vehicle	Class	Laps	Total Time	Gap	Kph	Best Lap		
									Lap	Time	Kph
1 2 Jean-Karl VERNAY	FRA	Leopard Racing Team	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR		9	23:15.816	-	162.6	5	2:33.945	163.8
2 1 Stefano COMINI	CHE	Leopard Racing Team	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR		9	23:18.078	+2.262	162.3	4	2:34.316	163.4
3 48 Antti BURI	FIN	Leopard Racing Team	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR		9	23:20.400	+4.584	162.0	4	2:34.492	163.2
4 70 Ma'o HOMOLA	SVK	B3 Racing Team Hungary	SEAT León TCR		9	23:22.607	+6.791	161.8	4	2:34.718	163.0
5 14 Aku PELLINEN	FIN	Westcoast Racing	Honda Civic TCR		9	23:23.544	+7.728	161.7	3	2:34.714	163.0
6 54 James NASH	GBR	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT León TCR		9	23:27.371	+11.555	161.2	3	2:34.299	163.4
7 74 Pepe ORIOLA	ESP	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT León TCR		9	23:28.142	+12.326	161.2	3	2:34.349	163.4
8 24 Kevin GLEASON	USA	Westcoast Racing	Honda Civic TCR		9	23:28.848	+13.032	161.1	4	2:34.275	163.4
9 77 Sergey AFANASYEV	RUS	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT León TCR		9	23:29.172	+13.356	161.0	3	2:34.608	163.1
10 49 Pierre-Yves CORTHALS	BEL	Ferry Monster Autosport	SEAT León Cup Racer		9	23:34.350	+18.534	160.4	4	2:35.445	162.2
11 50 Loris HEZEMANS	NLD	Ferry Monster Autosport	SEAT León TCR		9	23:41.116	+25.300	159.7	3	2:35.727	161.9
12 38 Grégory GUILVERT	FRA	Sébastien Loeb Racing	Peugeot 308 Racing Cup		9	23:41.995	+26.179	159.6	5	2:35.983	161.6
13 30 Jimmy CLAIRET	FRA	Sébastien Loeb Racing	Peugeot 308 Racing Cup		9	23:42.932	+27.116	159.5	3	2:36.489	161.1
14 7 Davit KAJAJA	GEO	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR		9	24:02.349	+46.533	157.3	2	2:35.417	162.2
15 9 Attila TASSI	HUN	B3 Racing Team Hungary	SEAT León TCR		9	24:03.404	+47.588	157.2	3	2:34.674	163.0
16 8 Mikhail GRACHEV	RUS	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR		6	16:16.625	3 Laps	154.9	3	2:35.432	162.2

Not classified:

62 Dusan BORKOVIC	SRB	B3 Racing Team Hungary	SEAT León TCR		1	3:29.928					
10 Gianni MORBIDELLI	ITA	Westcoast Racing	Honda Civic TCR								

Pole Position	A. BURI		
Fastest Lap	Lap 5	Jean-Karl VERNAY	2:33.945 163.8 Kph

Published at:

Track Status: **DRY**

Stewards:	Timekeeper:
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