

2 July 2016

Rounds 13 & 14 – Sochi, Russia – 2 / 3 July 2016

SATURDAY REPORT

Qualifying – First pole for Comini and Volkswagen

In a torrid afternoon on the shores of the Black Sea, reigning TCR champion Stefano Comini took his first pole of the season, which was also the first one for a Volkswagen Golf car and for Leopard Racing. The Luxemburger team placed his other car in third with Jean-Karl Vernay. Sandwiched in-between the two turquoise Golf cars was Pepe Oriola, with the Team Craft-Bamboo Lukoil SEAT, only 141 thousandths behind the poleman and a bit frustrated after having dominated the two free practice sessions and Qualifying 1. The Spaniard saw his best time in Q2 disallowed, for exceeding track limits, although this did not affect the final ranking.

It was a very close fight, with the first eight cars within a second, despite the length of the Sochi Autodrom. Gianni Morbidelli was fourth at the wheel of the WestCoast Honda Civic, ahead of the Mulsanne Racing Alfa Romeo Giulietta of Petr Fulín. The Czech rounded in Q2 a day that saw him always in the top positions and confirmed the progress made by the Italian car.

On their home track, Russian drivers lived a somehow difficult day, with Mikhail Grachev qualifying seventh and Sergey Afanasiev 11th. The two other locals present in the Russian event, Ildar Rakhmatullin (WestCoast Honda Civic) and Vladimir Sheshenin (Liqui Moly Volkswagen Golf) did not pass the Q1 cut, together with Michela Cerruti who complained about severe understeer.

The first row on the reverse grid for Race 2 will be filled by B3 Racing Team Hungary's Attila Tassi (on pole) and Mat'ó Homola.

The first race will start tomorrow at 12:35 local time, over a distance of 11 laps.

Q1: Oriola fastest as Fulín impresses

Pepe Oriola continued in topping the sessions as he was the fastest in Q1 with a lap of 2:21.734. Just like in the second Practice, Stefano Comini was his closest competitor, only one tenth behind (2:21.876), while Jean-Karl Vernay ranked in third (2:22.206).

Petr Fulín provided the biggest surprise, posting the fourth fastest lap in the dying moments (2:22.282), the best results so far for the Romeo Ferraris-built Alfa Romeo Giulietta.

The two Honda Civic cars of Gianni Morbidelli and Mikhail Grachev qualified in seventh and eighth, behind Dušan Borković and James Nash.

The following drivers made the cut for Q2: Oriola, Comini, Vernay, Fulín, Borković, Nash, Morbidelli, Grachev, Afanasyev, Homola, Tassi and Kajaia.

Q2: Comini claims first pole for Volkswagen

Stefano Comini claimed pole position with the time of 2:21.130 on his first lap out of the pits. Nobody was able to improve and only Pepe Oriola got close to it; the Spaniard's best lap (2:21.160) was disallowed by the Stewards because he trespassed the track limits, but his second best (2:21.271) gave him a front row position on the grid for Race 1.

Jean-Karl Vernay (2:21.434) and Gianni Morbidelli (2:21.699) qualified in third and fourth respectively, followed by an even more impressive Petr Fulín (2:21.954) who placed his Giulietta in fifth.

Drivers' quotes after the Qualifying session

Stefano Comini (pole position): *"It is very nice to take the first pole of the year for both Volkswagen and Leopard Racing. This is probably the first time this year that I am really happy with our qualifying performance and that I can say that we could bring the car to its limit. For once, we did not struggle with oversteer and I could give everything and have three flat out laps in Q2. I could benefit a little from some slipstreaming by Gianni [Morbidelli] and that was helpful as our cars are not as fast as the others on the straight. It will be more difficult to keep the advantage tomorrow, especially at the start, and we can predict some action at first corner..."*

Pepe Oriola (second fastest): *"I don't feel particularly upset to have not taken the pole after being the fastest in free practices and Q1. It just happened that in Q2, my first fast lap was disallowed because I ran too wide, although that lap would not mean the pole. Then, I was a little bit wide in my second attempt as well, and by then my tyres lost performance. Still, the first row is a good position to start from and we'll see what happens. It's going to be a long and tough race and I'll approach it thinking about the championship and trying to avoid doing any crazy things."*

Jean-Karl Vernay (third fastest): *"It was an excellent result for the team and a good start of the weekend for me, while discovering the track. I must say I really like it. It's a technical and interesting track that requires a good flowing and a good rhythm to be competitive. My only concern is about the start and the first corner. I think that with a lot of faster cars around Stefano and myself, it is going to be a crowded place..."*

Gianni Morbidelli (fourth fastest): *"I cannot be entirely satisfied today, I really believe we simply limited the damage... The truth is that we are less competitive than expected here and that we have probably reached the ceiling of our potential on this racetrack..."*

Petr Fulín (fifth fastest): *“I feel as happy as if I would have done the pole... It’s really a good result for us and for the entire team, which has worked very well, especially today when they could solve the turbo problem occurred in free practice 1 and give me a car capable of taking P5 in Q2. Considering that there was no time to work on evolving the car between Oschersleben and here, it means that we are becoming more and more competitive. This afternoon, the car was much better than this morning and I could perform three laps at the same pace. I used a bit Morbidelli’s slipstream and that probably represented a gain of around 4 tenths.”*

Two local drivers joined the International Series’ field

The TCR International Series has welcomed two Russian newcomers in this weekend’s event at Sochi Autodrom.

The last minute addition of Ildar Rakhmatullin and Vladimir Sheshenin to regulars Sergey Afanasyev and Mikhail Grachev increased the number of local drivers to four.

Rakhmatullin is at the wheel of a WestCoast Racing Honda Civic, just like he did last year here in Sochi. The 30-year old from Kazan, is a race winner in the Russian Touring Light category in which he finished as a runner up in 2015.

Sheshenin, 27-year old from Ekaterinburg, is the current leader of the Russian National class in a LADA Kalina; he had won the National title in 2014 and finished second last year. Sheshenin is driving a Liqui Moly Team Engstler Volkswagen Golf Gti.

They are both committed to race in their respective national championships as well during the weekend.

Another family photo with TCR's Russian relatives

Following the taking of the TCR family picture at Oschersleben, that gathered together all the competitors of the International and German series, another photo call was organised at Sochi with the TCR Russia drivers joining their International Series fellows.

Twenty-three cars from both championships were lined up on the Sochi Autodrom starting grid for another impressive shot.

The cars and drivers were then joined by TCR promoter Marcello Lotti and Oleg Petrikov, promoter of the SMP Russian Circuit Racing Series.

TCR Russia: Dmitry Bragin keeps on winning

Dmitry Bragin’s winning streak continued, as the TAIF Motorsport driver scored an new victory in today’s Race 1 at Sochi, his fifth out of the seven rounds of the SMP Russian Circuit Racing Series held so far.

press release



After having setting pole position in this morning's qualifying, Bragin resisted an early assault from Roman Golikov after the start and went to claim another lights-to-flag win. Behind him, Golikov and his Lukoil Racing teammates Nikolay Karamyshev and Aleksey Dudukalo were involved in a close, but short fight for the other podium position. In a few laps Karamyshev emerged as the fastest of the trio and proceeded to close the gap from Bragin.

Towards the end of the 9-lap race, Bragin's margin had faded to only two tenths, however he was able to increase the pace and to cross the line half-a-second ahead of Karamyshev. Dudukalo took third position, with Golikov in fourth.

These results enabled Bragin to take a solo lead in the Drivers' Championship, ten points ahead of Dudukalo.

The second race will take place tomorrow at 15:25, after the two TCR International Series races.

Live streaming playlist for tomorrow races

Tomorrow it will be possible to follow five TCR races in live streaming on www.tcr-series.tv.

09:45 from Magione: TCR Italy, Race 1

11:25 from Sochi: TCR International Series Race 1

12:55 from Sochi: TCR International Series Race 2

14:15 from Sochi: TCR Russia Race 2

15:20 from Magione: TCR Italy Race 2

All time are CET (GMT +2)

TCR International Series

TCR

SOCHI 5,848 km

Restarted 17:40

Combined Qualifying - OFFICIAL RESULT

Pos	No.	Name	Merk-Marque	Car	R1. Best Tm	R2. Best Tm	Gap
1	1	Stefano Comini	Leopard Racing	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR	2:21.876	2:21.130	
2	74	Pepe Oriola	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT Leon TCR	2:21.734	2:21.271	0.141
3	2	Jean-Karl Vernay	Leopard Racing	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR	2:22.206	2:21.434	0.163
4	10	Gianni Morbidelli	WestCoast Racing	Honda Civic TCR	2:22.522	2:21.699	0.265
5	22	Petr Fulin	Mulsanne Racing	Alfa Romeo Giulietta TCR	2:22.282	2:21.954	0.255
6	62	Dusan Borkovic	B3 Racing Team Hungary	SEAT Leon TCR	2:22.283	2:21.998	0.044
7	54	James Nash	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT Leon TCR	2:22.389	2:22.011	0.013
8	8	Mikhail Grachev	WestCoast Racing	Honda Civic TCR	2:23.035	2:22.171	0.160
9	70	Mat'o Homola	B3 Racing Team Hungary	SEAT Leon TCR	2:23.114	2:22.247	0.076
10	9	Attila Tassi	B3 Racing Team Hungary	SEAT Leon TCR	2:23.138	2:22.386	0.139
11	77	Sergey Afanasyev	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT Leon TCR	2:23.058	2:22.475	0.089
12	7	Davit Kajaia	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR	2:23.522	2:23.089	0.614
13	18	Ildar Rakhmatullin	WestCoast Racing	Honda Civic TCR	2:24.025		0.936
14	19	Vladimir Sheshenin	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR	2:24.108		0.083
15	88	Michela Cerruti	Mulsanne Racing	Alfa Romeo Giulietta TCR	2:24.944		0.836

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