

3 July 2016

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

## **SUNDAY REPORT**

### **Comini retakes the championship lead by one point**

It is full summer in Sochi, with glorious and warm weather and thousands of holiday-makers flocking to the Black Sea beaches. The Russian event also marked the start of the summer break for the TCR International Series, but most importantly, it made the title fight even hotter ahead of the final four race meetings in the Far East.

The action on the track and the penalties issued to Dušan Borković, James Nash and Mat'ó Homola and Davit Kajaia reshuffled the point standings that now see Stefano Comini as the new leader, although he has only a one point advantage on Pepe Oriola and seven on Nash; Jean-Karl Vernay and Homola are fourth and fifth, with gaps of 22 and 23 points respectively, while Gianni Morbidelli is still at striking distance (37 points from the leader) despite a broken suspension forced him out of today's second race.

In Sochi, the Leopard Racing Volkswagen Golf cars expressed their full potential. This allowed Comini to take pole position and an authoritative win in Race 1, while Vernay brought home another podium finish in Race 2. Oriola and Morbidelli completed the podium of the first race, but they neither of them could finish the second race.

Local hero Mikhail Grachev took a superb win in Race 2; the third of the season for him since he joined WestCoast Racing Honda Civic.

Eventually the podiums of both races were filled by three different car brands: Honda (first and third), Volkswagen (first and second) and SEAT (second and third).

The weekend provided more exciting news, with 17-year-old Hungarian Attila Tassi taking his first podium (3<sup>rd</sup>) in Race 2; the B3 Racing's teenager mastered some well-seasoned rivals to sign a great performance. And it was also a great weekend for the Alfa Romeo Giulietta of Mulsanne Racing that Petr Fulín put in P5 on the grid before finishing both races in the points (6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>), the best result so far for the Italian car.

The TCR International Series will resume on August 27 and 28 at Buriram, Thailand, for rounds 15 and 16.

### **Race 1 – An uncatchable Comini claims victory**

Stefano Comini took his second win of the season at Sochi Autodrom. Starting from the pole, the Swiss was able to build a good advantage in the early laps, keeping the Leopard Racing Volkswagen Golf Gti well ahead all rivals up to the chequered flag. Race 1 on the Russian track was characterized by extremely warm weather.

Pepe Oriola finished second after a short duel with Gianni Morbidelli, who had taken an excellent start. The SEAT of the Spaniard and the Honda of the Italian completed a podium where three different manufacturers were represented.

James Nash crossed the line fourth, ahead of Dušan Borković, Mikhail Grachev, Jean-Karl Vernay, Petr Fulín and Davit Kajaia, who animated the race with some close battles. Mat'o Homola took the last point in a race that saw few incidents.

After the race both Nash and Borković received time penalties of 10 and 30 seconds respectively; Nash was demoted from fourth to eighth as he was deemed responsible for a collision with Vernay, while Borković was punished for repeatedly trespassing the track limits and dropped from fifth to 14<sup>th</sup>.

#### Key facts

Start – Poleman Comini takes a good start from Morbidelli, Oriola and Vernay; Afanasyev stalls the engine and starts from the back

Lap 1 – The four leading cars are followed by Nash, Grachev, Borković and Fulín

Lap 2 – Comini builds a gap, at the pace of one second per; Oriola passes Morbidelli for second

Lap 3 – Fulín and Kajaia are in a close battle for 7<sup>th</sup> and swap positions twice; Borković and Grachev are in a similar fight, with the Serbian taking 5<sup>th</sup>

Lap 4 – Vernay makes contact with Nash and drops to 10<sup>th</sup>; Sheshenin pits with damage on the front right wheel and body after hitting a pile of tyres

Lap 6 – Comini leads by 4 seconds on Oriola, then Morbidelli, Nash and Borković; Vernay passes Homola for 9<sup>th</sup>

Lap 7 – Fulín attacks Grachev for 6<sup>th</sup>, with Kajaia chasing them closely; Afanasyev is given a drive-through for trespassing the track limits

Lap 8 – Vernay passes Kajaia for 8<sup>th</sup>

Lap 9 – Vernay takes 7<sup>th</sup> from Fulín

Lap 11 – Comini takes a comfortable win ahead of Oriola, Morbidelli, Nash and Borković

## Race 2 – Grachev shines at home with superb win

Mikhail Grachev played to perfection his role of local hero and delighted Russian fans with a clear win, his third this season. The driver of the WestCoast Racing Honda Civic took a perfect start from row 2 and kept the leadership until the end on the very track where he conquered, last year, his first TCR podium finish.

Jean-Karl Vernay, in the Leopard Racing Volkswagen Golf, put in a strong performance to take second, right ahead of Attila Tassi. The young Hungarian driver resisted well to the attacks of some much more experienced touring car stars to visit for the first time the TCR podium, to the delight of the B3 Racing Team squad, becoming the youngest ever podium finishers in the International Series.

James Nash was again fourth, ahead of Stefano Comini, but the Brit rounded his weekend by taking the lead in the overall standings, although by only one point on Comini and two on Pepe Oriola, which leaves the fight for the title more open than ever ahead of the final four events in Asia. Other top title contenders had a difficult Race 2, losing heavy points: Oriola retired with a steering issue and Gianni Morbidelli was stopped by a broken suspension on the penultimate lap while he was chasing Tassi.

After the race, Mat'o Homola was given a 5-second time penalty for being in a wrong position on the starting grid; this demoted him from ninth to tenth. Another penalty of 30-seconds was imposed for Davit Kajaia for track limits that dropped him from seventh to 11<sup>th</sup>.

## Key facts

Start – Grachev takes the best start and is first ahead of Tassi, Nash and Homola; Fulín and Rakhmatullin start from the pit lane

Lap 1 – Grachev leads from Tassi, Nash, Homola, Vernay and Morbidelli

Lap 2 – Nash puts the pressure on Tassi, while Vernay is attacking Homola

Lap 3 – Homola drops to 8<sup>th</sup> behind Vernay, Comini, Morbidelli, Oriola and Borković

Lap 5 – Vernay overtakes Nash for 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Lap 6 – Tassi and Vernay are in a close fight; Morbidelli takes 4<sup>th</sup> from Nash

Lap 7 – Vernay passes Tassi for second

Lap 8 – Oriola slows down and retires; Tassi is hit by Morbidelli who is chased by Nash

Lap 9 – Tassi resists in third position

Lap 10 – Morbidelli hits a wall after a suspension failure

Lap 11 – Grachev takes home win from Vernay, Tassi, Nash, Comini and Borković

## Quotes from the podium finishers in the two races

Stefano Comini (winner Race 1): *"I had an excellent weekend and I certainly did not expect to go away from Russia with such a close situation in the standings. I must say the car here was working perfectly. It is the first time I have the feeling that we are exploiting to the fullest the potential of the car. For sure, lowering the height of the car by 10mm helped, but the team also did a fantastic job. Following yesterday's pole, I really put all my chances on Race 1, so we had four new tyres, and everything went well. I took a good start and focused during the first laps in building a sufficient gap. That's what happened."*

Pepe Oriola (second in Race 1): *"It was a weekend with two completely different races. P2 in the first one was an excellent result. I took it after a short fight with Gianni (Morbidelli), but there was nothing I could do against Stefano (Comini). Not only is he a very good driver, but this time his car showed great pace. In Race 2, I was aiming at some good points, but had a problem with the steering since the beginning, I couldn't keep the car straight and turning became more and more difficult, so I preferred to stop. Now the championship is again very open and I think we'll have a lot of fun in Asia for the final part of the season."*



# press release



Gianni Morbidelli (third in Race 1): *"A frustrating weekend and I think we have lost all chances for the championship, despite what the figures say, because the car is just not fast enough. As it happened last year, we had a good start and then we started struggling. Today, third in Race 1 was the maximum we could aim at and in Race 2, when I was fighting for some heavy points, something broke in a suspension..."*

Mikhail Grachev (winner of Race 2): *"I am really happy of this win, the third of the season and at home! I really want to thank WestCoast Racing because they did a fantastic job. I had a problem with my front tyres in Race 1, their temperature was too high and there was no grip. In-between the two races, the guys worked to find a solution, despite the very short turn-around time, and they managed to solve the problem. The car was perfect. I could take a very good start, build some gap and stay in front. It wasn't easy, there was a lot of fighting behind me and when I saw Vernay emerging, I knew I was going to have some pressure on me, but eventually it worked. I think starting well in both races was key today, I am really happy about my starts since I drive the Civic, now I really want to improve my qualifying, so that I can be in a better position on the grids."*

Jean-Karl Vernay (second in Race 2): *"It has been a tough weekend for me: a new track, so much heat and a flu, really not easy. But I am happy I could do well and I liked the Sochi Autodrom a lot. Unfortunately, my Race 1 was spoiled when Nash hit me and I dropped from 4<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>, climbing back a few positions afterwards. Race 2 was much better. I won a couple of duels and finished second. By then, my tyres were not in a good situation and I was really sick, so I just tried to stay where I was."*

Attila Tassi (third in Race 2): *"It is very nice to be on the podium for the first time, but I really want to go for more results like this and to be on a higher spot soon. I think I made a good start in Race 2 and that I did a nice race having to defend myself from the attacks of much more experienced drivers. I did a little mistake at some point and Vernay passed me, but I managed to keep Morbidelli at bay until he had a problem. In the last lap, I just tried to stay focused and get on the podium. I really want to thank the B3 Racing Team for all their support, after a difficult start of the season, and my parents for allowing me to do what I like."*

# TCR International Series

Sorted on Laps

TCR SOCHI 5,848 km  
 Race 1 official result 03.07.2016 12:35  
 Race (11 Laps) started at 12:35:32

Pos	No.	Name	Заявитель	Car	Gap	Total Tm	Best Tm	In L	Avg. Speed
1	1	Stefano Comini	Leopard Racing	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR		26:08.805	2:21.315	3	147,616
2	74	Pepe Oriola	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT Leon TCR	1.915	26:10.720	2:21.912	3	147,436
3	10	Gianni Morbidelli	WestCoast Racing	Honda Civic TCR	6.163	26:16.883	2:22.701	6	146,860
4	8	Mikhail Grachev	WestCoast Racing	Honda Civic TCR	8.626	26:25.509	2:23.022	11	146,061
5	2	Jean-Karl Vernay	Leopard Racing	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR	1.014	26:26.523	2:22.541	6	145,968
6	22	Petr Fulin	Mulsanne Racing	Alfa Romeo Giulietta TCR	2.678	26:29.201	2:22.898	4	145,722
7	7	Davit Kajaia	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR	0.777	26:29.978	2:23.209	4	145,650
8	54	James Nash	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT Leon TCR	1.694	26:31.672	2:22.853	3	145,495
9	70	Mat'o Homola	B3 Racing Team Hungary	SEAT Leon TCR	0.213	26:31.885	2:23.115	4	145,476
10	9	Attila Tassi	B3 Racing Team Hungary	SEAT Leon TCR	0.915	26:32.800	2:23.132	5	145,392
11	18	Ildar Rakhmatullin	WestCoast Racing	Honda Civic TCR	14.895	26:47.695	2:24.074	5	144,045
12	88	Michela Cerruti	Mulsanne Racing	Alfa Romeo Giulietta TCR	1.492	26:49.187	2:24.331	5	143,912
13	77	Sergey Afanasyev	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT Leon TCR	0.715	26:49.902	2:23.007	10	143,848
14	62	Dusan Borkovic	B3 Racing Team Hungary	SEAT Leon TCR	3.638	26:53.540	2:22.785	4	143,523
Not classified (75% = 8 Laps)									
DNF	19	Vladimir Sheshenin	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR		10:26.309	2:24.597	3	134,456

## Announcements

Cars 62 (Dusan Borkovic) +30 seconds added to the elapsed time by decision №08  
 Cars54 (James Nash)+ 10 seconds seconds added to the elapsed time by decision №09

Margin of Victory	Avg. Speed	Best Lap Tm	Best Speed	Best Lap by
1.915	147,616	2:21.315	148,978	1 - Stefano Comini

Race Director

Orbits

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# TCR International Series

Sorted on Laps

TCR SOCHI 5,848 km  
 Race 2 official result 03.07.2016 14:05  
 Race (11 Laps) started at 14:05:42

Pos	No.	Name	Заявитель	Car	Gap	Total Tm	Best Tm	In L	Avg. Speed
1	8	Mikhail Grachev	WestCoast Racing	Honda Civic TCR		26:14.025	2:22.553	9	147,127
2	2	Jean-Karl Vernay	Leopard Racing	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR	1.254	26:15.279	2:22.053	4	147,009
3	9	Attila Tassi	B3 Racing Team Hungary	SEAT Leon TCR	4.700	26:19.979	2:22.447	6	146,572
4	54	James Nash	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT Leon TCR	0.635	26:20.614	2:22.639	4	146,513
5	1	Stefano Comini	Leopard Racing	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR	1.373	26:21.987	2:21.213	2	146,386
6	62	Dusan Borkovic	B3 Racing Team Hungary	SEAT Leon TCR	0.291	26:22.278	2:22.546	2	146,359
7	77	Sergey Afanasyev	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT Leon TCR	5.724	26:28.002	2:22.861	4	145,832
8	22	Petr Fulin	Mulsanne Racing	Alfa Romeo Giulietta TCR	2.151	26:30.153	2:22.245	2	145,634
9	70	Mat'o Homola	B3 Racing Team Hungary	SEAT Leon TCR	4.475	26:34.628	2:23.011	7	145,226
10	19	Vladimir Sheshenin	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR	4.088	26:38.716	2:24.064	3	144,854
11	7	Davit Kajaia	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR	17.104	26:55.820	2:22.474	2	143,321
12	10	Gianni Morbidelli	WestCoast Racing	Honda Civic TCR	2 Laps	21:32.197	2:22.297	4	146,630
13	74	Pepe Oriola	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT Leon TCR	1 Lap	19:23.328	2:21.559	2	144,776
Not classified (75% = 8 Laps)									
D N F	88	Michela Cerruti	Mulsanne Racing	Alfa Romeo Giulietta TCR		12:11.694	2:23.612	4	143,863
D N F	18	Ildar Rakhmatullin	WestCoast Racing	Honda Civic TCR		7:52.808	2:28.897	2	133,581

## Announcements

Cars70 (Mat'o Homola) +5 seconds seconds added to the elapsed time by decision №10  
 Cars7 (Davit Kajaia) +30 seconds seconds added to the elapsed time by decision №11

Margin of Victory	Avg. Speed	Best Lap Tm	Best Speed	Best Lap by
1.254	147,127	2:21.213	149,085	1 - Stefano Comini

Race Director

Orbits

Timekeeper

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## 2016 TCR INTERNATIONAL SERIES - TEAMS' CLASSIFICATION

[illegible]

## 2016 TCR INTERNATIONAL SERIES - CAR MODEL OF THE YEAR

[illegible]