

22 August 2016

Rounds 15 & 16 – Buriram, Thailand – 27 / 28 August 2016

PREVIEW

TCR's Asian leg begins this week in Thailand

The TCR International Series will resume this weekend at Buriram's Chang International Circuit, following an eight-week summer break after the meeting in Sochi. The Thai event also marks the beginning of the Asian leg that will later call at Singapore, Sepang and Macau, where the season will come to an end on November 20.

The series raced at Buriram last year, when all the drivers and teams members were amazed to discover the state-of-the-art Chang International Circuit designed by Hermann Tilke that had been inaugurated in 2014.

The track layout is well-suited to Touring Car competition, providing several overtaking places and corners where three or four cars can run abreast.

In last year's event Pepe Oriola and Stefano Comini took a win apiece, in a weekend that saw the SEAT cars dominate their rivals. The Craft-Bamboo Lukoil team posted a 1-2-3 in Race 1 (Oriola, Gené and Afanasyev) and Target Competition then returned a 1-2 in Race 2 with Comini and Hezemans. It was a weekend to forget for the Honda and Volkswagen cars, all victims of technical issues or race incidents; notably Gianni Morbidelli who saw his hopes to stay in contention for the title washed away by a drive-through for jump-start in Race 1 and an engine failure in Race 2.

The TCR International Series will hit the track on Saturday, with two 30-minute Practice sessions and Qualifying, split into Q1 (20 minutes) and Q2 (10 minutes, for the twelve fastest in Q1).

The two races will then be run back-to-back on Sunday, in the early afternoon.

TCR in Buriram – the event at a glance

Lap distance: 4.54 km

Race distance: 14 laps

Start: standing

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

Timetable:	Saturday, 11:00/11:30	Free Practice 1
	Saturday, 13:00/13:30	Free Practice 2
	Saturday, 15:30/16:05	Qualifying (Q1 + Q2)
	Sunday, 12:35	Race 1
	Sunday, 14:05	Race 2

all times: GMT +7

Maximum success ballast for Comini in Thailand

It will be the Leopard Racing Volkswagen Golf Gti driven by Stefano Comini that will carry the 30 kilos of maximum success ballast in the next race meeting of the TCR International Series that will take place in Thailand, at Buriram's Chang International Circuit.

The reigning champion emerged as the best scorer in the latest event at Sochi, Russia; the Swiss collected 40 points (pole position, victory in Race 1 and fifth place in Race 2) that propelled him on top of the standings once again.

WestCoast Racing's Mikhail Grachev – the winner of the second race in his home country's event – scored 37 points, meaning that his Honda Civic will be laden by 20 kilos of success ballast, while Comini's teammate Jean-Karl Vernay (31 points for him in Russia) will carry 10 extra kilos.

With these success ballasts added to the BoP, the running weights of the three cars will be: 1315 kg for Comini's Golf, 1335 kg for Grachev's Civic and 1295 kg for Vernay's Golf.

The SEAT cars of the other title contenders – Pepe Oriola, James Nash and Mat'o Homola – will run on 1315 kilos.

Six drivers will be engaged in a close fight for the title

Over a third of the season still lies ahead before the 2016 TCR International Series will crown its second champion ever. And the title fight is red-hot, with six drivers covered by 37 points when a possible 220 are still at stake.

Stefano Comini and Pepe Oriola, the 2015 champion and runner-up respectively, are on top of the standings once again; the Swiss and his Leopard Racing Volkswagen Golf have regained the leadership after Sochi, but Oriola lies only one point behind in the Craft-Bamboo Lukoil SEAT León.

A further six points adrift is Oriola's teammate James Nash, while Comini's Leopard Racing colleague Jean-Karl Vernay is currently fourth with a gap of 22 points. Only one further point behind him is another SEAT driver, B3 Racing Team's Mat'o Homola.

And although Gianni Morbidelli (WestCoast Racing Honda Civic) has declared himself out of contention after a string of disappointing results, he can't be ruled out as a change of luck might put the former F1 racer in the position to significantly cut his 37-point gap.

The rest of the field has only theoretical chances, beginning with Sergey Afanasyev (Craft-Bamboo Lukoil) who is seventh, 51 points behind the leader.

Top Run Motorsport re-joins from Buriram with new Subaru

Top Run Motorsport will re-join the TCR International Series for the Asian rounds, starting with the next event in Thailand. The Italian engineering company took part in the first two race meetings of the season, in Bahrain and Portugal, before electing to temporarily suspend racing to focus on the technical development of the Subaru WRX TCR car.

Team manager Renato Russo explained: *"Following the meeting we had in Tokyo with Subaru STi, we have built a brand new car that features a number of technical improvements and some new parts that are better suited to the TCR regulations. The new car successfully went through an intensive testing programme and was later shipped to Thailand where our technical staff will be assisted by David Rowe of MoTec for the engine management and Hiroshi Nakagawa of TEIN for the dampers."*

All the testing was conducted by the official tester Luca Rangoni, who was also joined by Luigi Ferrara; the latter drove the Subaru in Bahrain and will be at the wheel again in Buriram.

"We have also upgraded our first car to the same specifications – the one that was raced in the last events of 2015 and in the first two of the current season – and that has been shipped to Singapore. We will run both cars there, in Malaysia and at Macau," Russo added.

A strong Thai contingent enhances the field to 26 cars

The TCR International Series field will reach a season high of 26 cars in Buriram, thanks to the addition of a strong Thai contingent.

Thailand was one of the first countries to embrace the TCR concept and launch its own racing series. Promoted by Racing Spirit within the frame of the popular Thailand Super Series, TCR Thailand has already completed two race meetings (both at Buriram), featuring about ten cars. Some of its competitors will take part in the TCR International Series event at Buriram, eager to show off themselves against the international stars.

Vattana Motorsport will field a couple of young drivers who are among the fastest in the national series: Narasak Ittiritpong (Honda Civic) and Jack Lemvard (SEAT León). Three other SEAT cars will be run by the Kratingdaeng Racing Team for Grant Supaphongs, Alexander Mies (a 24-year old German with a solid Touring Car experience) and Taipei's Chen Jian Hong.

Nattachak Hanjirkasen and Kanthadee Kusiri will be at the wheel of Honda Civic cars for the TBN MK Ihere Racing Team and the Eakie BBR Kaiten respectively, while Paritat Bulbon (Sloth Racing) and Rattarin Leenutaphong (Yontrakit Racing Team) will race SEAT cars.

Munkong Sathienthirakul will provide the icing on the cake, driving a Volkswagen Golf for the Liqui Moly Team Engstler. He had already made a one-off appearance last year at Buriram, winning the TCR Asia class in a SEAT run by the Craft-Bamboo Racing.

Rafaël Galiana's return with WestCoast Racing

Rafaël Galiana has a soft spot for Asia. After taking part in last year's events at Singapore, Buriram and Macau, the French driver returns to the TCR International Series and will drive a WestCoast Racing Honda Civic in Thailand.

An amateur racing driver, Galiana is also known as 'Mr Tecpro'; in fact after several years of research and development, in 2000 he launched a safety barrier that proved much more effective than the tyre walls that were previously used in most of the circuits. Today Tecpro collaborates with FIA, FIM, and a number of National Sporting Authorities and works together with renowned racetrack designers and architects.

Live streaming and timing from Thailand and Russia

The TCR International Series event in Buriram will be covered live on the web with streaming and timing, as well as the TCR Russia from the Smolensk Ring, according to the timetable here below:

TCR International Series, Buriram (www.tcr-series.com and www.tcr-series.tv)

Saturday, 11:00 (06:00 CET) – Free Practice 1, **timing**

Saturday, 12:55 (07:55 CET) – Free Practice 2, **timing and streaming**

Saturday, 15:25 (10:25 CET) – Qualifying, **timing and streaming**

Sunday, 12:25 (07:25 CET) – Race 1, **timing and streaming**

Sunday, 13:55 (08:55 CET) – Race 2, **timing and streaming**

(all times local, GMT +7)

TCR Russia, Smolensk (www.tcr-series.tv and www.smp-rskg.tv)

Saturday, 09:30 (08:30 CET) – Free Practice, **timing**

Saturday, 11:25 (10:25 CET) – Qualifying, **timing**

Saturday, 14:10 (13:10 CET) – Race 1, **timing and streaming**

Sunday, 15:15 (14:15 CET) – Race 2, **timing and streaming**

(all times local, GMT +3)

entry list



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#	team	driver	car
1	Leopard Racing	Stefano Comini (SUI)	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR
2	Leopard Racing	Jean-Karl Vernay (FRA)	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR
7	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	Davit Kajaia (GEO)	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR
8	West Coast Racing	Mikhail Grachev (RUS)	Honda Civic TCR
9	B3 Racing Team Hungary	Attila Tassi (HUN)	SEAT León TCR
10	West Coast Racing	Gianni Morbidelli (ITA)	Honda Civic TCR
11	Kratingdaeng Racing Team	Grant Supaphongs (THA)	SEAT León Cup Racer
12	Kratingdaeng Racing Team	Alexander Mies (GER)	SEAT León Cup Racer
13	Vattana Motorsport	Narasak Ittiritpong (THA)	Honda Civic TCR
15	Eakie BBR Kaiten	Kantadhee Kusiri (THA)	Honda Civic TCR
22	Mulsanne Racing	Petr Fulín (CZE)	Alfa Romeo Giulietta TCR
32	Top Run Motorsport	Luigi Ferrara (ITA)	Subaru WRX STi TCR
35	West Coast Racing	Rafaël Galiana (FRA)	Honda Civic TCR
44	Vattana Motorsport	Jack Lemvard (THA)	SEAT León Cup Racer
51	LMS Racing	Kari-Pekka Laaksonen (FIN)	SEAT León Cup Racer
54	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	James Nash (GBR)	SEAT León TCR
55	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	Munkong Sathienthirakul (THA)	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR
58	Kratingdaeng Racing Team	Chen Jian Hong (TPE)	SEAT León Cup Racer
62	B3 Racing Team Hungary	Dušan Borković (SRB)	SEAT León TCR
66	TBN MK Ihere Racing Team	Nattachak Hanjitsasen (THA)	Honda Civic TCR
70	B3 Racing Team Hungary	Mat'ó Homola (SVK)	SEAT León TCR
74	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	Pepe Oriola (ESP)	SEAT León TCR
77	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	Sergey Afanasyev (RUS)	SEAT León TCR
88	Mulsanne Racing	Michela Cerruti (ITA)	Alfa Romeo Giulietta TCR
90	Yontrakit Racing Team	Rattarin Leenutaphong (THA)	SEAT León Cup Racer
97	Sloth Racing	Paritat Bulbon (THA)	SEAT León Cup Racer