

**27 August 2016**

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

## **SATURDAY REPORT**

### **Qualifying – Pepe Oriola beats Gianni Morbidelli by 1/1000**

In the closest Qualifying from the beginning of the season Pepe Oriola claimed his first pole position of the year beating Gianni Morbidelli by only one thousandth of a second.

It was also a very rewarding recognition for the Craft-Bamboo Lukoil team that had worked very hard since yesterday to rebuild James Nash's car after the shunt in testing and to solve a technical issue on Sergey Afanasyev's. On top of this, the five points awarded for the pole position enabled Oriola to re-take the championship lead by two points ahead of Stefano Comini.

The Qualifying results proved that competition is very close on the track – with the six fastest drivers in Q2 covered by three tenths. Meaning that two exciting races should be expected for tomorrow.

There will be an all-Russian front row on the reverse grid for Race 2, with Mikhail Grachev on pole and Afanasyev alongside him.

The first race will start tomorrow at 12:30 local time (7:25am in Central Europe), over a distance of 14 laps.

#### Q1: Morbidelli and Comini are very close

Gianni Morbidelli set the pace from the beginning with a provisional fastest time of 1:44.281 that he improved on the following lap to 1:44.109; a mark that was not to be beaten. Stefano Comini posted the second fastest lap of 1:44.180 in the final moments, demoting James Nash (1:44.340) and Pepe Oriola (1:44.393) to third and fourth.

It was an extremely close Q1, with the first 13 drivers covered only by six tenths of a second. Kantadhee Kusiri was the only Thai driver to advance to Q2 (8<sup>th</sup> fastest – 1:44.488), while Petr Fulín provided the final thrill by posting the 10<sup>th</sup> fastest lap (1:44.532) and kicking Davit Kajaia (whose car suffered from a broken drive-shaft) off the top-twelve in the process. Kajaia's teammate Munkong Sathienthirakul missed the whole session due to a gearbox failure.

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

#### Q2: Oriola on pole for the first time

Pepe Oriola won his first pole of the season with a perfect lap of 1:43.634 that was only one thousandths of a second faster than Gianni Morbidelli's 1:43.635.

The first spell at the pole was from Stefano Comini (1:43.865), but the reigning champion was immediately demoted by Morbidelli (1:43.834) and the later was then beaten by Jean-Karl Vernay (1:43.767).

On his second attempt, Morbidelli jumped on top again with a lap of 1:44.733, but Oriola managed to go faster (1:44.634) and Morbidelli's last lap (1:44.635) was only 0.001 seconds slower. Kantadhee Kusiri continued in his impressive effort and qualified in eighth, while Petr Fulín could not post any lap time due to an electrical issue.

## **Quotes after Qualifying at Chang International Circuit**

Pepe Oriola (pole position): *"I am really happy with this pole that I didn't expect at all. After free practice and Q1, I could never expect to beat Gianni, but I did, despite having to abort my first attempt because of traffic. Then, I found myself alone and I really enjoyed that clear lap. I know that it's when you enjoy driving that you are faster, but still, I didn't expect that to be the pole, the first this season. The points attached to it allowed me to retake the lead in the standings, but that doesn't mean anything, we still have eight races to go, and I won't think about that until Macau."*

Gianni Morbidelli (second fastest): *"I did my best and it was a great effort by the entire team to work on the set-up of the car during these two days. It worked well. I missed the pole by one thousandth of a second, which is nothing, some millimetres, but the most important is that the car goes well. When I did my fastest time, I had already three laps in my tyres, which showed that the balance was good. Tomorrow, the biggest problem will be managing the effects of extreme heat..."*

Jean-Karl Vernay (third fastest): *"We are all very close, which proved how competitive and balanced the level of the series is. I was not very confident about the set-up after free practices, but then, analysing the data, we discovered that the problem was probably... me. I tried to calm down and have a cooler approach, and it worked. It's my first time on this track and I really like it a lot."*

Kanthadee Kusiri (eighth fastest): *"It was an excellent result for me and I thank the team that gave me a perfect car and helped a lot in working on the set-up. It's my first race with a TCR car and it is very different from F.3, there are a lot of things to learn in a very short time. Tomorrow it won't be easy but I'll go for it and push as hard as I can."*

## **TCR Thailand joins the International Series for a family photo**

The tradition of taking TCR family pictures was carried on today at Buriram's Chang International Circuit, where cars and drivers of the TCR International Series and TCR Thailand were lined up all together on the track for the photo call.

TCR promoter Marcello Lotti also joined the picture, together with the circuit's managing director Tanaisiri Chanvitayaron and Paritat Bulbon, the promoter (but also a competitor) of TCR Thailand.

## **Buriram United young stars beat TCR drivers after penalties**

Motorsports and football are closely linked at Buriram, as the Chang International Circuit is next door to the I-Mobile Stadium, the home of Buriram United, one of the top teams in Thailand's Premier League. Friday evening, an unusual match took place between TCR drivers and the Buriram United Academy, the junior team of local heroes.

The two sides played an intense match of two 15-minute half-times, which started with some difficulty for the TCR drivers, down by 3-0 after only six minutes... Progressively, though, the car aces reduced the gap, as they became more involved into the action and improved team effort. While Mikhail Grachev and Davit Kajaia, among others, showed excellent game vision, Jean-Karl Vernay and Dušan Borković impressed with technical skills.

The TCR squad reduced the disadvantage to 4-3, with goals of Borković and Marc Masip (Pepe Oriola's personal trainer who scored twice), before Vernay tied the score in the dying seconds of the match.

The draw led to a penalty shoot-out that Buriram United young guns won 8-6. A truly honourable defeat for the four-wheel guys, which was followed with enthusiasm by the TCR and Buriram United communities, led by TCR promoter Marcello Lotti and Buriram United President Newin Chidchob. One of the top stars of Buriram United first team, Andrés Túñez, a former player of Venezuela national team, also attended and lent his savoir-faire to TCR drivers for a few minutes.

## **Live streaming playlist for tomorrow races**

Tomorrow it will be possible to follow three TCR races in live streaming on [www.tcr-series.tv](http://www.tcr-series.tv).

12:25 (07:25 CET) from Buriram: TCR International Series Race 1

13:55 (08:55 CET) from Buriram: TCR International Series Race 2

15:15 (14:15 CET) from Smolensk: TCR Russia Race 2



## TCR International Series 2016

### Result of the combined Qualifications - TCR International Series

#### OFFICIAL RESULT

26 - 28 August 2016  
Buriram - 4554 mtr.

Pos	Nbr	Cls	PIC	Name / Entrant	Car	Qual-1	Qual-2	Fastest	Gap
1	74			Pepe Oriola Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT León TCR	1:44.393	<b>1:43.634</b>	<b>1:43.634</b>	
2	10			Gianni Morbidelli West Coast Racing	Honda Civic TCR	1:44.109	<b>1:43.635</b>	<b>1:43.635</b>	0.001
3	2			Jean-Karl Vernay Leopard Racing	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR	1:44.444	<b>1:43.767</b>	<b>1:43.767</b>	0.133
4	1			Stefano Comini Leopard Racing	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR	1:44.189	<b>1:43.885</b>	<b>1:43.885</b>	0.251
5	70			Mat'ó Homola B3 Racing Team Hungary	SEAT León TCR	1:44.451	<b>1:43.927</b>	<b>1:43.927</b>	0.293
6	54			James Nash Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT León TCR	1:44.340	<b>1:43.994</b>	<b>1:43.994</b>	0.360
7	62			Dušan Borković B3 Racing Team Hungary	SEAT León TCR	1:44.422	<b>1:44.066</b>	<b>1:44.066</b>	0.432
8	15	T		Kantadhee Kusiri Eakie BBR Kaiten	Honda Civic TCR	1:44.488	<b>1:44.104</b>	<b>1:44.104</b>	0.470
9	77			Sergey Afanasyev Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT León TCR	1:44.658	<b>1:44.344</b>	<b>1:44.344</b>	0.710
10	8			Mikhail Grachev West Coast Racing	Honda Civic TCR	1:44.516	<b>1:44.397</b>	<b>1:44.397</b>	0.763
11	9			Attila Tassi B3 Racing Team Hungary	SEAT León TCR	1:44.628	<b>1:44.532</b>	<b>1:44.532</b>	0.898
12	22			Petr Fulín Mulsanne Racing	Alfa Romeo Giulietta TCR	<b>1:44.532</b>		<b>1:44.532</b>	0.898
13	7			Davit Kajaia Liqui Moly Team Engstler	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR	<b>1:44.753</b>		<b>1:44.753</b>	1.119
14	44	T		Jack Lemvard Vattana Motorsport	SEAT León Cup Racer	<b>1:45.020</b>		<b>1:45.020</b>	1.386
15	13	T		Narasak Ittiritpong Vattana Motorsport	Honda Civic TCR	<b>1:45.108</b>		<b>1:45.108</b>	1.474
16	35			Rafaël Galiana West Coast Racing	Honda Civic TCR	<b>1:45.371</b>		<b>1:45.371</b>	1.737
17	12	T		Alexander Mies Kratingdaeng Racing Team	SEAT León Cup Racer	<b>1:45.638</b>		<b>1:45.638</b>	2.004
18	53			Kari-Pekka Laaksonen LMS Racing	SEAT León Cup Racer	<b>1:45.885</b>		<b>1:45.885</b>	2.251
19	32			Luigi Ferrara Top Run Motorsport	Subaru WRX STi TCR	<b>1:46.009</b>		<b>1:46.009</b>	2.375
20	66	T		Nattachak Hanjitsasen TBN MK ihere Racing Team	Honda Civic TCR	<b>1:46.510</b>		<b>1:46.510</b>	2.876
21	11	T		Grant Supaphongs Kratingdaeng Racing Team	SEAT León Cup Racer	<b>1:46.648</b>		<b>1:46.648</b>	3.014
22	97	T		Paritat Bulbon Sloth Racing	SEAT León Cup Racer	<b>1:46.809</b>		<b>1:46.809</b>	3.175
DNQ	58	T		Chen Jian Hong Kratingdaeng Racing Team	SEAT León Cup Racer				
DNS	55			Munkong Sathienthirakul Liqui Moly Team Engstler	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR				


Fastest time : 1:43.634 in lap 3 by nbr. 74 : Pepe Oriola (SEAT León TCR)

Results and Laptimes : [www.raceresults.nu](http://www.raceresults.nu)

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Steward		Steward	Steward	Timekeeper	
Page 1 of 1		Results remain provisional pending technical examination and decisions from the stewards of the meeting			