



10 May 2017

Rounds 7 & 8 – 4 Hours of Monza – 12 / 14 May 2017

PREVIEW

TCR returns to Italy's 'Temple of Speed'

The fourth race meeting of the 2017 TCR International Series takes place this weekend on Monza's super-fast Autodromo, which is known worldwide as the 'Temple of Speed'; another legendary motorsport venue visited by the series, after Spa-Francorchamps where rounds 5 and 6 were run last week.

The International Series has already competed at Monza, in 2015, providing two very lively races in which groups of cars were running abreast into every corner.

Local hero Gianni Morbidelli scored a double victory at the wheel of a WestCoast Racing Honda Civic, but he had to fight hard to recover and beat his competitors.

In Race 1, Morbidelli had a poor start from pole and eventually emerged as the winner after a four-way fight with the SEAT cars of Pepe Oriola, Andrea Belicchi and Stefano Comini.

The second race was even more thrilling, as Fernando Monje took the lead in his Opel Astra. The Spaniard was chased by a group of six cars that included Morbidelli, Belicchi, Oriola, Comini, Jordi Gené and Kevin Gleason. Positions were swapped several times and contacts were made. Finally Morbidelli beat Gené and Monje to the line by mere inches, with the latter giving Opel its best result so far in the series.

This year the TCR International Series runs within the frame of the European Le Mans Series 4 Hours. Track activity will begin on Friday, with two 30-minute Free Practice sessions; Qualifying will take place on Saturday morning, followed by the first Race in the early afternoon. Race 2 will start on Sunday morning.

TCR in Monza – the event at a glance

Lap distance: 5.79 km

Race distance: 11 laps

Start: standing

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

Timetable:	Friday, 11:20/11:50	Free Practice 1
	Friday, 13:55/14:25	Free Practice 2
	Saturday, 10:45/11:20	Qualifying (Q1 + Q2)
	Saturday, 14:30	Race 1
	Sunday, 10:55	Race 2

all times: GMT +2

Will Monza produce a seventh different race winner?

After the first three events of the season, Leopard Racing's Jean-Karl Vernay has been able to build a cushion of points between himself and his rivals. The Frenchman has scored in all of the six races held so far, finishing on the podium three times, including his first victory of the year in the second race at Spa.

Vernay's margin amounts to 25 points ahead of Stefano Comini, while Attila Tassi, Dušan Borković and Roberto Colciago rank from third to fifth with gaps of 38, 40 and 41 points respectively.

However, considering how level is the performance between the top cars and drivers, it's a safe prediction that the title fight will be very hard-fought.

A look at the statistics explains everything. The six races held so far have produced six different winners at the wheel of five different models of cars: Alfa Romeo, SEAT, Honda, Audi and Volkswagen (in chronological order).

Only the Opel Astra has not won a race yet, but has already shown its potential with the 1-2 in Bahrain Qualifying and the victory claimed by Mat'ò Homola in TCR Benelux a couple of weeks ago. In fact, Homola and his DG Sport Compétition teammate Pierre-Yves Corthals have frequently been handicapped by bad luck.

Along the straights of Monza, outright speed will be a factor, which could be an advantage for the Honda and the SEAT cars, while Comini and Vernay will have to cope with the extra weight of the Success Ballast.

With such a close field, it wouldn't be a surprise if Monza produces a seventh different race winner, or even an eighth...

Colciago, Morbidelli and Alfa Romeo; the Italian Factor

The Autodromo is one of the favourite places for Italian motorsport fans, especially when they can cheer representatives of the national colours, either drivers or cars.

Roberto Colciago in the M1RA Honda Civic Type-R will be one of the men to watch. Monza is his - and JAS Motorsport's - home racetrack and the reigning TCR Italy champion is eager to make up for a disappointing Belgian weekend, when the Success Ballast greatly affected the performance of his Civic on the steep slopes of Spa.

Gianni Morbidelli too has a special feeling with the Autodromo, where he won both races on the occasion of the TCR's first visit in 2015. And on top of this, the former F1 racer is eager to make up for a disappointing start of the season that saw him struggling to set up the WestCoast Racing Volkswagen Golf GTI.

However, quite possibly the Tifosi's strongest support will go to the Romeo Ferraris-built Alfa Romeo Giulietta cars driven by Davit Kajaia and Dusan Borković. Both the Georgian and the Serbian have already savoured the sweet taste of victory in the previous rounds, but success in Monza would have a very different meaning.

In fact, the last time an Alfa Romeo won a Touring Car race at the Autodromo dates back to 2006...too long a wait!



Success Ballast for Comini and Vernay

In the Monza event, Success Ballast will only be carried by Stefano Comini and Jean-Karl Vernay, the race winners of the previous event at Spa-Francorchamps.

Comini was the best scorer in Belgium, with pole position, victory in Race 1 and third in Race 2 that brought him 45 points, but also 30 kilos of Success Ballast. Vernay, the current points leader, scored 39 points in Spa and so will be given 20 extra kilos.

The 10-kilo Success Ballast for the third best scorer will not be allocated, as Benjamin Lessennes (who pocketed 31 points in his home race meeting) will not race at Monza.

As a result, Comini's Comtoyout Racing Audi RS3 LMS will weigh 1360kg (1285kg minimum weight + 30kg Success Ballast + 45kg Balance of Performance adjustment), while the running weight of Vernay's Leopard Racing WRT Volkswagen Golf GTI will be 1315kg (1285kg + 20kg SB + 10kg BoP).

Jaap van Lagen replaces Rob Huff at Monza

Jaap van Lagen will replace Rob Huff at the wheel of the Leopard Racing Volkswagen Golf GTI for this weekend's race meeting at Monza.

Huff, who joined the team last week at Spa, is forced to skip Monza because of a previous commitment and will be back from the following event at the Salzburgring.

With Jean-Karl Vernay currently leading the TCR International Series standings, the team did not want to miss the opportunity of fielding its second car and picked van Lagen who is both experienced and fast enough to provide good support to the Frenchman.

"I'm very much looking forward to my first TCR event ever at Monza! Especially because I'm joining a top team and I will be driving a competitive car. For me it's a good opportunity to come back to Touring Car racing after a few years with LADA Sport. I hope I will be able to do a good job and score important points for the team!" van Lagen said.

Cappellari joins the TCR International Series in Monza

Daniele Cappellari, a regular competitor in TCR Italy, will join the International Series for the Italian event at Monza.

At a time when big articulated trucks line up behind the garages at each racetrack and hospitality suites fill the paddocks, Cappellari and his partner and team manager Fabiola bring their SEAT León on a trailer and sleep in a camper van like in the 'good old days', proving that the category is really affordable for independent teams and drivers.

And competing with a family-run team in this way does not affect results, as was proved by finishing in fifth position in last year's TCR Italy.

Now, Daniele is looking forward to his first international appearance at Monza: "I feel very excited and I'm sure I will remember the Monza weekend for the rest of my life. I love Touring Car racing and when I was a boy I never missed a Super Touring race on TV, but I couldn't even dream of taking part in an International event at Monza! Whatever will be, I will be happy. But I also hope to show off and find some support for the future. It will be a dream come true and I dare to hope that it will not be a one-off..."



Full live coverage from Monza

Fans will be able to follow live on the Internet the whole action of the TCR International Series at Monza on www.tcr-series.com and www.tcr-series.tv according to the following timetable.

Friday, 11:20 – Free Practice 1, **timing**
Friday, 13:55 – Free Practice 2, **timing**
Saturday, 10:45 – Qualifying, **timing and streaming**
Saturday, 14:25 – Race 1, **timing and streaming**
Sunday, 10:50 – Race 2, **timing and streaming**

(all times local, GMT +2)

2017 TCR International Series – calendar

2 April – Rustavi International Motorpark, Georgia
16 April – Bahrain International Circuit (F1 event)
6 May – Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium (WEC event)
14 May – Autodromo di Monza, Italy (ELMS event)
11 June – Salzburgring, Austria
2 July – Hungaroring, Hungary
9 July – Motorsport Arena Oschersleben, Germany (with ADAC TCR Germany)
3 September – Chang International Circuit, Buriram (with TCR Thailand)
8 October – Zhejiang International Circuit, China (with TCR Asia & TCR China)
26 November – Yas Marina Circuit, Abu Dhabi (F1 event)



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#	team	driver	car
1	Comtoy Racing	Stefano Comini (SUI)	Audi RS 3 LMS TCR
2	Leopard Racing Team WRT	Jean-Karl Vernay (FRA)	Volkswagen Golf GTi TCR
5	M1RA	Roberto Colciago (ITA)	Honda Civic Type-R TCR
6	Comtoy Racing	Frédéric Vervisch (BEL)	Audi RS 3 LMS TCR
7	Lukoil Craft-Bamboo Racing	Hugo Valente (FRA)	SEAT León TCR
9	M1RA	Attila Tassi (HUN)	Honda Civic Type-R TCR
10	West Coast Racing	Gianni Morbidelli (ITA)	Volkswagen Golf GTi TCR
11	Reno Racing	Jens Reno Møller (DEN)	Honda Civic Type-R TCR
14	Leopard Racing Team WRT	Jaap van Lagen (NED)	Volkswagen Golf GTi TCR
16	GE-Force	Davit Kajaia (GEO)	Alfa Romeo Giulietta TCR
18	Icarus Motorsports	Duncan Ende (USA)	SEAT León TCR DSG
21	West Coast Racing	Giacomo Altoè (ITA)	Volkswagen Golf GTi TCR
23	DG Sport Compétition	Pierre-Yves Corthals (BEL)	Opel Astra TCR
34	Stian Paulsen Racing	Stian Paulsen (NOR)	SEAT León TCR
54	Lukoil Craft-Bamboo Racing	James Nash (GBR)	SEAT León TCR
55	Zele Racing	Ferenc Ficza (HUN)	SEAT León TCR
62	GE-Force	Dušan Borković (SRB)	Alfa Romeo Giulietta TCR
70	DG Sport Compétition	Mat'ò Homola (SVK)	Opel Astra TCR
74	Lukoil Craft-Bamboo Racing	Pepe Oriola (ESP)	SEAT León TCR
76	CRC	Daniele Cappellari (ITA)	SEAT León TCR DSG