

9 May 2015

Rounds 7 & 8 – Portimão, Portugal – 9/10 May 2015

QUALIFYING REPORT

Thiim gives Liqui Moly Team Engstler first TCR pole

Qualifying for the seventh round of the TCR International Series took place in brilliant sunshine and temperatures of 27 degrees Celsius at the Autódromo Internacional Algarve near Portimão on Saturday – and saw Nicki Thiim walking away as pole-setter after posting a best time of 1:53.863 in the all-important second session.

Thiim celebrates his TCR debut this weekend in Portugal and immediately made an impact on the series. At the wheel of his Liqui Moly Team Engstler Audi TT, the Danish ace set the pace in both qualifying sessions, relegating Jordi Gené and Pepe Oriola in their SEAT León cars from Team Craft-Bamboo Lukoil, to second and third on the grid.

With Lorenzo Veglia putting another SEAT in the top-five, after posting the fourth-fastest lap time, Kelvin Van der Linde completed a very positive overall result for the Audi TT cars and Liqui Moly Team Engstler by finishing fifth.

Championship leader Stefano Comini will start the first of the two races in Portimão from seventh, one place behind Gianni Morbidelli in his Honda Civic TCR.

Morbidelli's team-mate Kevin Gleason qualified tenth and won pole position for Race 2 on the top-ten reverse grid.

Sunday's races will go green at 12.35 and 14.05 local time, with a distance of 13 laps each.

Q1: Thiim leads the way in his Audi TT

After his third flying lap Nicki Thiim appeared at the top of the timesheet for the first time – and successfully defended this position until the end of the 20-minute session. With a time of 1:54.172 he was a dominant 0.681 seconds quicker than Team Craft-Bamboo Lukoil's Pepe Oriola (1:54.852) in the SEAT León. However, the gap between P2 and P3, which was secured by Oriola's team-mate Jordi Gené, was just a mere five thousandths of a second.

The third Craft-Bamboo Lukoil driver, Sergey Afanasyev (1:55.094), came fourth, followed by Kelvin Van der Linde (1:55.132), the second TCR newcomer within the ranks of Liqui Moly Team Engstler in an Audi TT. The SEAT cars of Michel Nykjær, Andrea Belicchi and championship leader Stefano Comini also made it into Q2, the same went for Honda drivers Gianni Morbidelli and Kevin Gleason. Francisco Mora and Lorenzo Veglia in their SEAT Leóns completed the top-12.

Oscar Nogués was 13th and the first of the driver not allowed to Q2, kicked off by Veglia in the very end of Q1.



The following drivers advanced to Q2: Thiim, Oriola, Gené, Afanasyev, Van der Linde, Nykjær, Belicchi, Comini, Morbidelli, Gleason, Mora, Veglia

Q2: Invincible Thiim claims maiden TCR pole position

In the second qualifying session, Nicki Thiim once again took the early lead after posting a time of 1:53.863 on his second flyer. This time turned out to be unbeatable for the rest of the field in the ten-minute qualifying session. Jordi Gené emerged as Thiim's closest rival in Q2, setting a time of 1:54.621 minutes. The Spaniard will share the front row with the Liqui Moly Team Engstler driver tomorrow. Third position was claimed by Pepe Oriola (1:54.699). Thanks to a considerable improvement in Q2, Lorenzo Veglia secured fourth on the grid. Comini had to make do with P7, one place behind the second-placed man in the Drivers' Championship, Gianni Morbidelli.

Kevin Gleason finished tenth (1:55.369), winning pole position for Sunday's second race.

What the drivers had to say

Nicki Thiim, pole sitter: *"Me and my team-mate are here to get the performance and we have really showed it over the weekend up to now. We changed a lot on the car and it seems to be going in the right direction. I am especially happy for the team because you feel they needed to get some more confidence. This is the first time I have driven the TCR Audi TT. It is completely different from the GT cars I am used to, as it is eight years since I have driven a front-wheel drive car so it is a bit of a difference, but it is still a car with four wheels and a steering wheel. The track is really nice and I am competing against some of the best in the touring car business, so I am just looking forward to the races tomorrow."*

Jordi Gené, qualified 2nd: *"In Valencia I think we had a similar pace to here, as I was really close to Pepe in practice, but in the wrong moment I made a mistake. I was at home, I was very hot, I wanted to perform extremely well and I overdrove, so it was my fault there. I needed a good result and Portimão has brought me this again. I am happy for my team because they have been working very hard and did a fantastic job because the car is perfect. I am happy for Lukoil, myself and my fans because we have showed we should be fighting constantly up there. At the moment my goal is to have a good result, get some points and bring myself up a little bit in the championship."*



Pepe Oriola, qualified 3rd: *"I am happy to be third, get some points in qualifying and be in a good position for tomorrow's race, especially because after Valencia I have another 30 kilos over the other drivers. I am quite happy because my main competitors in the championship are without points in qualifying. I will try to get as many points as I can in race one as they are starting behind me, and in the second race try to fight them to get some more points. We know our car is not going to be as good as in Valencia so we need a points gap. I don't think I could do the same time as Nicki even with the 60 kilos he has less than me, especially because on this straight the Audi is a little bit lower so they have less wind resistance."*

Two scions of motorsport dynasties joined Liqui Moly Team Engstler

The presence of Nicki Thiim and Kelvin Van der Linde with the Liqui Moly Team Engstler was the consequence of an invitation the German outfit addressed to Audi Sport Customer Racing to put two of its development drivers in the TT cars this weekend.

Thiim and Van der Linde were appointed to assist with the development of the TT following the steps taken after the previous races in Valencia. Audi Sport Customer Racing is currently evaluating the TCR International Series with a possible view to developing a car and was grateful to Franz Engstler for agreeing to give up his seat in Portimão to assist with the evaluation.

Both, Thiim and Van der Linde belong to families with long standing motorsport traditions. Nicki's father, Kurt Thiim, was a famous Touring Car driver in the Nineties as a factory driver for Rover, Mercedes and Alfa Romeo and won the 1986 DTM. His son was champion in the 2008 German SEAT León Supercopa and the 2013 Porsche Supercup.

The Van der Lindes are the Andrettis of South Africa. Kelvin's grandfather opened the line, followed by his sons Shaun (Kelvin's father) who won the South African Touring Car Championship for BMW in 1994 and Etienne who was F3 German champion in 1998. Despite his young age (18) Kelvin has already claimed three titles in the 2012 South African Polo Cup, 2013 German Scirocco Cup and 2014 ADAC GT Championship. His younger brother Sheldon has already established himself as one of South Africa's motorsport best prospects.





TCR International Series

Autódromo Internacional do Algarve

Official Combined Qualifying - TCR International Series

9 - 10 May 2015

OFFICIAL

Autodromo Internacional Algarve - 4652 mtr.

Pos	Nbr	Name / Entrant	Car	Qual-1	Qual-2	Gap
1	3	Nicki Thiim (DEN) Liqui Moly Team Enqstler	Audi TT	1:54.172	1:53.863	
2	88	Jordi Gené (ESP) Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	Seat Leon	1:54.857	1:54.621	0.757
3	74	Pepe Oriola (ESP) Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	Seat Leon	1:54.852	1:54.699	0.836
4	7	Lorenzo Veglia (ITA) Liqui Moly Team Enqstler	Seat Leon	1:55.778	1:54.786	0.923
5	9	Kelvin Van Der Linde (RSA) Liqui Moly Team Enqstler	Audi TT	1:55.132	1:54.842	0.978
6	10	Gianni Morbidelli (ITA) West Coast Racing	Honda Civic TCR	1:55.572	1:54.945	1.082
7	25	Stefano Comini (SUI) Target Competition	Seat Leon	1:55.523	1:54.969	1.106
8	77	Sergey Afanasyev (RUS) Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	Seat Leon	1:55.094	1:55.080	1.217
9	17	Michel Nykaer (DEN) Target Competition	Seat Leon	1:55.246	1:55.277	1.414
10	24	Kevin Gleason (USA) West Coast Racing	Honda Civic TCR	1:55.590	1:55.369	1.506
11	33	Andrea Belicchi (ITA) Target Competition	Seat Leon	1:55.247	1:55.411	1.548
12	50	Francisco Mora (POR) Velooso Motorsport	Seat Leon	1:55.755	1:55.779	1.916
13	19	Oscar Nogués (ESP) Campos Racing	Opel Astra OPC	1:55.868		2.004
14	8	Mikhail Grachev (RUS) Liqui Moly Team Enqstler	Seat Leon	1:56.291		2.428
15	18	José Monroy (POR) Velooso Motorsport	Seat Leon	1:56.437		2.574
16	20	Igor Skuz (UKR) West Coast Racing	Honda Civic TCR	1:58.533		4.670


All Classified. The max Qualification Time (107% of 1:53.863 = 2:01.833) was not exceeded.

Fastest time : 1:53.863 in lap 3 by nbr. 3 : Nicki Thiim (Audi TT)

Publication-time

Results and Laptimes : <https://livetiming.raceresults.nu/autodromodoalgarve>

Time Printed : 16:32

Clerk of the Course	Stewards	Timekeeper  Miguel Glória - CRO 3741/14	
Page 1 of 1	Results remain provisional pending technical examination and decisions from the stewards of the meeting		

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