



MACAU GUIA RACE 2.0T

TCR eyes stronger presence in China

SINCE its first edition in 1972, the Macau Guia Race has built itself a strong reputation as one of the main events on the international touring car calendar. From 2004 to 2014, Macau's Guia Circuit played host to the FIA World Touring Car Championship (WTCC) season finale. In the end of 2014, the Macau Guia Race was left orphan of the strong and reputable technical touring car regulation, putting its heritage and status at stake. Then the TCR International Series and its Asian series stepped in, with the blessing of the Macau Grand Prix Committee, offering a continuation of touring car races on the streets of Macau last November.

Unfortunately, the TCR International Series will end its association with the Guia Race of Macau after just two years, but the concept will stay in the region.

FIA WTCC founding father and former promoter Marcello Lotti, now CEO of WSC Ltd, is the man behind the TCR concept that quickly spread across the world. The objective: restoring the 'Touring Car Pyramid', with cars that can compete at the national, regional and international level. Touring car racing has a huge legacy in the region and unsurprisingly Asia promptly embraced the concept. The TCR Asia Series was the first regional series to be established, set up last year by WSC Asia Limited, and headed by David Sonenscher. Sonenscher has a long history in Asian motorsport and successfully ran the Asian Touring Car Series from 1997 up until the end of 2011 through his Malaysia-based company Motorsport Asia, which also promotes the highly successful GT Asia Series.

China is the world's largest auto market for new cars, and will certainly play a role in the future shaping of the TCR Series concept.

"We are very much keen on establishing the TCR concept in the whole of Asia and in particularly in China. The whole region is a market

that provides large figures for the automotive industry. And China is the peak of this huge market," Lotti told Business Daily.

TCR Cars Concept

**Car sold at MOP700,000/
MOP1.25 million including engine**
Affordable running costs
**Production-based engine 2.0L
Turbo - 300/300 Bhp**

The TCR concept is very much oriented for customer racing. It has come about as a direct result of the experiences faced by the different national Touring Car championships. There was a strong demand for competitive cars that could be purchased and run at reasonable cost. Car manufacturers, racing departments and tuners are now using this stage to

reinforce and enlarge their clientele and increase their profits. A stronger presence in Asia will undoubtedly boost the sales and help in promoting the sporting brands in a growing market. Lotti knows this well and the Italian entrepreneur is preparing for the future in this part of the globe.

"We are planning to create TCR platforms in the key countries to cover the whole of Asia. Our goal is to spread TCR series all over the Far East by 2018," he says.

Drivers from across the world line up to race on the Guia Circuit, considered one of the most challenging road courses in the world. So far, the Macau Grand Prix event has been the only event of the TCR International Series held in the People's Republic of China, but no one would be surprised to witness a TCR International Series race in Mainland China in the coming seasons.

"One race meeting in China remains

one of the options we are considering for the near future", says the TCR International Series promoter.

These past few months, prominent car manufacturers like Audi and KIA have got on-board the TCR concept, joining the likes of Honda, SEAT, Volkswagen, Alfa Romeo, Ford, Subaru and Opel. Chinese automakers are taking their first steps into motor racing at home. BAIC, Hayma and Geely are already involved in the national motor racing series. It won't take long until the Chinese auto giants will go racing overseas and battle the supremacy of European, Japanese and American carmakers on the racetracks. Lotti remains positive about the possibility of seeing a "Made in China" TCR car hitting the tracks soon.

"The TCR concept is founded on a kind of car – compact, front-wheel drive, two-litre turbo engine – that nearly every manufacturer has in its range. In fact, there are several Chinese brands that produce cars that would be easily developed in TCR specifications", he adds.

Thirty of the 36 participants in this year's Macau Guia Race 2.0T were driving TCR specification cars. The Macau Guia Race 2.0T was the host of the last race of the season for TCR International and Asia Series drivers. ■



Marcello Lotti, CEO of WSC Ltd