

30 May 2015

Rounds 11 & 12 – 12. Mozartpreis Salzburgring, Austria – 30/31 May 2015

QUALIFYING REPORT

Gleason claims his second pole in breathtaking qualifying

After the very close races last Sunday at Monza, the competitors of the TCR International Series put in another thrilling show during today's Qualifying at the Salzburgring.

In a breathtaking session, Kevin Gleason won his second pole position of the season after Sepang and his WestCoast Racing Gianni Morbidelli completed an all-Honda front row. Gleason and Morbidelli were the last competitors to cross the line under the chequered flag, when it seemed that Stefano Comini had secured the pole.

It was a bit of a shock for the Swiss driver and the Target Competition crew, but also for most of the insiders, especially after the SEAT cars had dominated the second Free Practice and Q1. In Q2 the gaps were so small that before the last lap of the Honda duo the first four positions (Comini, Gleason, Oriola and Morbidelli) were covered by only 78 thousandths of a second. Eventually, less than five tenths separated the ninth – Michel Nykjær – from pole position. Sunday's races will go green at 12.35 and 14.05 local time, with a distance of 15 laps each.

Qualifying 1: Belicchi posts the fastest lap

Target Competition's team-mates Andrea Belicchi and Stefano Comini posted the fastest lap in the first part of the Qualifying with times of 1:27.281 and 1:27.400 set halfway through the session.

Liqui Moly Team Engstler's Mikhail Grachev was third fastest (1:27.674), improving in the final moments and demoting Jordi Gené (1:27.675) and Lorenzo Veglia (1:27.859) to fourth and fifth. Just like in the second Free Practice, the SEAT León cars filled the first nine spots of the classification.

Gianni Morbidelli was the best of the Honda drivers in tenth (1:28.170) ahead of his team-mates Kevin Gleason and Igor Skuz; Gleason had a brief spell on the second place, but his best lap of 1:27.308 was disallowed because he had posted it while the yellow flag was waved after Szolt Szabó went out at the Nochstein-Kehre.

Both the Campos Racing Opel Astra cars missed the cut. Fernando Monje came out and in for the whole session trying to solve some technical issues and did not post a valid time. His team-mate Markus Östreich went off at the Ötschleife on his last attempt to improve and remained 1.3 seconds slower than his time in the Free Practice.

The following drivers advanced to Q2: Belicchi, Comini, Grachev, Gené, Veglia, Schouten, Nykjær, Oriola, Afanasyev, Morbidelli, Gleason and Skuz.



Qualifying 2: Successful last gasp attempt for Honda duo

The Honda Civic cars of Kevin Gleason and Gianni Morbidelli shattered Stefano Comini's dream of pole position by setting the two fastest times on a last gasp attempt.

Gleason was faster (1:26.915) and won his second pole of the season, beating Morbidelli by 91 thousandths of a second.

Igor Szuk provided the icing on the cake for WestCoast Racing, posting the tenth fastest lap that will give him pole position on the reversed grid for Race 2.

What the drivers had to say

Kevin Gleason, pole sitter: *"It's great to have done the pole position after such a close qualifying session. Things hadn't started very well, after my best time in Q1 was disallowed for not seeing a yellow flag. The radio was working on and off and there was a moment of confusion. In Q2, I did a small mistake in my first flying lap, but luckily I decided for a second one, which was the good one. I'm learning this incredible track bit by bit and it's starting to come together. Everything was ok: the car balance, the tyres, the conditions and also slipstreaming with Gianni. This is my second pole of the season, I have been twice on the podium, so tomorrow I'll definitely go for my first TCR win."*

Gianni Morbidelli, qualified second: *"I know everybody thought after free practice that I was hiding my game, but Q2 shows that people just have too much fantasy... There is not much more I could do today, carrying the maximum success ballast, and I only owe the second-fastest time to a good tow from Kevin."*

Stefano Comini, qualified third: *"My radio wasn't working at all this afternoon, and evidently, it was not a good option to come back to the pits a few minutes from the end of Q2, as the best time I was holding was beaten by the two Civic cars. This said, I don't think I could have improved my best time, I was on the limit everywhere, especially in the fast left-hander."*

Early wake-up call and duties for Comini

It was an early wake-up call for Stefano Comini Saturday morning: the Swiss was expected at the paddock gate to greet the Salzburgring marshals arriving at the track and thank them on behalf of all drivers.



Comini was instructed to do so by the Stewards following some fuming statements he made to the media after the close duels he was involved in at Monza. Instead of imposing penalties, the Panel of Stewards elaborated this unusual measure that the Swiss accepted gladly: *"I don't see it as a sanction and I was actually very pleased to greet the marshals at 7 am sharp. They are the real unsung heroes of motorsports and I have great respect for their work"*.

As a good Helvetic citizen of Italian mother tongue, Stefano is also fluent in German, which made easier communicating with the little crowd, eventually captivated by the natural wit of Stefano. Mutual applauses concluded the gathering.

The early wake-up call was not too much a punishment for Stefano: *"Luckily enough, I was already in the paddock, as this time I came with my motorhome and slept at the track!"*

Östreich teams-up with Monje at Campos Racing

Markus Östreich is driving the second Campos Racing Opel Astra OPC car this weekend at the Salzburgring.

The Spanish team confirmed Fernando Monje at the wheel of its first car following the brilliant podium result achieved at Monza, and they announced Östreich as his team-mate for the Austrian event.

Östreich is very experienced, with a solid and successful background in Touring Car competition that dates back to the Eighties when he was BMW factory driver in the European and World Touring Car Championship. He also claimed overall victories in the 24 Hours of Spa and the Nürburgring. He then switched to Truck Racing, establishing himself as one of the top players in the FIA European Championship, but this year he went back to his roots and snatched a brilliant class victory in the Nürburgring 24 Hours at the wheel of an Opel Astra OPC.

Östreich: *"It was my first time in a TCR car and this Astra is very different from the one we drove in the 24 Hours that is much closer to the production model. This is a proper racing car and I had a good feeling. It's fun to drive and has good performance."*

Östreich spoiled his chances to qualify for Q2 by spinning on his last attempt.





International Series

TCR International Series

Combined Qualifying - TCR International Series Official

28 - 31 May 2015
Salzburgring - 4240 mtr.

Pl.	Nr.	Name / Bewerber	Fahrzeug	Qual-1	Qual-2	Diff.
1	24	Kevin Gleason (USA) West Coast Racing	Honda Civic TCR	1:28.346	1:26.915	
2	10	Gianni Morbidelli (ITA) West Coast Racing	Honda-Civic TCR	1:28.170	1:27.006	0.091
3	25	Stefano Comini (SUI) Tarquet Competition	SEAT León	1:27.400	1:27.107	0.192
4	74	Pepe Oriola (ESP) Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT León	1:28.059	1:27.168	0.253
5	88	Jordi Gené (ESP) Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT León	1:27.675	1:27.269	0.354
6	77	Sergey Afanasyev (RUS) Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT León	1:28.146	1:27.310	0.395
7	33	Andrea Belicchi (ITA) Tarquet Competition	SEAT León	1:27.281	1:27.314	0.399
8	8	Mikhail Grachev (RUS) Liqui Moly Team Engstler	SEAT León	1:27.674	1:27.386	0.471
9	17	Michel Nykjær (DEN) Tarquet Competition	SEAT León	1:27.889	1:27.403	0.488
10	20	Igor Skuz (UKR) West Coast Racing	Honda Civic TCR	1:28.540	1:27.628	0.713
11	7	Lorenzo Veglia (ITA) Liqui Moly Team Engstler	SEAT León	1:27.859	1:27.704	0.789
12	34	Bas Schouten (NED) ST Motorsport / Bas Koeten Racing	SEAT León	1:27.885	1:27.981	1.066
13	16	Markus Östreich (GER) Campos Racing	Opel Astra OPC	1:30.633		3.718
NICHT GEWERTET IN KLASSE TCR QUALIFICATION MAXIMA (107% of 1:26.915) = 1:32.999						
DNQ	22	Fernando Monje (ESP) Campos Racing	Opel Astra OPC			
DNQ	46	Zsolt Dávid Szabó (HUN) Zenq Motorsport	SEAT León	1:45.849		

Schnellste Runde : 1:26.915 in Runde 7 durch nr. 24 : Kevin Gleason (USA) (Honda Civic TCR)

Aushangzeit

Ergebnisse und Rundenzeiten : www.raceresults.at

Zeitnahme durch : SDO SportTiming

Steward	Steward	Steward	
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www.tcr-series.com