

23 April 2016

Rounds 3 & 4 – Estoril, Portugal – 22 / 24 April 2016

SATURDAY REPORT

Mat’o Homola on pole after breathtaking qualifying

Mat’o Homola and B3 Racing Team won their first pole position on their second appearance in the TCR International Series.

Once again it was a very close session, with the ninth fastest drivers covered by only six tenths and three different brands – SEAT, Honda and Volkswagen – filling the top-three positions within three tenths.

The young Slovak and his SEAT edged out the rest of the field with an impressive lap of 1:48.518 that was posted on their first run in Q2. Gianni Morbidelli placed his WestCoast Racing Honda in second position, only 0.155 seconds behind the poleman (1:48.673).

The Leopard Racing duo of Jean-Karl Vernay and Stefano Comini fought for the third position until the very end; eventually the Frenchman’s 1:48.860 beat the reigning champion’s 1:48.965 by one tenth.

After topping the time sheet in Q1, Pepe Oriola qualified in a disappointing seventh position, while Loris Hezemans was classified tenth and won pole position on the reverse grid for the second race.

The first race will start tomorrow at 11:25 local time on the distance of 15 laps, with the green light for the second race at 17.05.

Qualifying 1: One lap is enough for Oriola

It took only one lap to Pepe Oriola for posting the fastest lap at the beginning of the session. His time of 1:49.231 was nearly two tenths faster than everybody else’s.

Jean-Karl Vernay (1:49.424) climbed to second fastest in the latest moments, demoting Mat’o Homola (1:49.479) to third. After aborting one attempt due to a mistake, Gianni Morbidelli salvaged the situation with a last lap of 1:49.508 that placed him in fourth, ahead of Stefano Comini and James Nash.

The leg was disrupted by the red flag after only four minutes, when Dušan Borković lost his car and hit the barrier head-on at Turn 3.

The following drivers advanced to Q2: Oriola, Vernay, Homola, Morbidelli, Comini, Nash, Afanasyev, Gleason, Pellinen, Hezemans, Kajaia and Tassi.

They were all covered by only nine tenths of a second.

Qualifying 2: SEAT beats Honda and Volkswagen

Mat’o Homola’s SEAT set an impressive fastest lap of 1:48.518 that was good enough for claiming pole position.

The other drivers did their best and improved their times, but not enough. Gianni Morbidelli managed to post the second best lap (1:48.673), while Jean-Karl Vernay (1:48.860) beat his teammate Stefano Comini (1:48.965) for third.

Quotes from the fastest qualifiers

Mat'o Homola (pole position): *"I'm very happy with pole position in only my second TCR Qualifying. I'd like to thank my team B3 Racing, because they've done an amazing job since Bahrain where I didn't have very good pace. We tested on Wednesday and I wasn't so sure that we had a good setup, so we had to make some changes and clearly it was a good move and a good step forwards. I'm very happy with the car. From my point of view, it was a normal lap; with the new tyres, I had a lot more grip and I could push more. Maybe there could have been a few more tenths."*

Gianni Morbidelli (2nd fastest): *"I have to be happy because I wasn't here on Wednesday for the test. We were quite unlucky yesterday because the weather didn't help me make some laps and today I didn't have much time. We struggled with the power steering and I'm a little bit worried about it. I didn't expect to be so quick so I'm happy for the team as we scored some points for the Championship. Now we have to solve the power steering issue. Behind me I have a good team and I believe in them, so I know they will do everything they can for me."*

Jean-Karl Vernay (3rd fastest): *"It was a really good performance and we are not that far compared to the others so it's a big improvement. We saw that we still have lots of work to do on the car to come back on the SEAT and the Honda so that we can fight for the pole but it's really good and Stefano is also really close, so it's good for the team. We gained two or three tenths thanks to the BoP and it's good for the championship to have different cars fighting for the win."*

B3 Racing at work to repair Dušan Borković's car

Dušan Borković escaped with only a few bruises by a spectacular crash during today's Qualifying session at Estoril.

In the early stages of Q1, on his first flying lap, the Serbian lost the back of his SEAT León and crashed head-on into the Armco barrier at Turn 3.

"I don't really know what happened. I was not pushing particularly hard, I was on my racing line, but all of a sudden there was a lot oversteer. I lost the back of the car and hit quite heavily. I still don't know if the damage is repairable," he said.

The B3 Racing Team crew is already at work to try repairing the car that suffered from extensive damage to the front right.

Loris Hezemans wins pole position for Race 2

On his comeback to the TCR International Series, Loris Hezemans set the tenth fastest lap in Q2 Qualifying, which will earn him pole position on the reverse grid for tomorrow's Race 2.

The Baporo Motorsport driver said: *"Surprisingly, perhaps, I'm actually not that pleased with today's results. The bad weather in Free Practice 1 meant I changed to slicks just as the rain started, so I only had the second practice to learn the track. We made some changes for Qualifying but we had a really bad understeer problem, especially power understeer out of the corners. I'm happy that I'm able to start from pole position in Race 2, but we need to fix this issue, otherwise I won't be able to hold that position. I'm confident we'll find something so hopefully I can be on the podium at least."*

Pepe Oriola endures difficult qualifying session

Current championship leader Pepe Oriola had a difficult qualifying session today at Estoril and ended up with only a seventh position on the grid for tomorrow's Race 1.

After posting the fastest lap in Q1, Oriola had his best time in Q2 disallowed for not respecting the track limits. This provisionally placed him in ninth place. However, the Stewards of the meeting reviewed their decision after the end of the session and reinstated the young Spaniard in seventh position.

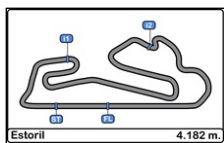
Oriola said: *"Q1 went really well; I did almost the perfect lap. I really thought I could get pole position because I had made some mistakes on my flying lap. So I knew I could go two or three tenths faster. Somehow the other drivers found one second from their pockets and then my lap got cancelled. On the last lap, my engineer told me that I had to finish the lap because I was in P12 and I managed to move up to P9."*

FIA Vice President Carlos Gracia visited Estoril

Carlos Gracia, President of the Spanish National Sporting Authority (RFEdA) and Vice President of the FIA, was one of the guests who visited Estoril today.

He had the opportunity to meet with all key players of the different series that are racing in Portugal.

Gracia also spent some times in the paddock, talking with Jaime Puig (SEAT Sport director), Marcello Lotti (TCR promoter) and Jesús Pareja (GT Open and Euroformula promoter).



Autodromo do Estoril

QUALIFYING Final Classification

23/04/2016

Ord.	N°	Driver	Nat.	Entrant	Car	Laps	Laps1	BL1	Q1	Laps2	BL2	Q2	Q-Time	Km/h
1	70	Mat'O Homola	SVK	B3 Racing Team Hungary	SEAT León TCR	13	9	6	1'49.479	4	2	1'48.518	1'48.518	138.735
2	10	Gianni Morbidelli	ITA	West Coast Racing	Honda Civic TCR	14	10	9	1'49.508	4	3	1'48.673	1'48.673	138.537
3	2	Jean-Karl Vernay	FRA	Leopard Racing	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR	12	8	7	1'49.424	4	4	1'48.860	1'48.860	138.299
4	1	Stefano Comini	SUI	Leopard Racing	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR	12	8	6	1'49.711	4	4	1'48.965	1'48.965	138.165
5	77	Sergey Afanasyev	RUS	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT León TCR	10	5	3	1'49.913	5	4	1'49.012	1'49.012	138.106
6	14	Aku Pellinen	FIN	West Coast Racing	Honda Civic TCR	14	9	6	1'50.000	5	2	1'49.051	1'49.051	138.057
7	74	Pepe Oriola	ESP	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT León TCR	12	6	3	1'49.231	6	4	1'49.085	1'49.085	138.013
8	24	Kevin Gleason	USA	West Coast Racing	Honda Civic TCR	14	10	7	1'49.938	4	4	1'49.173	1'49.173	137.902
9	54	James Nash	GBR	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT León TCR	13	8	6	1'49.773	5	5	1'49.188	1'49.188	137.883
10	50	Loris Hezemans	NED	Baporo Motorsport	SEAT León TCR	15	10	8	1'50.008	5	3	1'49.868	1'49.868	137.030
11	9	Attila Tassi	HUN	B3 Racing Team Hungary	SEAT León TCR	12	8	7	1'50.165	4	4	1'50.176	1'50.176	136.647
12	7	Davit Kajaia	GEO	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR	14	10	6	1'50.132	4	2	1'50.457	1'50.457	136.299
13	8	Mikhail Grachev	RUS	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR	10	10	6	1'50.421				1'50.421	136.344
14	26	Francisco Mora	POR	Baporo Motorsport	SEAT León Cup Racer	10	10	6	1'50.653				1'50.653	136.058
15	88	Michela Cerruti	ITA	Mulsanne Racing	Alfa Romeo Giulietta TCR	10	10	8	1'51.727				1'51.727	134.750
16	31	Luca Rangoni	ITA	Top Run Motorsport	Subaru STi TCR	7	7	6	1'52.083				1'52.083	134.322

Qualifying Time 107% 1'56"877

17	62	Dušan Borkovic	SRB	B3 Racing Team Hungary	SEAT León TCR	2	2	2	4'07.881				4'07.881	60.736
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Published at:.....

Stewards:	Race Director:	Timekeeper: 
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Autodromo do Estoril - 23 - 24 / April 2016

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