

6 May 2016

Rounds 5 & 6 – Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium – 5 / 7 May 2016

RACE 1 REPORT

Aku Pellinen signs maiden win under the Belgian sun

Aku Pellinen has joined the club of TCR race winners, after taking a clear win in Race 1 at Spa, on a sunny Friday afternoon. Once again, the young Finn of WestCoast Racing took an excellent start from row 2 and kept the lead throughout the entire race with his Honda Civic TCR.

Pepe Oriola and Dušan Borković concluded in second and third, after the Spaniard passed the Serbian on lap 1, both achieving their main goal of scoring heavy points. Mat'ò Homola, Gianni Morbidelli, Kevin Gleason and Davit Kajaia took positions from 4th to 7th, after Jean-Karl Vernay and James Nash had ended their duel with a contact that cost several positions to the Briton (he eventually finished 8th) and a drive-through to the Frenchman, who dropped from fourth to 14th.

The last points were scored by Sergey Afanasyev and Antti Buri who both had stalled at the start. It was an even worse day for Stefano Comini, as the reigning champion's car was stopped by a broken driveshaft before joining the grid.

The young Attila Tassi had a scary shunt in the last lap, caused by a puncture, but luckily he escaped unhurt.

Today's result have closed the gap at the top of the points standings, with Morbidelli leading now only by 2 points on Oriola and 6 on Nash.

Race 2 will start tomorrow morning at 12:35.

Key facts

Grid – Comini's car stops at the bottom of the pitlane and is pushed back to the pits with a drive-shaft problem

Start – Excellent start of Pellinen from row 2; the Finn takes the lead ahead of Borković, Oriola, Nash, Homola and Tassi; Afanasyev and Buri stall on the grid

Lap 1 – Oriola passes Borković for second; Tassi drops 4 positions.

Lap 2 – Vernay passes Homola for 5th at les Combes; Morbidelli is already behind them

Lap 3 – Pellinen leads by 2.5 seconds from Oriola, Borković, Nash, Vernay, Homola, Morbidelli, Gleason and Tassi; Hezemans, Corthals, Afanasyev and Guilvert fight for the 11th position

Lap 4 – Hezemans is given a drive-through for a track limits infringement; Corthals pits with turbo issues

Lap 5 – Vernay is putting pressure on Nash for 4th; Tassi is also given a drive-through penalty for track limits

Lap 6 – Both Hezemans and Tassi serve their drive-through

Lap 7 – Vernay and Nash make contact at the Bus Stop; Nash goes wide and rejoins in eighth position

Lap 8 – Oriola closes the gap on Pellinen; Vernay is given drive-through for the incident with Nash and drops to 14th

Lap 9 – Pellinen wins from Oriola and Borković, while Kajaia passes both Afanasyev and Nash for 7th; Tassi provides the last thrill, crashing into the barriers at turn 12

Race 1 – Quotes from the podium finishers

Aku Pellinen (winner): *“It wasn’t an easy win, despite the appearances, but it was a nice one. I took again a perfect start as soon as the lights went off; it seems I’m getting good at this... The plan was to push in the opening laps and then try to preserve the tyres. The car was very good today but as expected, I started to struggle with the front tyres after mid-race. The last two laps were very tough and I tried not to look to the mirrors, stay focused on my driving and avoiding mistakes. It went well and this first win is quite a relief. It definitely will help building self-confidence. We still have some work to do on the car, but the speed now is there and I thank the team for the excellent work.”*

Pepe Oriola (second): *“I am happy but I also have some regrets because of the bad start. I think that with a better start, I could have won, because I had a better pace than Aku. Still, it is a good result, as I am getting much closer to Gianni (Morbidelli) in the championship.”*

Dušan Borković (third): *“Third is a good result, I am satisfied, I got the heavy points I was looking for, but it could have been a better day. Unfortunately I had a very bad start and Aku pulled away immediately. I probably got a little bit nervous and made a small mistake getting into the Esses, which allowed Pepe to pass me. I had some oversteer, but I could keep a good pace and almost catch Pepe again. But I knew I could not pass him and preferred to lift off a bit in the final laps.”*

Unshaken Attila Tassi hopeful to race tomorrow

Attila Tassi was the lucky guy today in Spa-Francorchamps, as he suffered no consequences after a violent shunt in turn 12 (Pouhon) during the last lap of Race 1.

The fearless young Hungarian seemed not shaken by the incident and even minimized what occurred: *“Actually the accident was more spectacular than severe”,* he explained. *“I had a puncture in one of the front tyres and went off. There was nothing I could do to avoid going straight into the tyre-wall. It was a big shunt but, luckily enough, the tyres are quite thick there and that limited the damage, although images on TV were quite dramatic.”*

The relaxed attitude of the 16-year-old driver contrasted completely with the expression on the faces of the B3 Racing crews, still scared and relieved to see the jockey-sized Attila in one piece.

“The most important thing is that Attila is ok. Even the car doesn’t look too damaged and we’ll do everything we can to repair it for tomorrow”, confirmed team manager David Bári. After Tassi’s accident in Bahrain and Borković’s shunt in Estoril, another long night of work awaits the mechanics of the Hungarian team.

Qualifying: Borković beats Oriola in the fight for the pole

Dušan Borković gave B3 Racing Team its second consecutive pole position in the TCR International Series after that won by Mat’o Homola at Estoril two weeks ago.

After being stripped of the fastest Q1 lap by a penalty, the Serbian driver posted an impressive 2:33.065 in Q2, beating Pepe Oriola by a bit more than two tenths.

“It’s great to get the pole, it was a good reward for the team after the difficult weekend in Portugal. Considering the car that has done the pole here is exactly the same that suffered the accident at Estoril, you realize how well the boys worked. Today, everything worked well: car, tyres, strategy... I just tried to keep calm after one of my best laps in Q1 was deleted and remain focused,” Borković said.

Him and Oriola locked the front row on the Race 1 grid for SEAT. Aku Pellinen’s Honda Civic qualified in third, the only car able to compete with the Spanish machine for the top positions.

The first Volkswagen Golf – Stefano Comini’s – qualified in eighth, while the other two Honda cars of Kevin Gleason and championship leader Gianni Morbidelli surprisingly did not make the cut for Q2.

An impressive Jimmy Claret managed to qualify 11th in his Peugeot 308, while local hero Pierre-Yves Corthals posted the tenth fastest lap and won pole position on the top-ten reverse grid for Saturday’s Race 2.

Imola to host the Italian round in two weeks

The Italian round of the 2016 TCR International Series will take place in two weeks at Imola, on May 22.

The timetable of the event will be concentrated in one day only, on the Sunday, with the aim to make the most out of the promotion and gather as much public as possible during what will be a mid spring weekend.

press release



TCR promoter Marcello Lotti explained: *“We are grateful to the Municipality of Imola and Formula Imola for offering us this opportunity to bring an international touring car series back to this glorious and demanding racetrack. And we are currently meeting with a lot of interest from Italian teams and drivers that want to join for the event.”*

Imola’s circuit, named after Enzo and Dino Ferrari, was built in 1952, along the Santerno river; it underwent a complete reconstruction in 1979 and hosted both the Italian and San Marino F1 Grands Prix between 1980 and 2006. The racetrack was further modified and its facilities rebuilt in 2010.

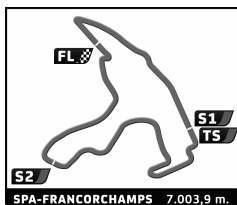
The lap distance is 4.5 kilometres; TCR competitors will complete 14 of those laps in each race.

Corthals plays ambassador role for TCR Benelux

Pierre-Yves Corthals is more than ‘local hero’ this weekend at Spa. The Belgian is also the unofficial ambassador of the TCR Benelux, the new regional series that will kick-off in two weeks, precisely at Spa.

No surprise then that the SEAT León of *Pilou* Corthals is sporting the logos of the new series, the RACB, and of the innovative ‘Make the Grid’ concept that the TCR Benelux will inaugurate.

‘Make the Grid’ will allow everybody, from team members and partners to family, friends and fans, to determine, through their vote, the grid of the Qualifying Long Race at each event. The voting application, $\frac{1}{2}$ Make the Grid $\frac{1}{2}$, is integrated in the Facebook account of the series, and has been developed in cooperation with Live Buzz. The vote will be open 15 days ahead of each Qualifying Long Race up until the race day. Voters will also participate in a draw for prizes.



6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps

TCR International Series

Race 1 (9 laps, 63,0 km.)

Final Classification

| Drivers | Nat | Team | Vehicle | Class | Laps | Total Time | Gap | Kph | Best Lap | | |
|------------------------|-----|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------|------|------------------|---------|-------|----------|-----------------|-------|
| | | | | | | | | | Lap | Time | Kph |
| 1 14 Aku PELLINEN | FIN | Westcoast Racing | Honda Civic TCR | | 9 | 23:19.800 | - | 162.1 | 2 | 2:33.851 | 163.9 |
| 2 74 Pepe ORIOLA | ESP | Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL | SEAT León TCR | | 9 | 23:20.176 | +0.376 | 162.1 | 4 | 2:34.310 | 163.4 |
| 3 62 Dusan BORKOVIC | SRB | B3 Racing Team Hungary | SEAT León TCR | | 9 | 23:21.094 | +1.294 | 162.0 | 3 | 2:34.351 | 163.4 |
| 4 70 Ma'o HOMOLA | SVK | B3 Racing Team Hungary | SEAT León TCR | | 9 | 23:25.276 | +5.476 | 161.5 | 3 | 2:33.979 | 163.8 |
| 5 10 Gianni MORBIDELLI | ITA | Westcoast Racing | Honda Civic TCR | | 9 | 23:26.524 | +6.724 | 161.3 | 3 | 2:34.011 | 163.7 |
| 6 24 Kevin GLEASON | USA | Westcoast Racing | Honda Civic TCR | | 9 | 23:27.008 | +7.208 | 161.3 | 3 | 2:34.435 | 163.3 |
| 7 7 Davit KAJAJA | GEO | Liqui Moly Team Engstler | Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR | | 9 | 23:29.469 | +9.669 | 161.0 | 2 | 2:34.609 | 163.1 |
| 8 54 James NASH | GBR | Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL | SEAT León TCR | | 9 | 23:36.393 | +16.593 | 160.2 | 3 | 2:33.882 | 163.9 |
| 9 77 Sergey AFANASYEV | RUS | Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL | SEAT León TCR | | 9 | 23:36.876 | +17.076 | 160.2 | 3 | 2:34.741 | 162.9 |
| 10 48 Antti BURI | FIN | Leopard Racing Team | Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR | | 9 | 23:37.534 | +17.734 | 160.1 | 4 | 2:34.425 | 163.3 |
| 11 8 Mikhail GRACHEV | RUS | Liqui Moly Team Engstler | Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR | | 9 | 23:41.775 | +21.975 | 159.6 | 3 | 2:35.956 | 161.7 |
| 12 38 Grégory GUILVERT | FRA | Sébastien Loeb Racing | Peugeot 308 Racing Cup | | 9 | 23:42.507 | +22.707 | 159.5 | 2 | 2:36.098 | 161.5 |
| 13 30 Jimmy CLAIRET | FRA | Sébastien Loeb Racing | Peugeot 308 Racing Cup | | 9 | 23:45.680 | +25.880 | 159.2 | 3 | 2:35.906 | 161.7 |
| 14 2 Jean-Karl VERNAY | FRA | Leopard Racing Team | Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR | | 9 | 23:54.396 | +34.596 | 158.2 | 3 | 2:33.702 | 164.0 |
| 15 50 Loris HEZEMANS | NLD | Ferry Monster Autosport | SEAT León TCR | | 9 | 24:04.582 | +44.782 | 157.1 | 2 | 2:34.879 | 162.8 |
| 16 9 Attila TASSI | HUN | B3 Racing Team Hungary | SEAT León TCR | | 8 | 21:18.079 | 1 Lap | 157.8 | 2 | 2:34.656 | 163.0 |

Not classified:

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-----|-------------------------|-------------------------|--|---|------------------|--|--|---|-----------------|-------|
| 49 Pierre-Yves CORTHALS | BEL | Ferry Monster Autosport | SEAT León Cup Racer | | 5 | 15:53.848 | | | 2 | 2:35.128 | 162.5 |
| 1 Stefano COMINI | CHE | Leopard Racing Team | Volkswagen Golf Gti TCR | | 1 | 22:37.951 | | | | | |

| | | | | |
|----------------------|-------|------------------|-----------------|-----------|
| Pole Position | | D. BORKOVIC | 2:33.065 | 164.7 Kph |
| Fastest Lap | Lap 3 | Jean-Karl VERNAY | 2:33.702 | 164.0 Kph |

CAR N° 2; 30 SECONDS PENALTY DUE TO STEWARDS DECISION

Published at:

Track Status:

DRY

Stewards:

Timekeeper:

