

19 November 2016

Rounds 21 & 22 – Macau – 17 / 20 November 2016

QUALIFYING REPORT

The Leopard Racing duo dominate the field Vernay beats Comini in the fight for the pole position

The Leopard Racing duo of Jean-Karl Vernay and Stefano Comini dominated the field in a Qualifying session that was spoiled by rain in its second and decisive part.

The young Frenchman set an impressive fastest lap in Q2 of 3:00.602 at the wheel of his Volkswagen Golf, beating his own teammate Comini by 0.491 seconds. The 2015 TCR International Series champion could have been even faster, but he was slowed down by Pepe Oriola on his last attempt. The Spaniard was also on a fast lap but could not give way to Comini until they reached the final sector where overtaking was possible.

Both Oriola and his Craft-Bamboo Lukoil teammate James Nash seemed less at ease in the wet than their rivals in the championship fight and eventually qualified seventh (Nash) and tenth (Oriola).

Guest star Tiago Monteiro drove his WestCoast Racing Honda Civic to third position, while Antti Buri surprisingly qualified fourth and best of the SEAT drivers, just ahead of Dušan Borković.

In terms of championship points, the Qualifying results mean that Comini has closed the gap to Nash from 17 to 13 points, while Vernay is still fourth, 34 points behind the leader but now only one behind Oriola.

The two final races of the TCR International Series will take place tomorrow at 10:05 and 11:20 over a distance of ten laps.

Q1: Oriola sets the fastest lap

Pepe Oriola was the only driver to break the 2:34 wall, as he posted a fastest lap of 2:33.480 that no one else was able to match.

The top drivers tried to post fast laps in the early stages in order to avoid problems with the traffic and the slower cars. Oriola (2:36.713), Mat'ò Homola (2:36.646) and Tiago Monteiro (2:35.362) all clocked provisional fastest laps until Oriola eventually completed a lap of 2:33.480 that topped the time sheet for good.

Jean-Karl Vernay (2:34.121), Monteiro (2:34.217), Dušan Borković (2:34.415), James Nash (2:34.456), Josh Files (2:34.700), Stefano Comini (2:34.738), Homola (2:34.814), Sergey Afanasyev (2:34.821) and Attila Tassi (2:34.892) all improved and filled the positions between second and tenth.

The rain came with five minutes left, preventing any further improvements. Antti Buri and Gianni Morbidelli managed to claim the last two spots that granted access to Q2.

Among those who failed to make the cut were Andy Yan (13th – only one tenth slower than Morbidelli), Davit Kajaia (14th), Tin Sritrai (20th – he spoiled his chances crashing at the Police bend) and the two Alfa Romeo cars of Petr Fulín (21st) and Andrea Belicchi (25th) that suffered from turbo and gearbox problems respectively.

Mikhail Grachev missed the whole session, as he crashed at the Mandarin bend on his first lap out.

Q2: Vernay sets pole in the wet

As the rain eased, lap times dropped dramatically. Eventually the fight for the pole was restricted to the Leopard Racing teammates in their Volkswagen Golf cars.

On his last lap, Vernay claimed his second pole of the season with a lap of 3:00.602 that demoted Comini (3:01.093) to second.

Monteiro posted the third fastest lap (3:02.604), with Buri (3:04.393), Borković (3:04.442) and Morbidelli (3:04.723) in fourth, fifth and sixth respectively.

The Craft-Bamboo Lukoil title contenders Nash (3:05.033) and Oriola (3:05.936) qualified in seventh and tenth positions respectively.

Quotes after the Qualifying session

Jean-Karl Vernay (pole position): *“It was a great session! We knew the Golf is very quick in the wet, we saw it at the Salzburgring and it proved here again. The key was to stay calm and go through the first laps, which were quite tricky and with very poor visibility. We raised the bar lap after lap, working together with Stefano, pushing and pulling each other. My last lap was the fastest, I knew it was a very good lap and just tried to avoid mistakes in the last sector.”*

Stefano Comini (second fastest): *“Second is very good, although my last lap was unlucky as I found Pepe Oriola on the way. He did not block me, everything was very correct, but he was slower. It would have probably meant pole, as the data in the dashboard were telling I was one second faster than in the lap that gave second, but it was good like that, it was a nice team result, and it was good to keep the championship battle alive. Actually, we were lucky to get the rain for Q2, it suited us well especially after the difficult Q1 I had, touching the walls four times. The best thing of the day, though, is that I could do the Melco hairpin with the handbrake, it was something I always wanted to do, it was great and now that box is ticked!”*

Tiago Monteiro (third fastest): *“After the difficult day yesterday, it’s nice to be in the top-three and retrieve confidence. Then, the conditions changed for Q2 and that was tricky, because it wasn’t wet the same way in all parts of the track, but the situation was the same for everybody. It was challenging for me, as I don’t know the car that well, so I preferred not to change much in the set-up and that was a good decision.”*

Antti Buri (fourth fastest): *“It was a good session for me, especially given it is my first time here. It wasn’t easy on the wet, but I felt comfortable with the car. It was a pity, though, because I believe that in normal dry conditions, we would have brought down the lap times by one second. The only trouble today is that I had no radio and the watch on the dashboard was not working, so I had no idea of how good the times were.”*

James Nash (seventh fastest): *“Q1 was simple, although I was deliberately blocked by Comini half-way through the session, and the team reported that to the stewards. In Q2, it was simply ridiculous to see how big is the gap with the Golf cars, but the good thing is that I’m still ahead of my team mates despite the extra weight.”*

Pepe Oriola (tenth fastest): *“Bad luck for me with the rain, Macau really does not like me. Q1 was fine and I stayed way within my limits not to take any risk, but on the wet in Q2 we were really struggling with no grip and no traction. It’s hard to believe that we are 5 seconds slower than our direct competitors.”*

A further 20-kilo weight break for Alfa Romeo

A further weight break was granted to the Alfa Romeo Giulietta cars before today’s Qualifying session.

As a consequence, the two Italian cars entered by Mulsanne Racing for Petr Fulín and Andrea Belicchi will run at 1225 kilos with the drivers onboard.

Another amendment to the Balance of Performance, compared to the previous technical bulletin issued last Wednesday, was about the SEAT León TCR DSG model. As these cars cannot get down to 1230 kilos, they have been brought back to the original running weight of 1250. As a result they have been authorized to run with a 70mm ground clearance instead of 80mm.

Suncity Group Macau Guia Race 2.0T

Qualifying 1 & 2 - Final Combined Classification - TCR International Series

POS	NO	DRIVER / TEAM	NAT	CAR	QUALIFYING 1	QUALIFYING 2
1	2	Jean Karl VERNAY Leopard Racing Team	FRA	Volkswagen Golf GTI	2:34.121	3:00.602
2	1	Stefano COMINI Leopard Racing Team	SUI	Volkswagen Golf GTI	2:34.738	3:01.093
3	81	Tiago MONTEIRO WestCoast Racing	PO	Honda Civic	2:34.217	3:02.604
4	48	Antti BURI LMS Racing	FIN	SEAT León DSG	2:35.916	3:04.393
5	62	Dusan BORKOVIC B3 Racing Team	SRB	SEAT León SEQ	2:34.415	3:04.442
6	10	Gianni M ORBIDELLI WestCoast Racing	ITA	Honda Civic	2:36.828	3:04.723
7	54	James NASH Craft Bamboo Racing	GB	SEAT León SEQ	2:34.456	3:05.033
8	77	Sergey AFANASYEV Craft Bamboo Racing	RUS	SEAT León SEQ	2:34.821	3:05.264
9	70	Matej HOMOLA B3 Racing Team	SVK	SEAT León	2:34.814	3:05.348
10	74	Pepe ORIOLA Craft Bamboo Racing	ESP	SEAT León SEQ	2:33.480	3:05.396
11	50	Joshua Luke FILES Target Srl	GB	Honda Civic	2:34.700	3:06.428
12	9	Attila TASSI B3 Racing Team	HUN	SEAT León SEQ	2:34.892	3:07.100
13	3	YAN Cheuk Wai Andy Liqui Moly Team Engstler	HK	Volkswagen Golf GTI	2:36.973	
14	7	Davit KAJAIA Liqui Moly Team Engstler	GE	Volkswagen Golf GTI	2:37.955	
15	83	SRITRAI Tin Team Thailand	THA	Honda Civic	2:41.393	
16	22	Petr FULIN Mulsanne Racing	CZE	Alfa Romeo Giulietta	2:41.686	
NOT QUALIFIED		Qualification maxima (107% of 2:33.480) = 2:44.223				
	35	Rafaël GALIANA Target Srl	FRA	SEAT León	2:44.247	
	23	Andrea BELICCHI Mulsanne Srl	ITA	Alfa Romeo Giulietta	2:45.204	
	20	LOU Hon Kei Elegant Racing Team	MA	SEAT León	2:45.292	
	28	Kevin TSE Team Work Motorsport	MA	Volkswagen Golf GTI	2:48.332	
	17	TSE Kin Leung Terence Roadstar Racing Team	HK	SEAT León DSG	2:50.102	
	27	William E. O'BRIEN Team Work Motorsport	HK	Volkswagen Golf GTI	2:51.754	
	65	KHOO Kok Hui Douglas Viper Niza Racing	MA	SEAT León SEQ	3:01.228	
	8	Mikhail GRACHEV WestCoast Racing	RUS	Honda Civic		