



2 May 2017

## Rounds 5 & 6 – WEC 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps – 4 / 6 May 2017

### PREVIEW

#### Legendary Belgian track welcomes back the TCR drivers

The third race meeting of the 2017 TCR International Series takes place this weekend on the demanding racetrack of Spa-Francorchamps in the Belgian region of the Ardennes; a legendary circuit in motorsport history.

For the second consecutive year the series runs at Spa as a support event to the 6 Hours race, the second round of the FIA World Endurance Championship.

In 2016 Honda and Volkswagen shared the honours, with Aku Pellinen and Jean-Karl Vernay claiming one victory apiece.

On Saturday afternoon in the first race, Pellinen led from lights to flag in a WestCoast Racing Honda Civic and led home the SEAT León cars of Pepe Oriola and pole-sitter Dušan Borković.

On the Sunday morning, the second race was dominated by the trio of Leopard Racing WRT Volkswagen Golf GTi cars, with Vernay winning ahead of Stefano Comini and Antti Buri.

The event also marked the debut in TCR of two 1.6-litre Peugeot 308 Racing Cup cars run by the Sébastien Loeb Racing and driven by Jimmy Clairet and Grégory Guilvert.

Just like last year, track activity will begin on Thursday, with two 30-minute Free Practice sessions; Qualifying will take place Friday at lunchtime, followed by the first Race in the late afternoon. Race 2 will start on Saturday morning.

#### TCR in Spa-Francorchamps – the event at a glance

Lap distance: 7.00 km

Race distance: 9 laps

Start: standing

Grids: determined by Qualifying results (Q1+Q2) with top-10 reversed for Race 2

Timetable:	Thursday, 11:00/11:30	Free Practice 1
	Thursday, 16:00/16:30	Free Practice 2
	Friday, 13:05/13:40	Qualifying (Q1 + Q2)
	Friday, 17:25	Race 1
	Saturday, 11:35	Race 2

all times: GMT +2



## A twenty-four-car field and six brands represented

The TCR International Series has already raced twice in the current season, at Rustavi International Motorpark – the first international race meeting ever hosted by Georgia – and at the Bahrain International Circuit, one of two appearances with Formula One.

For its first European event, the series presents itself in top form, with a strong field of 24 cars – including Touring Car superstars Rob Huff and Tom Coronel.

Jean Karl-Vernay of Leopard Racing arrives at Spa as the points leader with a tally of 52, but the Frenchman is shadowed by GE-Force's Dušan Borković and M1RA's Roberto Colciago who are lying only one and two points adrift respectively.

Just a handful of points behind are Pepe Oriola of Lukoil Craft-Bamboo (45), Borković's teammate Davit Kajaia (39), Oriola's teammates Hugo Valente (38) and James Nash (34) and Colciago's teammate Attila Tassi (36).

There are four different car models in the top eight positions: Volkswagen Golf, Alfa Romeo Giulietta, Honda Civic and SEAT León.

However, in Spa it will be wise to keep an eye on the Audi SR3 LMS and the Opel Astra. The performance of both cars is definitely improving, as it was recently proved by Stefano Comini and Mat'ò Homola. The Swiss and his Comtoy Racing Audi won two TCR Benelux sprint races at Spa ten days ago and on the same weekend Homola drove the DG Sport Compétition Astra to set pole position and win another sprint race. The young Slovak had already claimed an impressive pole in Bahrain.

## The same Success Ballast for Borković and Colciago

Dušan Borković and Roberto Colciago, the race winners of the previous event in Bahrain, will both carry 30 kilos of Success Ballast at Spa.

The Serbian drove his Alfa Romeo Giulietta to victory in Race 2 after finishing fourth in Race 1, which gave him 37 points, while the Italian and his Honda Civic Type-R scored the very same amount of points by Qualifying fifth, winning Race 1 and finishing fifth in Race 2.

The running weights of their cars will be 1345 kilograms for Colciago's Honda (1285kg minimum weight, plus 30kg of Success Ballast and 30kg of Balance of Performance adjustment) and 1315 kg for Borković's Alfa Romeo (1285kg + 30kg SB).

Hugo Valente, who Qualified fourth in Bahrain and then was classified second and third in the races with his SEAT León, scored 36 points, only one short of his rivals. And that point is worth 20 kilos, as the Frenchman will carry the 10 kilos of ballast imposed to the third best scorer, for a running weight of 1325kg (1285 + 10 SB + 30 BoP).

## Rob Huff joins Jean-Karl Vernay at Leopard Racing

In Spa the spotlight will be on Rob Huff, who joins championship-winning squad Leopard Racing Team WRT for the remainder of the TCR International Series.

The 2012 FIA World Touring Car champion has already had his first experience with the team, sharing a Volkswagen Golf GTi with his new teammate Jean-Karl Vernay at the opening round of the TCR Benelux series ten days ago, also in Spa. There, Huff and Vernay took four podium finishes from four sprint races on Sunday.



Huff will compete in seven of the eight remaining events alongside current championship leader Vernay, with the task of supporting the Frenchman's title bid.

Huff said: *"It's fantastic to join Leopard Racing Team WRT in this year's TCR International Series. The deal came after the Benelux race event, which was a success despite having to learn a new team, a new car and category. I had a great time getting to know the team at Spa, and I think we're going to have a great rest of the season together. TCR is also a brilliant championship to be involved in. There's a lot of future Touring Car talent rising up through there, and also great door-to-door racing. As the levels of the cars are balanced, it's a lot less about the car but the driver. For someone who started racing in mono-brand trophies, like me, it's extremely appealing. It's also very nice to again be in a series launched and run by Marcello Lotti and his team, who know the business inside-out and are like a family."*

### **Tom Coronel makes a one-off appearance at Spa**

Touring car specialist Tom Coronel will make his first appearance in the TCR International Series this weekend at Spa-Francorchamps.

The Dutch driver will be at the wheel of a second Honda Civic Type-R car run by the Boutsen Ginion Racing team, alongside that of his 17-year old teammate Benjamin Lessennes. One of Coronel's commitments during the current season is taking part in the TCR Benelux in which he shares a Boutsen Ginion Racing Honda with the series' reigning champion Stéphane Lémeret.

At Spa his car will be officially backed by Honda Benelux, who are determined to make Tom Coronel one of their top ambassadors, as confirmed by Paul Tomanek, the President of Honda Benelux: *"The Dutch market is an extremely important market for Honda; we are thrilled to be able to count on his popularity and his talent behind the wheel to boost the dynamism of the brand in the Netherlands."*

The Dutchman does not hide his ambitions: *"TCR is a fairly new category but one that all drivers closely follow. After a race in the Benelux championship, taking part in an event of the TCR International Series is naturally very exciting, especially since Spa isn't too far away for my fans and the level looks particularly high so the races should be extremely thrilling."*

### **Paulsen and Møller begin their European campaign**

The third race meeting in Spa will represent the beginning of the European campaign for Stian Paulsen and Jens Reno Møller; they both will take part in the International Series European events with the aim of competing in the TCR European Trophy final at the Adria International Raceway in October.

Paulsen, 29 years old from Norway and 2012 winner of a FIA European Touring Car Cup, will be driving a SEAT León TCR run by his own team.

*"I am very excited by this programme. Looking further ahead I will be working to add a couple of overseas events in 2018 and eventually taking part in the full International Season in 2019,"* he said.



A regular participant in both the Danish and the Scandinavian Touring Car championships and winner of the 2009 DTC Independent title, Møller will be at the wheel of a Honda Civic Type-R for Reno Racing.

*"I am excited for coming back to racing after a five-year break and can't wait to work with JAS Motorsport again, as they have built a very competitive car. The new TCR category is really attractive for privateers and provides top class racing, with a lot of very quick drivers. I expect to struggle in the first part of the season, but I will work hard to be in the right part of the field during the season."* said Møller.

## **Six local drivers for the joy of Belgian fans**

Belgian fans will have reasons to rejoice, as six of their favourite drivers will be racing in Spa. Besides Pierre-Yves Corthals who drives the DG Sport Compétition Opel Astra, five of the TCR Benelux competitors will be making their first appearance in the TCR International Series for their home race meeting: Benjamin Lessennes, Frédéric Vervisch, Maxime Potty and the brothers Edouard and Guillaume Mondron.

### **Benjamin Lessennes teams up with Coronel**

17-year old Benjamin Lessennes will drive the very same Honda Civic Type-R car run by Boutsen Ginion Racing he regularly uses in the Benelux championship.

After finishing eighth in the 2016 championship and claiming his first victory in the season's finale at Mettet, Lessennes has just begun the new season with a couple of podiums last weekend at Spa: second in Race 1 and third in Race 2.

And it was perhaps an omen that in both the sprint races he was joined on the podium by Stefano Comini and Jean-Karl Vernay, guest stars of the TCR Benelux event.

*"This is a real opportunity to see where I am facing the elite of the TCR International Series. The challenge is great, but I hope that I will be at their level and achieve a good result during this prestigious race meeting!"* said Lessennes.

### **Comtoy Racing add a second car for Vervisch**

After running a solitary Audi RS3 LMS for Stefano Comini in Rustavi and Bahrain, Comtoy Racing will add a second car from the next weekend in Spa.

The team, that enjoyed success in the first event of the TCR Benelux scoring three victories out of the four sprint races (two with Comini and one with Sheldon van der Linde) has signed Frédéric Vervisch for the rest of the season.

The 30-year old Vervisch faces his first commitment in Touring Cars, after many seasons in single-seaters and GT racing.

### **The Mondron brothers with Delahaye Racing**

Guillaume and Edouard Mondron are used to sharing the car in TCR Benelux, which they did last week in Spa where they won the Qualifying Race at the wheel of a SEAT León run by Delahaye Racing.

However, for their first appearance in the International Series, they will split. Guillaume will keep on driving the SEAT, while Edouard will switch to a Volkswagen Golf GTi.

Edouard's Golf will sport a special livery dedicated to the 25 Hours VW Fun Cup that will celebrate its twentieth anniversary at Spa on 6 to 9 July.



*“This time we won’t share the wheel, but we will face each other on the track,”* Edouard commented and Guillaume added: *“We won’t make it easy for each other, and may the best driver win!”*

### **Michaël Mazuin Sport fields a Golf for Maxime Potty**

Michaël Mazuin Sport in collaboration with the Belgian VW Club and with the technical assistance from WRT, will field a Volkswagen Golf GTi car for Maxime Potty at Spa.

The 17-year old Potty is another teenager who drew attention to himself with his performances in the TCR Benelux. After some promising results in karting, Potty debuted in car racing last year with a WRT Golf and finished a respectable tenth in the TCR Benelux, scoring one victory in the Qualifying race at Colmarberg where he shared driving duties with Stefano Comini.

On the occasion of the 2017 TCR Benelux first event at Spa, ten days ago, Potty was able to complete an outstanding recovery in the fourth sprint race, from last on the grid to second under the chequered flag.

### **A full live coverage from Spa-Francorchamps**

Fans will be able to follow live on the Internet the whole action of the TCR International Series at Spa-Francorchamps on [www.tcr-series.com](http://www.tcr-series.com) and [www.tcr-series.tv](http://www.tcr-series.tv) according to the following timetable.

Thursday, 11:00 – Free Practice 1, **timing**  
Thursday, 16:00 – Free Practice 2, **timing**  
Friday, 13:00 – Qualifying, **timing and streaming**  
Friday, 17:20 – Race 1, **timing and streaming**  
Saturday, 11:30 – Race 2, **timing and streaming**

(all times local, GMT +2)

### **2017 TCR International Series – calendar**

2 April – Rustavi International Motorpark, Georgia  
16 April – Bahrain International Circuit (F1 event)  
**6 May – Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium (WEC event)**  
14 May – Autodromo di Monza, Italy (ELMS event)  
11 June – Salzburgring, Austria  
2 July – Hungaroring, Hungary  
9 July – Motorsport Arena Oschersleben, Germany (with ADAC TCR Germany)  
3 September – Chang International Circuit, Buriram (with TCR Thailand)  
8 October – Zhejiang International Circuit, China (with TCR Asia & TCR China)  
26 November – Yas Marina Circuit, Abu Dhabi (F1 event)

## Rounds 5 & 6 – WEC 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium 4 / 6 May 2017

#	team	driver	car
1	Comtoyou Racing	Stefano Comini (SUI)	Audi RS 3 LMS TCR
2	Leopard Racing Team WRT	Jean-Karl Vernay (FRA)	Volkswagen Golf GTi TCR
3	Leopard Racing Team WRT	Rob Huff (GBR)	Volkswagen Golf GTi TCR
5	M1RA	Roberto Colciago (ITA)	Honda Civic Type-R TCR
6	Comtoyou Racing	Frédéric Vervisch (BEL)	Audi RS 3 LMS TCR
7	Lukoil Craft-Bamboo Racing	Hugo Valente (FRA)	SEAT León TCR
9	M1RA	Attila Tassi (HUN)	Honda Civic Type-R TCR
10	West Coast Racing	Gianni Morbidelli (ITA)	Volkswagen Golf GTi TCR
11	Reno Racing	Jens Reno Møller (DEN)	Honda Civic Type-R TCR
12	Delahaye Racing Team	Guillaume Mondron (BEL)	SEAT León TCR
16	GE-Force	Davit Kajaia (GEO)	Alfa Romeo Giulietta TCR
18	Icarus Motorsports	Duncan Ende (USA)	SEAT León TCR DSG
21	West Coast Racing	Giacomo Altoè (ITA)	Volkswagen Golf GTi TCR
23	DG Sport Compétition	Pierre-Yves Corthals (BEL)	Opel Astra TCR
25	Delahaye Racing Team	Edouard Mondron (BEL)	Volkswagen Golf GTi TCR
34	Stian Paulsen Racing	Stian Paulsen (NOR)	SEAT León TCR
52	Michaël Mazuin Sport	Maxime Potty (BEL)	Volkswagen Golf GTi TCR
54	Lukoil Craft-Bamboo Racing	James Nash (GBR)	SEAT León TCR
55	Zengő Motorsport	Ferenc Ficza (HUN)	SEAT León TCR
62	GE-Force	Dušan Borković (SRB)	Alfa Romeo Giulietta TCR
63	Boutsen Ginion Racing	Benjamin Lessennes (BEL)	Honda Civic Type-R TCR
64	Boutsen Ginion Racing	Tom Coronel (NED)	Honda Civic Type-R TCR
70	DG Sport Compétition	Mat'ó Homola (SVK)	Opel Astra TCR
74	Lukoil Craft-Bamboo Racing	Pepe Oriola (ESP)	SEAT León TCR