



13 November 2017

**Rounds 19 & 20 – TCR International Speedfest, Dubai – 17 / 18 Nov 2017****PREVIEW****The ultimate title fight to be staged in the Emirates**

The Dubai Autodrome is ready to host the final event of the 2017 TCR International Series that will decide the battles for the Drivers', Teams' and Model of the Year titles.

This will be the first time that the International Series has visited the Emirates' circuit that was inaugurated in 2004 and which hosted the first event of the TCR Middle East Series last January. Those two races were won by Luca Engstler and Brendan Gdovic at the wheel of Volkswagen Golf GTI cars run by the Liqui Moly Team Engstler.

The Dubai TCR International Series Speedfest will also feature the Formula Gulf Academy, the Radical Middle East Cup and the UAE Sportbike Championship as support races.

Following the region's tradition, the race weekend will take place on Friday and Saturday. The TCR International Series will follow its standard timetable, with two Free Practice sessions and the Qualifying on Friday, while the two 60-kilometre races will take place on Saturday.

**TCR in Dubai – the event at a glance**

Lap distance: 3.59 km

Race distance: 17 laps

Start: standing

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

Timetable:	Friday, 09:30/10:00	Free Practice 1
	Friday, 11:50/12:20	Free Practice 2
	Friday, 15:30/16:05	Qualifying (Q1 + Q2)
	Saturday, 11:05	Race 1
	Saturday, 15:30	Race 2

all times: GMT +4

**Three titles are still on offer in the final event**

The season finale in Dubai will be the decider for all three titles on offer in the 2017 TCR International Series.

In the fight for the Drivers' championship, Leopard Racing's Jean-Karl Vernay took the most out of the previous event in China and regained the lead in the standings with a 21-point margin ahead of M1RA Racing's Attila Tassi.

Two other drivers are still in contention: the 2015 and 2016 champion Stefano Comini (Comtoy Racing) and Tassi's teammate Roberto Colciago; however, with gaps of 42 and 46 points respectively – when 55 are still at stake – they must both be hoping for a miracle to happen.

With a leading margin of 71 points, M1RA is just one step away from the Teams' title. Lukoil Craft-Bamboo Racing lies in second position, but because there are only 95 points to be awarded over the last race weekend, the Hong Kong-based outfit's chances are more theoretical than real.

The battle for the Model of the Year award is much closer, with the Honda Civic currently followed by the Volkswagen Golf GTI with a gap of only 30 points (and 95 at stake).

### **Success ballast for Morbidelli, Vernay and Tarquini**

None of the drivers will carry the maximum Success Ballast of 30 kilos in the final event of the season at Dubai. In fact, Rob Huff who scored the greatest amount of points at Zhejiang, will not be racing in the Emirates.

The second-best scorer in China, Gianni Morbidelli, will carry 20 extra kilos on board his WestCoast Racing Volkswagen Golf GTI, while the 10 kilos for the third best scorer will be imposed on the championship leader Jean-Karl Vernay.

Although he was not allowed to score points, because the Hyundai i30 N cars are running under a temporary homologation form, Gabriele Tarquini will also have 10 kilos of success ballast on board. This is because he would have been the Chinese event's third best scorer had he not been 'transparent'.

In terms of running weights, this means that Morbidelli's Volkswagen will weigh 1285kg (1285kg minimum weight + 20kg Success Ballast - 20kg Balance of Performance adjustment), Vernay's Volkswagen 1275kg (1285kg + 10kg SB - 20kg BoP) and Tarquini's Hyundai 1335 kg (1285kg + 10kg SB + 40kg BoP).

### **Gordon Shedden joins Leopard Racing in Dubai**

Triple British Touring Car champion Gordon Shedden will join the Leopard Racing WRT Team for the final event of the TCR International Series at Dubai, where he will drive one of the team's Volkswagen Golf GTI cars alongside Jean-Karl Vernay.

Shedden will replace Rob Huff, who is unavailable due to a clashing commitment, and his mission will be to help Vernay in his attempt to secure the Drivers' title.

The 38-year-old from Edinburgh has established himself as one of the most successful BTCC drivers ever, with 48 race wins in twelve seasons and three titles in 2012, 2015 and 2016, becoming the third Scotsman to win the championship after Jim Clark and John Cleland. Shedden also finished second twice (2011 and 2013) and third three times (2007, 2010 and 2014) in the championship.

He said: *"I'm excited to join Leopard Racing and WRT where I will use all my experience to help Jean-Karl secure the Championship. The TCR International Series looks really competitive but I am looking forward to the challenge!"*

### **M1RA calls up Josh Files for the season finale**

Josh Files has been called up by M1RA to race in a third Honda Civic car at the Dubai Autodrome, for the final race meeting of the TCR International Series.

The Briton will join team regulars Attila Tassi and Roberto Colciago, with the task of supporting them in the fight for the Drivers' and Teams' titles.

During the last two seasons, Files has emerged as one of the most successful drivers in TCR cars, having twice won the ADAC TCR Germany title (2016 and 2017) and the inaugural TCR Middle East title (2017). Most recently, he was classified third in the TCR Europe Trophy at Adria after winning the first race.

Files said: *"This will be my third straight year contesting the final round of the TCR International Series. I'm thrilled to be doing it and am aiming to challenge for victories and to help M1RA and Honda achieve their title ambitions, despite the circuit being new to me. M1RA have done a superb job in their first year, have an incredible record for such a young team and always field fast and well-presented cars. I can't wait to get going."*

## **TCR Europe Trophy winner, Comte joins DG Sport in Dubai**

The winner of the TCR Europe Trophy, Aurélien Comte, will make his TCR International Series debut at Dubai.

The young Frenchman will be Mat'ò Homola's teammate at the wheel of an Opel Astra TCR for DG Sport Compétition. Comte has driven for the Belgian team throughout the season in a Peugeot 308, finishing third in the TCR Benelux series (with three race wins) and clinching the TCR Europe Trophy at the Adria International Raceway two weeks ago.

Team manager Christian Jupsin commented: *"I wish to thank Monsieur Demoustier and his company Eurodatacar for supporting this initiative. I am delighted to offer Aurélien the opportunity to make his debut in the TCR International Series. He has completed a fantastic season at the wheel of our Peugeot 308. We are aware that it won't be possible to judge his performance at Dubai in a car he doesn't know and against drivers who are used to the races of the International Series. But we are confident that he will approach this event with the right spirit, to fully benefit from this end-of-season bonus."*

## **Benjamin Leuchter to drive for WestCoast Racing**

WestCoast Racing has named Benjamin Leuchter as Gianni Morbidelli's teammate for the final event of the TCR International Series at Dubai.

Leuchter is one of the most experienced Volkswagen Golf GTI TCR drivers and this year, as well as his role as an instructor with the brand, he celebrated five class victories in the VLN endurance series at the legendary Nürburgring Nordschleife. Last year he competed in the ADAC TCR Germany series and finished fifth in the championship.

*"I'm really happy to join WestCoast Racing for the final round of the TCR International Series,"* said Leuchter. *"After winning the TCR class in the VLN and in the Nürburgring 24h, it will be another highlight for me to come back to sprint racing in the Golf TCR. I'm really looking forward to work with such a professional team like WestCoast Racing. I don't know the Dubai track, so this will be an extra motivation for me."*

## **Tarquini and Menu return with the Hyundai i30 N cars**

After a successful debut in the previous event at Zhejiang, the BRC Racing Team will again be racing the new Hyundai i30 N TCR cars for Gabriele Tarquini and Alain Menu.



The Korean car made a strong impression on its maiden appearance in the TCR International Series, as Tarquini claimed an authoritative win in the first of the Chinese races, despite his 13<sup>th</sup> position on the starting grid.

After observing a drive-through penalty for causing a collision in Race 1, his teammate Menu confirmed the potential of the Hyundai i30 N by recovering from 14<sup>th</sup> at the start to fourth position at the end of the race. His performance was no less impressive, considering that both his and Tarquini's cars were laden by 40 kg of success ballast after the first race. Three weeks after that resounding debut, Tarquini encored in the TCR Europe Trophy at Adria, where he finished second in Race 1 and won Race 2, for an impressive 50% winning score of the new car.

At Dubai, just as in Zhejiang and Adria, the two Hyundai cars will not be eligible to score points as they are still accepted with a temporary homologation document. This also means that they will not be eligible to qualify for Q2.

### **Full live coverage from Dubai Autodrome**

Fans will be able to follow live on the Internet the whole action of the TCR International Series at Dubai 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.

Friday, 09:25 – Free Practice 1, **timing and streaming**

Friday, 11:45 – Free Practice 2, **timing and streaming**

Friday, 15:25 – Qualifying, **timing and streaming**

Saturday, 11:00 – Race 1, **timing and streaming**

Saturday, 15:25 – Race 2, **timing and streaming**

(all times local, GMT +4)

### **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

18 June – Hungaroring, Hungary (DTM Event)

9 July – Motorsport Arena Oschersleben, Germany (with ADAC TCR Germany)

8 October – Zhejiang Circuit, China (with TCR Asia & TCR China)

**18 November – Dubai Autodrome, United Arab Emirates**