

28 March 2015

**Rounds 1 & 2 – Sepang, Malaysia – 28/29 March 2015**

**SATURDAY REPORT**

## **Stefano Comini was the first winner of a TCR race!**

The first-ever winner of a TCR race was a Swiss: Stefano Comini took a resounding success in today's Race 1 at Sepang. The Target Competition driver took a wonderful start and despite a slight mistake at turn 1 was able to take the lead as from lap 2 and pulled away thanks to the fierce battle behind him.

The SEAT cars eventually managed to monopolize the podium with two Team Craft-Bamboo Lukoil boys, Pepe Oriola and Sergey Afanasyev in second and third. Still, they had to sweat in their fight with the West Coast Honda Civic TCR cars of Gianni Morbidelli and poleman Kevin Gleason. The Japanese cars finished fourth and sixth, with Andrea Belicchi (Target SEAT) who clinched fifth on the penultimate lap. Race 2 will take place tomorrow at 12.35 local time.

### Key facts

Grid – All cars were on the 1260-kg minimum weight for Race 1 after a BoP adjustment. The Proteam Ford Focus of Diego Romani and the Campos Opel Astra cars of Igor Skuz and Jordi Oriola did not make the grid because of technical problems.

Start – Engstler, Münnich and Comini took an excellent kick off and got side-by-side with poleman Gleason. At first corner, Comini and Münnich ran a wide while Morbidelli and Engstler made contact.

Lap 1 – Gleason kept the lead until the end of lap 1 when he was passed by Comini; Belicchi hit Ficza but with no harm.

Lap 2 – The battle for 2<sup>nd</sup> was fierce between the SEAT cars of Afanasyev, Oriola and the Honda cars of Gleason and Morbidelli; Grachev led the rest of the pack, while Engstler retired with a damaged front suspension resulting from first corner action.

Lap 3 – Oriola took second from Afanasyev and was now 4 seconds behind Comini.

Lap 4 – Grachev stopped with an engine problem; Münnich pitted with a fuel issue.

Lap 5 – Ficza and Nykjær had a close fight for eighth.

Lap 7 – Oriola reduced the gap to three seconds, while Afanasyev defended third place from Gleason.

Lap 8 – Gleason was in troubles with his tyres and dropped behind Morbidelli and Belicchi.

Lap 9 – Comini won from Oriola and Afanasyev; with Morbidelli, Belicchi, Gleason, Gené, Nykjær, Ficza and Veglia in the points.

## Race 1 – Quotes from the podium finishers

Stefano Comini, first: *“It’s incredible to win the very first event of the TCR International Series! A moment I’ll always remember! I feel I have been very lucky in this race: I had a good start but missed the breaking point at turn 1 and had to do some drifting... I recovered well and was able to take the lead, pushing a lot in the first four laps to build a good advantage. The guys behind made my task easier as they were battling fiercely between them!”*

Pepe Oriola, second: *“I’m happy with second, I couldn’t do better after a somehow poor qualifying, which was a pity following excellent free practice. In the race I was hit a couple of times in the first lap, but then could find the way through and take second. Stefano, though, was too far away and it was too late to try and catch him.”*

Sergey Afanasyev, third: *“First of all, I have to say I am enjoying this new experience very much and want to congratulate everybody who put together such a nice series. My race was lively and I was involved in a lot of battles. I was worried about how the tyres would behave in the final laps and indeed, I had to struggle a bit, but I am happy to be on the podium in this very first race, especially because the level is very high and I think people behind me were already being tactical about avoiding success ballast...”*

## Gleason took historical pole position for Race 1

It was a hot first-ever qualifying session for the TCR contenders at Sepang, as under suffocating heat, the fierce battle for pole showed the top 12 within one second or less in both Q1 and Q2. Kevin Gleason, at the wheel of the West Coast Racing Honda car, made history as he took the pole position for TCR’s first-ever race.

The US driver impressed all observers with his impeccable and aggressive style, preceding the two Target Competition SEAT León cars of Andrea Belicchi and Stefano Comini and the Liqui Moly Audi TT car of Franz Engstler, with no less than three different brands represented in the top-four.

Jordi Gené qualified tenth in the Craf-Bamboo Lukoil SEAT, meaning that he will be on pole on the top-ten reversed grid for tomorrow’s Race 2.

An elated Gleason commented: *“I feel wonderful! It’s amazing, the car is brand new, but the team did a great job and they have worked so hard together with JAS in order to get everything ready and running. I had no expectations before the qualifying. Just wanted to do the best I could. I struggled with understeer in Q1, but we managed to make some adjustments in the five-minute break and it worked. After that the car felt great!”*

## **Ecclestone's visit boosted enthusiasm in TCR paddock!**

Friday, the very first day of official racetrack activity in the life of the TCR International Series, ended at Sepang with the much-appreciated visit of Bernie Ecclestone.

The Formula 1 supremo wished to have a closer look at TCR cars and concept. He was welcomed in the paddock by Marcello Lotti, CEO of WSC Ltd., who showed him a selection of the cars, one per each of the five brands represented, and introduced him to some of the drivers and TCR's key personnel.

Bernie Ecclestone was particularly interested in technical aspects and wished all the best to the new-born series.

On top of the Malaysian opening round, the TCR will have two other rounds (China and Singapore) in the framework of F1 Grands Prix.

## **Campos Racing Opel cars will start in Race 2**

The Opel Astra OPC cars of Campos Racing are due to participate in tomorrow's Race 2 after having been forced to skip Race 1 today.

The two cars of Igor Skuz and Jordi Oriola were withdrawn following the persistence of the engine heating problems that plagued them throughout practice and qualifying.

The Spanish team though did not give up and has found a solution for tomorrow.

Rubén Espín, Campos Racing Team Manager, explained: *"We have designed and built on the spot bigger radiators, which we will fit this afternoon. Given the very high temperatures, we preferred not to race today in order to avoid bigger issues, but we will be ready for tomorrow's races. We still pay the price for a short preparation time ahead of this first event, but we hope to be in running order for Sunday's race 2."*

## **Romanini's Ford sidelined by technical problems**

Diego Romanini's Proteam Racing Ford Focus ST was withdrawn from the event due to teething problems.

After missing yesterday's free practice because of a minor electrical failure, the Focus suffered from gearbox problems in both the second free practice and today's qualifying.

Greg Simmonds, Technical Director at Onyx Engineering explained: *"In full respect of the TCR spirit we are using a production gearbox that is operated by a paddle-shift via an actuator. Unfortunately the actuator proved defective and this resulted in downshifting problems; something we did not expect. We were not able to solve the problem here and decided to replace the gearbox with a racing unit before the next event in China."*



## Race 1 Classification after 9 Laps - 49.887 Kms

POS	NO	DRIVER	NAT	ENTRANT	LAPS	TIME	GAP	KPH	BEST	LAP
1	25	<b>S. COMINI</b>	SUI	Target Competition	9	21:26.159		139.635	2:20.585	3
2	74	<b>P. ORIOLA</b>	ESP	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	9	21:29.540	3.381	139.269	2:20.871	4
3	77	<b>S. AFANASYEV</b>	RUS	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	9	21:34.254	8.095	138.761	2:21.370	4
4	10	<b>G. MORBIDELLI</b>	ITA	West Coast Racing	9	21:35.161	9.002	138.664	2:21.698	5
5	33	<b>A. BELICCHI</b>	ITA	Target Competition	9	21:35.867	9.708	138.589	2:21.509	5
6	24	<b>K. GLEASON</b>	USA	West Coast Racing	9	21:37.587	11.428	138.405	2:21.728	6
7	88	<b>J. GENE</b>	ESP	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	9	21:38.653	12.494	138.291	2:21.923	3
8	17	<b>M. NYKJAER</b>	DEN	Target Competition	9	21:42.374	16.215	137.896	2:22.537	3
9	55	<b>F. FICZA</b>	HUN	Zengo Motorsport	9	21:47.307	21.148	137.376	2:22.152	3
10	7	<b>L. VEGLIA</b>	ITA	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	9	21:51.810	25.651	136.904	2:22.368	3
11	99	<b>F. YU SIU FUNG</b>	HKG	Craft-Bamboo Racing	9	22:34.631	68.472	132.577	2:22.388	4
<b>NOT CLASSIFIED</b>										
	23	<b>R. MUENNICH</b>	GER	West Coast Racing	7	19:44.809	DNF	117.895	2:22.880	3
	8	<b>M. GRACHEV</b>	RUS	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	3	7:19.760	DNF	136.129	2:22.062	3
	6	<b>F. ENGSTLER</b>	GER	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	0		DNF			
	20	<b>I. SKUZ</b>	UKR	Campos Racing	0		DNS			
	21	<b>J. ORIOLA</b>	ESP	Campos Racing	0		DNS			
	72	<b>D. ROMANINI</b>	ITA	Proteam Racing	0		DNS			
<b>FASTEST LAP</b>										
	25	<b>S. COMINI</b>	SUI	Target Competition		2:20.585 on lap 3		141.941		

Timekeeper:

### A Support Event Race to the 2015 FORMULA 1 PETRONAS MALAYSIA GRAND PRIX - Kuala Lumpur

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## 2015 TCR INTERNATIONAL SERIES - DRIVERS' CLASSIFICATION

position	driver	Sepang	MALAYSIA	29 March	Shanghai Jiading	CHINA	12 April	Valencia	SPAIN	3 May	Portimão	PORTUGAL	10 May	Monza	ITALY	24 May	Salzburging	AUSTRIA	31 May	Sochi	RUSSIA	21 June	Buenos Aires	ARGENTINA	26 July	Marina Bay	SINGAPORE	20 September	Buriram	THAILAND	25 October	Macau	MACAU	22 November	TOTAL	
		Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2		
1	Sefano Comini (SUI)	3	25																																	28
2	Pepe Oriola (ESP)	0	18																																	18
3	Sergey Afanasyev (RUS)	0	15																																	15
4	Andrea Belicchi (ITA)	4	10																																	14
5	Kevin Gleason (USA)	5	8																																	13
6	Gianni Morbidelli (ITA)	0	12																																	12
7	Jordi Gené (ESP)	0	6																																	6
8	Michel Nykjær (DEN)	0	4																																	4
9	Franz Engstler (GER)	2	0																																	2
9	Ferenc Ficza (HUN)	0	2																																	2
11	René Münnich (GER)	1	0																																	1
11	Lorenzo Veglia (ITA)	0	1																																	1

## 2015 TCR INTERNATIONAL SERIES - TEAMS' CLASSIFICATION

position	manufacturer	Sepang	MALAYSIA	29 March	Shanghai Jiading	CHINA	12 April	Valencia	SPAIN	3 May	Portimão	PORTUGAL	10 May	Monza	ITALY	24 May	Salzburging	AUSTRIA	31 May	Sochi	RUSSIA	21 June	Buenos Aires	ARGENTINA	26 July	Marina Bay	SINGAPORE	20 September	Buriram	THAILAND	25 October	Macau	MACAU	22 November	TOTAL		
		Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2			
1	Target Competition	7	35																																	42	
2	Team Craft-Bamboo Lukoil	0	33																																		33
3	West Coast Racing	6	20																																		26
4	Zengó Motorsport	0	6																																		6
5	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	2	4																																		6