

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 Afanayev 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 2nd 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	S. COMINI	SUI	Target Competition	9	21:26.159		139.635	2:20.585	3
2	74	P. ORIOLA	ESP	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	9	21:29.540	3.381	4.714	139.269	4
3	77	S. AFANASYEV	RUS	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	9	21:34.254	8.095	0.907	138.761	4
4	10	G. MORBIDELLI	ITA	West Coast Racing	9	21:35.161	9.002	0.706	138.664	5
5	33	A. BELICCHI	ITA	Target Competition	9	21:35.867	9.708	1.720	138.589	5
6	24	K. GLEASON	USA	West Coast Racing	9	21:37.587	11.428	1.066	138.405	6
7	88	J. GENE	ESP	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	9	21:38.653	12.494	3.721	138.291	3
8	17	M. NYKJAER	DEN	Target Competition	9	21:42.374	16.215	4.933	137.896	3
9	55	F. FICZA	HUN	Zengo Motorsport	9	21:47.307	21.148	4.503	137.376	3
10	7	L. VEGLIA	ITA	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	9	21:51.810	25.651	42.821	136.904	3
11	99	F. YU SIU FUNG	HKG	Craft-Bamboo Racing	9	22:34.631	68.472		132.577	4
NOT CLASSIFIED										
23		R. MUENNICH	GER	West Coast Racing	7	19:44.809	DNF	117.895	2:22.880	3
8		M. GRACHEV	RUS	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	3	7:19.760	DNF	136.129	2:22.062	3
6		F. ENGSTLER	GER	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	0		DNF			
20		I. SKUZ	UKR	Campos Racing	0		DNS			
21		J. ORIOLA	ESP	Campos Racing	0		DNS			
72		D. ROMANINI	ITA	Proteam Racing	0		DNS			
FASTEST LAP										
25		S. COMINI	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

No part of these results/data may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, broadcasting or otherwise without prior permission of the copyright holder except for reproduction in local/national/international daily press and regular printed publications on sale to the public within 90 days of the event to which the results/data relate and provided that the copyright symbol appears together with the address shown below.
© 2015 Formula One World Championship Ltd, 6 Princes Gate, London, SW7 1QJ, England.

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	Salzburgring	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 Ficz (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	Salzburgring	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