

29 March 2015

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

SUNDAY REPORT

Gené resists to all attacks and wins thrilling Race 2

Jordi Gené returned to the first step of the podium in an international event after brilliantly controlling a lively and closely-fought Race 2 today in Sepang.

Despite the heat, the 44-year-old Spaniard kept his cool to make a perfect use of pole position and managed to keep the lead throughout the entire race, but had to resist to the furious attacks of other contenders, which included Ferenc Ficzá, Jordi Oriola and Gianni Morbidelli. Eventually, Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL posted a one-two, as Pepe Oriola took second, like yesterday in Race 1, and Gianni Morbidelli gave the Honda Civic car its first TCR podium finish. The Italian briefly lost the position to Andrea Belicchi in the last lap, but won it back with a superb overtaking in the very last corner that cost Belicchi one more position, as his team-mate and yesterday's winner Stefano Comini took fourth. The Swiss leaves Sepang as the first point leader of the series.

The TCR International Series will resume for Rounds 3 and 4 at Shanghai International Circuit on April 11 and 12, in the frame of the Formula 1 China Grand Prix.

Key moments

Grid – The top-ten reversed grid for Race 2 had Gené on pole, with Ficzá alongside him.

Start – Gené and Ficzá pulled away nicely followed by Afanasyev and Oriola in an orderly start.

Lap 1 – Nykjaer and Veglia made contact and collected Afanasyev, sending him into the gravel.

Lap 2 – Veglia pitted for repairs and rejoined.

Lap 3 – Gené was closely followed by Ficzá, Oriola and Morbidelli who were fighting for second; right behind Belicchi and Comini were chasing by Münnich.

Lap 3 – Grachev and Yu made contact and the Hong-Kong spun.

Lap 4 – Oriola and Morbidelli managed to pass Ficzá; Münnich had a sudden slow-down and got passed by Comini and Belicchi.

Lap 5 – Ficzá was passed also by the two Target cars.

Lap 6 – Skuz and Engstler retired, both claiming they lost power

Laps 6 to 9 – In a thrilling second part of the race, Gené, Oriola and Morbidelli were running bumper-to-bumper, while Belicchi and Comini were closing the gap.

Lap 10 – Belicchi overtook Morbidelli for third, but the Italian won it back in the last turn.

Race 2 – Quotes from the podium finishers

Jordi Gené, 1st: *"I am really very happy. I never expected to win in this opening event, first because I haven't been racing at this level for two years, then because it was a new circuit for me, and also because in practice and in qualifying I had some power issue in my car due to the heat. But everything went perfectly today. It was a very tough race, as my opponents were extremely close. I just pushed as much as I could. In the last two laps, I started feeling the tyres were suffering, but I could keep everybody at bay. It has been a wonderful debut for the TCR, the level is already extremely high and I am completely convinced we are going to have close and tough racing throughout the season."*

Picture: Gené congratulated by his younger brother Marc.

Pepe Oriola, 2nd: *"Two seconds was a good result to start the season and I am quite satisfied. The fight today was just fine, it was fun, but I knew that beating Jordi was going to be difficult. And he proved that he is still a very fast driver. I am really happy for the team, as they did a great job."*

Gianni Morbidelli, 3rd: *"I am really happy with this podium finish, it's a well-deserved reward to the great and hard job made by the team. I feel proud to work for such a squad that put a tremendous amount of effort in the latest weeks. This first weekend also proved how good the TCR concept is, this is the best response to those who did not believe in it. The race today was fun, I had a nice battle in the final lap with Belicchi. He managed to pass me, but then in the very last corner he opened slightly the line and I dived into the gap."*

Morbidelli elected TCR Man of the Race in Sepang

West Coast Racing's Gianni Morbidelli was elected TCR Man of the Race for the event at Sepang International Circuit.

The jury formed by WSC CEO Marcello Lotti, Race Director Marc Duez, TV Commentator Mark James, TV Director Alessandro Dragosei, Communication Director Fabio Ravaioli and Press Officer Alfredo Filippone, elected the Italian driver for his brilliant overtaking manoeuvre on Andrea Belicchi that earned him third place in today's Race 2.

Other nominees were Kevin Gleason (for his pole position), Pepe Oriola (for his fair and effective driving) and Igor Skuz (for his sporting spirit in spite of his bad luck).

Campos Racing won its own battle in Malaysia

The inaugural event of the TCR International Series has had many heroes, but there is no doubt that among them there is a bunch of guys who deserve special praise: the crew of Campos Racing.

The mechanics and technicians of the Spanish squad have worked round the clock to solve the technical problems that plagued the two Opel Astra OPC cars of Igor Skuz and Jordi Oriola and were able to get Skuz on the grid for Race 2.

It was a race against time to get the cars ready for the opening event. They arrived in Malaysia without the necessary development and testing and soon encountered power problems due to the extreme heat that triggered the activation of the electronic auto-protection system.

Eventually the team had to work out a creative solution to the problem, by fitting a larger radiator built on the spot from an after-market spare found in a local retail shop. The heavier piece required stronger brackets, which were crafted from a ... fire extinguisher! Campos Racing staff worked long hours and until 5am on Sunday morning to allow Skuz's car to start Race 2.

Achieving that obviously had the taste of success. *"We came a long way to Malaysia and this first race,"* commented team manager Rubén Espín, *"and there was no way we wouldn't try the impossible to be at the start of at least one race with at least one car. We won that challenge and now we will work to be ready for Shanghai. We know that we still have a lot of work ahead with the cars, as they are brand new, but we are ready for the challenge."*

For now, well done, guys!



Race 2 Classification after 10 Laps - 55.430 Kms

POS	NO	DRIVER	NAT	ENTRANT	LAPS	TIME	GAP	KPH	BEST	LAP
1	88	J. GENE	ESP	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	10	23:53.256		139.226	2:21.544	2
2	74	P. ORIOLA	ESP	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	10	23:54.008	0.752	139.154	2:21.735	2
3	10	G. MORBIDELLI	ITA	West Coast Racing	10	23:55.622	2.366	138.997	2:21.627	2
4	25	S. COMINI	SUI	Target Competition	10	23:55.850	2.594	138.975	2:22.098	2
5	33	A. BELICCHI	ITA	Target Competition	10	23:56.826	3.570	138.881	2:21.336	3
6	23	R. MUENNICH	GER	West Coast Racing	10	24:02.859	9.603	138.300	2:22.043	2
7	24	K. GLEASON	USA	West Coast Racing	10	24:04.115	10.859	138.180	2:21.712	3
8	8	M. GRACHEV	RUS	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	10	24:05.323	12.067	138.064	2:22.216	4
9	99	F. YU SIU FUNG	HKG	Craft-Bamboo Racing	10	24:26.816	33.560	136.041	2:23.608	3
10	55	F. FICZA	HUN	Zengo Motorsport	9	22:07.778	DNF	135.258	2:21.705	2
11	7	L. VEGLIA	ITA	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	9	24:32.078	1 LAP	121.999	2:23.755	4
NOT CLASSIFIED										
	6	F. ENGSTLER	GER	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	6	14:27.835	DNF	137.962	2:22.081	3
	20	I. SKUZ	UKR	Campos Racing	6	16:12.012	DNF	123.176	2:36.809	5
	77	S. AFANASYEV	RUS	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	1	3:30.657	DNF	94.726		
	17	M. NYKJAER	DEN	Target Competition	0		DNF			
	21	J. ORIOLA	ESP	Campos Racing	0		DNS			
FASTEST LAP										
	33	A. BELICCHI	ITA	Target Competition		2:21.336 on lap 3		141.186		

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			Salzbourg 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				
1	Sefano Comini (SUI)	3	25	12																												40			
2	Pepe Oriola (ESP)	0	18	18																												36			
3	Jordi Gené (ESP)	0	6	25																												31			
4	Gianni Morbidelli (ITA)	0	12	15																												27			
5	Andrea Belicchi (ITA)	4	10	10																												24			
6	Kevin Gleason (USA)	5	8	6																												19			
7	Sergey Afanasyev (RUS)	0	15	0																												15			
8	René Münnich (GER)	1	0	8																												9			
9	Michel Nykjær (DEN)	0	4	0																												4			
9	Mikhail Grachev (RUS)	0	0	4																												4			
11	Ferenc Ficza (HUN)	0	2	1																												3			
12	Franz Engstler (GER)	2	0	0																												2			
12	Frank Yu (HKG)	0	0	2																												2			
14	Lorenzo Veglia (ITA)	0	1	0																												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				
1	Team Craft-Bamboo Lukoil	0	33	43																												76			
2	Target Competition	7	35	22																												64			
3	West Coast Racing	6	20	23																												49			
4	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	2	4	8																												14			
5	Zengö Motorsport	0	6	4																												10			