

24 May 2015

Rounds 9 & 10 – Monza, Italy – 23/24 May 2015

RACE REPORT

“Magic Monza” produces thrilling races, as Morbidelli wins twice

The “Temple of Speed” kept up with its reputation and offered two superb races, probably the most thrilling seen so far in the TCR International Series and a delight for touring car fans at the track and at home.

The sight of up to four cars fighting side-by-side on the straights or of intense duels in the fast corners and in the chicanes was really captivating!

The other great winner of the weekend was Gianni Morbidelli. At home, the Italian driver of WestCoast Racing took a maximum of trophies and points, clinching the pole and a double victory, becoming the first driver to win both races in the same event in the TCR. Still, the Honda Civic, had to sweat to achieve this sensational harvest, against the SEAT cars of Pepe Oriola and Jordi Gené (who each took a second), Andrea Belicchi (third in Race 1) and Stefano Comini who missed the podium but was instrumental in putting in the show, as always.

Fernando Monje rounded an excellent weekend for Campos Racing, by taking a podium finish in Race 2, the first one for the Opel Astra OPC, which has impressed by progress made. There were more first satisfactions, as rookies Zsolt Szabó and Antonio D’Amico scored points in both races and the Proteam Racing Ford Focus driven by Tom Boardman, took its first point.

Stewards’ investigations after the races resulted in two reprimands to Morbidelli for clashing with Comini and a drop of five grid positions for the next race to Afanasyev for the Race 1 pile up that involved Grachev and Nykjær.

Things are close in the championship standings, with Morbidelli retaking the lead ahead of comini, Oriola and Gené, all within 26 points.

The TCR International Series will resume next week, for Round 11 and 12 at Salzburgring, in Austria.

Race 1 – Hardly-fought win for Morbidelli

Gianni Morbidelli took the second win of the year for WestCoast Racing and the Honda Civic in a lively Race 1 at Monza that was much closely-fought than expected. The advantage shown by the Civic during free practice and qualifying did not materialize in the race, under a nice sunshine, which forced Morbidelli to the limit for passing Belicchi and Comini before taking the lead from Oriola at mid-race.



The Spaniard finished a close second ahead of Belicchi and Gené, while “warrior Comini” had to retire two laps from the end after running wide at the Lesmo 2 corner. It was not the only spectacular incident, as Grachev, Afanasyev and Nykjær were eliminated in a three-way collision while fighting for the eighth position.

It was a race of premieres, with Fernando Monje taking a superb fifth in the Campos Racing Opel Astra, while there were point finishes for rookies Zsolt Szabó and Antonio D’Amico. Last but not least, Tom Boardman managed to finish the race with the Ford Focus ST, giving the first point to Proteam Racing’s car.

Key moments

Grid – All cars are on the grid, except for Davide Roda’s SEAT that could not be repaired after yesterday’s roll

Start – Not a great start from Morbidelli and Comini, with Oriola sneaking between them, which creates some rubbing at the first chicane; excellent kick-off from Monje and Belicchi

Lap 1 – Contact between Comini and Afanasyev at the first chicane; Oriola leads ahead of Belicchi, Morbidelli, Comini, Gené, Monje and Grachev

Lap 2 – Comini passes Morbidelli on the outside of the first chicane and is third

Lap 3 – Comini again in action at the first chicane, this time passing Belicchi for second

Lap 4 – Morbidelli outpowers Belicchi on the straight and is third; Veglia passes Grachev for 7th and soon after also Gleason is through; the first three are nose to tail at the Parabolica, with Comini trying the outside line, but losing position to Morbidelli

Lap 5 – Morbidelli almost passes Oriola on the straight but the Spaniard keeps the advantage; Gleason takes seventh from Veglia

Lap 6 – At the end of the lap, Morbidelli manages to take the lead using the slipstream

Lap 7 – Comini cuts the first chicane after trying to pass Oriola.

Lap 8 – Gleason passes Monje for sixth at the end of the straight; Skuz stops in pits with brakes problems; Monje repasses Gleason, while Veglia goes straight at the Roggia

Lap 9 – Big fight between Oriola and Comini for second, but the Swiss is kept at bay and then goes wide at Lesmo 2 and stops on the track soon after

Lap 10 – Grachev touches Afanasyev at the Roggia and both hit the barriers after taking Nykjær along; the race is over for the them all

Lap 11 – Morbidelli wins ahead of Oriola, Belicchi, Gené, Monje, Gleason and Veglia

Race 2 – Morbidelli wins battle, Monje on the podium

Gianni Morbidelli rounded a great day at Monza, by taking win also in Race 2 and becoming the first driver to win both races of a TCR event. Race 2 was thrilling from start to end, with a great fight and close duels involving Morbidelli, Comini, Gené and Monje, who all led at some point, plus Oriola and Belicchi. With often three and even four cars side-by-side on the straight and diving abreast into the first chicane, the show was superb.



Eventually, Morbidelli made the winning move on Comini, who had started last and climbed up in his usual flamboyant style, at the beginning of the last lap, with the Swiss losing a few position in the incident. Second place was for Jordi Gené, while Fernando Monje gave a first well-deserved podium to the Campos Racing Opel Astra OPC after having led for five laps and having performed a great show. Comini and Belicchi took fourth and fifth, with the last points going to Szabó, Veglia, Grachev and D'Amico.

Key moments

Grid – The cars of Nykjær and Afanasyev are not repairable, while Grachev (who had pole for Race 2) starts from the pits and Comini from the last row; this means that D'Amico and Gené are on the front row

Start – Gené takes the best start with D'Amico touching Belicchi and hitting the barriers at the first chicane; Monje and Oriola make contact

Lap 1 – Gené is in the lead but under attack from Monje; behind them are Belicchi and Morbidelli who have passed Skuz

Lap 2 – Monje passes Gené and takes the lead; Belicchi is third followed by Morbidelli, Skuz and Comini

Lap 3 – Morbidelli takes third from Belicchi, while Comini and Oriola pass Skuz; Comini also passes Belicchi; there is a big fight for seventh between Skuz, Gleason and Veglia

Lap 4 – Morbidelli passes Gené at the Roggia and is second

Lap 5 – Monje resists well to Morbidelli with Gené, Comini, Belicchi, Oriola and Gleason right behind

Lap 6 – Comini and Belicchi pass Gené; Morbidelli touches Monje at the Ascari, but Comini sneaks in-between the two at the Parabolica

Lap 7 – Monje, Morbidelli and Comini get side-by-side to the first chicane, with the Honda touching the SEAT which cuts the chicane and takes first; Oriola goes off-track at Lesmo and retires

Lap 8 – Gené, Morbidelli, Belicchi and Monje are side by side on the straight, with Gené taking the advantage and moving up to second

Lap 9 – Monje jumps over the kerb and hits Belicchi

Lap 10 – Great fight between Comini and Morbidelli for first, but the Swiss keeps the advantage; Belicchi drops to sixth behind Skuz

Lap 11 – Morbidelli passes Comini at the end of the straight, with the Swiss trying to respond by taking the outside line at the first chicane; there is a contact and Comini spins and nearly hits Gené; Morbidelli wins ahead of Gené, Monje, Comini, Belicchi and Skuz

What the race winner had to say

Gianni Morbidelli, winner of Races 1 and 2: *"It has been an incredible day for me, I must admit. Beyond the results, which of course pleased me very much, I am very happy because there were a lot of good fights and we put on a terrific show for the fans. I think today's races proved we had not the advantage that everybody said we had. I said after qualifying that it would not be that easy and I wasn't wrong. What probably made the difference was our good speed on some key corners, like Ascari and the Parabolica, rather than on the straight. If you know Monza, you know that both those corners are crucial to get the right speed. It was also difficult to preserve the brakes, which are under heavy constraints here, and I was constantly on the very limit."*



Fernando Monje put the Opel in the top league

The “Man of the Race” recognition went without hesitation to Fernando Monje. At Monza, the 21-year-old driver from Barcelona was driving for the first time the Opel Astra OPC of Campos Racing, although he has been involved in this project since the very beginning as part of the management staff.

Not only Monje signed the best performance in qualifying (6th) of the car so far, but he produced two superb races, clinching a 5th in Race 1 and a 3rd in Race 2, where he led for five laps, earning everybody’s appreciation and the congratulations from an expert racer as Gianni Morbidelli:

“It was very difficult to pass Fernando in Race 2 because he drove very well and was doing exactly what he had to do to defend his position in a very clean way where his car was slower than mine and rebuilding enough gap in the straight, where the Opel was very fast.”
A delighted but laid-back Monje explained: *“It was an unexpected but great weekend. We progressed well throughout it, showing performance, reliability and consistency. The new sequential gearbox worked well, while we struggled a bit with the brakes. I am very happy for Campos Racing that has been working hard and well since the beginning of the season. Here at Monza, we had a very good top speed, as everybody could see, but were slower than our opponents in key corners. This obliged me to be always on the limit, especially when braking, and adopt defensive lines when needed, but I think we did it well and put on an entertaining show.”*



RACE 1 Official Result

Clas.	Nº	Driver	Nat.	Entrant	Car	Laps	Total Time	Km/h.	Gap	Best	Time	Km/h.
1	10	Gianni Morbidelli	ITA	West Coast Racing	Honda Civic TCR	11	22'31.918	169.687		8	2'01.801	171.221
2	74	Pepe Oriola	ESP	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT León Racer	11	22'33.116	169.537	1"198	10	2'02.242	170.603
3	33	Andrea Belicchi	ITA	Target Competition	SEAT León Racer	11	22'35.422	169.249	3"504	8	2'02.107	170.792
4	88	Jordi Gené	ESP	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT León Racer	11	22'35.802	169.201	3"884	10	2'02.145	170.739
5	22	Fernando Monje	ESP	Campos Racing	Opel Astra OPC	11	22'36.974	169.055	5"056	9	2'02.176	170.695
6	24	Kevin Gleason	USA	West Coast Racing	Honda Civic TCR	11	22'37.620	168.975	5"702	9	2'01.523	171.612
7	7	Lorenzo Veglia	ITA	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	SEAT León Racer	11	22'43.955	168.190	12"037	3	2'02.019	170.915
8	46	Zsolt Szábo	HUN	Zengő Motorsport	SEAT León Racer	11	22'52.078	167.194	20"160	6	2'02.819	169.802
9	36	Antonio D'Amico	ITA	B.D. Racing Motorsport	SEAT León Racer	11	22'52.666	167.123	20"748	9	2'02.843	169.768
10	71	Tom Boardman	GBR	Proteam Racing	Ford Focus ST	11	23'40.539	161.490	1'08"621	3	2'06.860	164.393
11	77	Sergey Afanasyev	RUS	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT León Racer	10	24'43.219	140.605	1 Lap.	4	2'02.482	170.269
12	8	Mikhail Grachev	RUS	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	SEAT León Racer	9	18'36.848	168.057	2 Lap.	3	2'02.757	169.887
13	17	Michel Nykjær	DEN	Target Competition	SEAT León Racer	9	18'37.144	168.012	2 Lap.	4	2'02.655	170.029
		NOT CLASSIFIED										
14	25	Stefano Comini	SUI	Target Competition	SEAT León Racer	8	16'26.292	169.158	3 Lap.	8	2'01.972	170.981
15	20	Igor Skuz	UKR	West Coast Racing	Honda Civic TCR	7	14'53.747	163.339	4 Lap.	4	2'03.110	169.400

Fastest lap Kevin Gleason 2'01.523 171.612 Km/h.

Autodromo di Monza on May 24, 2015

At 16:54

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RACE 2 Official Result

Clas.	Nº	Driver	Nat.	Entrant	Car	Laps	Total Time	Km/h.	Gap	Best	Time	Km/h.
1	10	Gianni Morbidelli	ITA	West Coast Racing	Honda Civic TCR	11	22'37.847	168.946		3	2'01.919	171.055
2	88	Jordi Gené	ESP	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT León Racer	11	22'40.564	168.609	2"717	7	2'02.301	170.521
3	22	Fernando Monje	ESP	Campos Racing	Opel Astra OPC	11	22'41.778	168.459	3"931	3	2'02.224	170.628
4	25	Stefano Comini	SUI	Target Competition	SEAT León Racer	11	22'44.346	168.142	6"499	3	2'01.933	171.035
5	33	Andrea Belicchi	ITA	Target Competition	SEAT León Racer	11	22'44.388	168.137	6"541	5	2'02.372	170.422
6	20	Igor Skuz	UKR	West Coast Racing	Honda Civic TCR	11	22'44.600	168.110	6"753	4	2'02.794	169.836
7	46	Zsolt Szábo	HUN	Zengő Motorsport	SEAT León Racer	11	22'47.976	167.696	10"129	5	2'02.806	169.820
8	7	Lorenzo Veglia	ITA	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	SEAT León Racer	11	22'51.289	167.290	13"442	5	2'01.986	170.961
9	8	Mikhail Grachev	RUS	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	SEAT León Racer	11	22'58.498	166.416	20"651	8	2'03.164	169.326
10	36	Antonio D'Amico	ITA	B.D. Racing Motorsport	SEAT León Racer	11	23'01.035	166.110	23"188	6	2'02.416	170.361
11	71	Tom Boardman	GBR	Proteam Racing	Ford Focus ST	10	23'24.384	148.498	1 Lap.	3	2'07.267	163.867
		NOT CLASSIFIED										
12	74	Pepe Oriola	ESP	Team Craft-Bamboo LUKOIL	SEAT León Racer	6	12'22.618	168.497	5 Lap.	4	2'01.934	171.034
13	24	Kevin Gleason	USA	West Coast Racing	Honda Civic TCR	6	14'10.036	147.205	5 Lap.	4	2'01.311	171.912

Fastest lap Kevin Gleason 2'01.311 171.912 Km/h.

Autodromo di Monza on May 24, 2015

At 16:55

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2015 TCR INTERNATIONAL SERIES - TEAMS' CLASSIFICATION

position	team	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			TBA TBA 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	22	0	27	43	7	25	43	0	13	26	5	15	22																			290
2	Team Craft-Bamboo Lukoil	0	33	43	2	12	16	7	43	12	7	20	27	5	30	18																			275
3	WestCoast Racing	6	20	23	9	43	25	0	10	27	1	10	20	5	33	33																			265
4	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	2	4	8	3	12	14	1	16	6	7	40	8	0	6	6																			133
5	Campos Racing	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	6	6	0	10	15																			39
6	Zengö Motorsport	0	6	4	1	6	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	4	6																			29
7	Veloso Motorsport	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	12	14	-	-	-																			26
8	Bas Koeten Racing	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	6	4	-	-	-	-	-	-																			10
9	JSB Compétition	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	1	8	-	-	-	-	-	-																			9
10	B.D. Racing Motorsport	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	2	1																			3
11	Proteam Racing	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	1	0																			1

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