

17 September 2016

Rounds 17 & 18 – Singapore – 16 / 18 September 2016

SATURDAY REPORT

Jean-Karl Vernay converts pole position into Race 1 victory Stefano Comini retakes the points lead

Jean-Karl Vernay remained undefeated after two days of track activities at Singapore's Marina Bay Circuit. After posting the fastest laps in yesterday's Practice and this afternoon's Qualifying, the young Frenchman converted his pole position into a brilliant victory in the night race.

Stefano Comini crossed the line second, completing an excellent 1-2 finish for Leopard Racing, while Pepe Oriola successfully defended a crucial third position despite strong pressure from Mat'ò Homola.

James Nash – who was leading the standings before the race – was classified fifth ahead of Sergey Afanasyev.

The victory enabled Vernay to significantly cut his gap in the Drivers' Championship standings; he still lies fourth, but is now only 22 points behind his teammate Comini.

In fact, the Swiss driver has taken the lead of the series back and is now ahead of Nash and Pepe Oriola by one and two points respectively.

Petr Fulín lost a possible points result by pitting, as he was worried by an alarm from the oil temperature sensor. Both the Liqui Moly Team Engstler cars of Davit Kajaia and Filipe de Souza retired with brake issues. Jordi Oriola's Opel Astra and Martin Cao's Ford Focus managed to finish the race in 12th and 13th position respectively.

Race 2 will start tomorrow at 15:00 local time, with Mikhail Grachev on pole on the reverse grid

Key facts

Start – Vernay makes a good start and leads from Comini, P. Oriola and Nash

Lap 1 – Morbidelli spins at Turn 1 and re-joins; Homola overtakes Nash for 4th

Lap 3 – Fulín pits and retires from 9th; Afanasyev defends 6th place from Borković

Lap 4 – Vernay pulls away; Comini is chased by P. Oriola and Homola

Lap 5 – De Souza stops on the track

Lap 6 – Gleason, Tassi and Morbidelli are in a close battle for 8th

Lap 7 – Khoo hits the tyre-wall head-on, but re-joins

Lap 8 – Kajaia pits and retires; Grachev defends 11th place from Hezemans

Lap 9 – Khoo stops on the track; Hezemans hits the tyre-wall head-on and retires

Lap 10 – Vernay wins from Comini, P. Oriola, Homola and Nash

Quotes from the podium finishers in Race 1

Jean-Karl Vernay (winner): *"I am very happy, it was very nice to win here and in this fantastic atmosphere. I knew that the start was going to be crucial and luckily, everything went well. I pulled away nicely in the first laps, trying to stay calm, avoid any mistakes and preserving the tyres. Everything went as planned, and it was great. I was also able to reduce the gap in the championship, I still would prefer to be much closer, but it was a good result anyway."*

Stefano Comini (second): *"Second behind my teammate was a very good result, especially for the team. I took again the leadership in the standings, and although this means little, because the gaps are very close, it was good news. As for the race, I wanted to create some chaos and I almost managed to do so, because I saw in my mirrors that Oriola and Homola were going everywhere... It would not have been clever to try to reach Jean-Karl, so I settled for a quiet race and saved new tyres for tomorrow."*

Pepe Oriola (third): *"There was nothing I could try against Vernay and Comini, their cars were so much faster, especially on the straights. I could only hope in some mistakes from them, which did not come. The situation in the standings is even closer now, and I am happy with this. We know that everything will be decided in Macau..."*

Penalties shake up qualifying results behind the pole

Jean-Karl Vernay confirmed his form as the fastest TCR driver on Singapore's Marina Bay Street Circuit by claiming his first pole position of the season with an impressive lap of 2:24.511 that improved last year's TCR record time by nearly two seconds.

In the provisional results, Gianni Morbidelli (2:25.016), Mat'ò Homola (2:25.019), Stefano Comini (2:25.115), Pepe Oriola (2:25.436), Dušan Borković (2:25.629) and James Nash (2:25.899) filled the positions from fourth to seventh.

However, Qualifying results were later shaken up by a rain of penalties imposed by the Stewards following a number of track-limit infringement reports.

No fewer than twelve drivers saw their fastest laps disallowed: Mikhail Grachev, Davit Kajaia, Petr Fulín, Gianni Morbidelli, Martin Cao, Kevin Gleason, Jordi Oriola, Dušan Borković, Douglas Khoo, Pepe Oriola, Rafaël Galiana and Neric Wei.

On top of this, those who repeated the infringement were also given grid penalties ahead of Race 1: 15 positions to Grachev, 6 to Kajaia Fulín, Morbidelli and Cao and 3 to Gleason and Jordi Oriola.

Eventually the first three rows of the starting grid for Race 1 were filled by Vernay, Homola, Comini, P. Oriola, Nash and Tassi, while Morbidelli was demoted to 9th position.

