



2 April 2017

**Rounds 1 & 2 – Rustavi International Motopark, Georgia – 1 / 2 April 2017**

## **RACE REPORT**

### **Georgian fans delighted by first TCR experience Local hero Kajaia and Oriola share victories**

The third season of the TCR International Series couldn't have started in a more exciting way, as the first-ever visit by the series to Georgia's Rustavi International Motorpark resulted in two breathtaking races that delighted the thousands of fans that crowded the grandstand to full capacity.

The icing on the cake for them was local hero Davit Kajaia's victory in the first race at the conclusion of a thrilling four-way fight that involved cars of four different brands. The Georgian policeman showed speed and a cool head in keeping his pursuers at bay and giving the first victory to the Romeo Ferraris-built Alfa Romeo Giulietta.

The second race victory went to Pepe Oriola and his Lukoil Craft-Bamboo SEAT León, which meant that for the third consecutive year the young Spaniard opened the season with a victory and so established himself as a candidate for the title fight once again.

The event also offered the young Hungarian duo of Attila Tassi and Ferenc Ficza reasons to be satisfied – each claimed one second place – together with Honda, Audi and Volkswagen (all of whom obtained podium positions).

The reigning champion Stefano Comini experienced very mixed fortunes on his first appearance at the wheel of the Audi RS 3 LMS. He first made up for a disappointed Qualifying by fighting for a podium place in Race 1, but then was forced to retire in Race 2 thanks to the consequences of a collision with his former teammate, which occurred after the end of the first race.

Although Opel struggled to stay on the pace of the faster cars and lost Mat'ò Homola at the start of Race 2, the brand was eventually rewarded by its first TCR International points scored by Pierre-Yves Corthals.

After this resounding start, the series will resume over the Easter weekend at the Bahrain International Circuit in the frame of the Formula One Grand Prix.

### **Race 1 – Kajaia and Alfa Romeo win a breathtaking first race**

The 2017 TCR International Series kicked off with a breathtaking wet race at Rustavi International Motorpark.

Georgia's local hero Davit Kajaia and his Romeo Ferraris-built Alfa Romeo Giulietta run by the GE-Force team claimed a fantastic victory after a close fight that involved five drivers representing four different brands of car manufacturers.

After sprinting from pole position, Kajaia pushed to the limit and created a gap in the first half of the race, while Attila Tassi (M1RA Honda Civic Type-R), Ferenc Ficza (Zele Racing SEAT León) and Stefano Comini (Comtoy Racing Audi RS 3 LMS) were fighting behind him.



Once Ficza managed to overtake Tassi and close the gap, Kajaia was able to keep him at bay, while Comini and Roberto Colciago (M1RA Honda Civic Type-R) were also chasing the leading pair.

Eventually the crowd roared when Kajaia crossed the finish line with a slim margin ahead of Ficza, while Comini kept third place despite Colciago's last effort.

#### Key facts

Grid – the track is still wet after it rained the whole morning

Start – Kajaia takes the best start, from Tassi, Ficza and Colciago

Lap 1 – Comini and Vernay make contact, Comini moves up to fifth; Borković and Valente clash

Lap 2 – Comini overtakes Colciago for fourth

Lap 3 – Borković overtakes Morbidelli for ninth

Lap 4 – Tassi is under pressure from Ficza and Comini

Lap 5 – Homola overtakes Valente for 11<sup>th</sup>

Lap 6 – Ficza overtakes Tassi for second

Lap 7 – Comini overtakes Tassi for third; Valente pits for repairs

Lap 9 – Colciago overtakes Tassi for fourth

Lap 10 – Ficza closes in on Kajaia

Lap 11 – Kajaia leads shrinks to four tenths

Lap 12 – Kajaia, Ficza, Comini and Colciago are nose to tail

Lap 13 – the first four are covered by less than one second

Lap 14 – Ficza knocks on Kajaia bumper, but the leader maintain the position

Lap 15 – Colciago dives inside Comini at Turn 1, but the reigning champion maintains second place; Kajaia wins from Ficza, Comini and Tassi

### **Quotes from the Race 1 podium finishers**

Davit Kajaia (winner): *“I am more than happy, it is so great to win my first race here at home, I have no words... I just want to thank my country for all the support, the team that did a fantastic job and TCR for bringing such a great show to Georgia. The race was very tough. My start was good and I could build some gap, but as from lap 6, my front tyres started to suffer and then I had to fight to keep Ficza at bay.”*

Ferenc Ficza (second): *“I am very happy was second, it's a good result. My start wasn't that great, then I could pass Tassi, but Comini's car was getting larger and larger in my mirrors. At the same time, we were reducing the gap to Kajaia and got really close but there was no way to pass him.”*

Stefano Comini (third): *“First of all, I want to congratulate Davit for his fabulous win, he did a superb job. I am very happy for all Georgians, who have welcomed us so warmly. My race was good, to finish on the podium for our first race as a team and with the Audi is an excellent result. I had a contact with Jean-Karl Vernay on the first lap; I had the inside line and he hit me. He went sideways and I actually pushed him a bit to get his car straight again. After crossing the line, he hit me on purpose breaking my radiator, which was so silly...”*



## Race 2 – Oriola keeps up impressive opening event record

Pepe Oriola confirmed his winning record in the opening event of the TCR International Series; after being victorious at Sepang in 2015 and Bahrain in 2016, the Catalan won the second race in Georgia.

Oriola beat his Lukoil Craft-Bamboo teammate Hugo Valente, while Attila Tassi claimed third position ahead of Jean-Karl Vernay. While the two SEAT León cars of Oriola and Valente pulled away when the race resumed after the safety car, there was a red-hot fight for the fifth position. Eventually Dušan Borković managed to resist the pressure from the likes of Ferenc Ficzá, James Nash and Roberto Colciago, while Pierre-Yves Corthals finished tenth and became the first Opel driver to score championship points.

Following the race 2, the Stewards reviewed video evidence of two incidents and handed 30-second time penalties to Valente (who dropped from second to ninth) and Colciago (who dropped from sixth to 12<sup>th</sup>) for overtaking under yellow flags.

### Key facts

Grid – the track is drying, all cars are on slicks; Comini lines up at the end of the pit lane

Start – Altoè sprints ahead of Oriola and Valente

Lap 1 – Abkhazava hits Homola at Turn 1, the Slovak's Opel spins and stalls; there is battle for the leading positions: Oriola and Valente overtake Altoè who drops to third ahead of Tassi, Vernay and Morbidelli

Lap 2 – the safety car is deployed to recover Homola's car

Lap 4 – the race resumes

Lap 5 – Tassi overtakes Altoè for third; Borković overtakes Morbidelli for fifth; Ficzá overtakes Kajaia for ninth

Lap 6 – Comini pits and retires

Lap 7 – Nash overtakes Morbidelli for sixth

Lap 8 – Colciago overtakes Morbidelli for seventh

Lap 9 – Oriola pulls away from Valente

Lap 10 – Nash overtakes Borković for fifth

Lap 11 – Colciago and Nash go wide and Borković retakes fifth; Ficzá overtakes Nash for sixth

Lap 13 – Borković, Ficzá, Nash, Colciago, Morbidelli and Nash have a close battle

Lap 14 – Ficzá makes a mistake and drops behind Nash and Colciago

Lap 15 – Ficzá and Colciago make contact, Ficzá stops and retires

Lap 16 – Kajaia overtakes Morbidelli for eighth

Lap 17 – Oriola wins from Valente, Tassi and Vernay; Borković keeps fifth ahead of Colciago who overtakes Nash for sixth; Corthals claims the last point

## Quotes from the Race 2 podium finishers

Pepe Oriola (winner): *"It's the third year in a row that I manage to win a race in the opening event of the TCR International Series, it seems that I come always strong out of the winter... It's really nice to win a race after the difficult event we had, with a bad qualifying and lots of trouble. My start wasn't great, because I was on a line still humid and my wheels got spinning, but I could keep Hugo behind, then I pushed hard to try to build some advantage. It wasn't easy because it was not very clear if it was raining or not and as the race leader you always risk to be caught by surprise first..."*



Hugo Valente (second): *“It’s great for the team to end a difficult weekend with a 1-2. It’s also a good result for me for a first outing with a new team and a new car. At the start, I got side-by-side with Pepe, we even touched slightly, and after that my steering wasn’t that precise on left turns. I coul never really attack Pepe, but the objective was to score heavy points.”*

Attila Tassi (third): *“I am happy with the podium and with my performances throughout the weekend. I could not hope on such a weekend before it started, especially given that I was driving the Honda for the first time. In Race 2, Pepe and Hugo were far away in front, but I had a good fight with Vernay and could defend third.”*

### **2017 TCR International Series – calendar**

#### **2 April – Rustavi International Motopark, Georgia**

16 April – Bahrain International Circuit (F1 event)

6 May – Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium (WEC event)

14 May – Autodromo di Monza, Italy (ELMS event)

11 June – Salzburgring, Austria

2 July – Hungaroring, Budapest (GT Open event)

9 July – Motorsport Arena Oschersleben, Germany (with ADAC TCR Germany)

3 September – Chang International Circuit, Buriram (with TCR Thailand)

8 October – Zhejiang International Circuit, China (with TCR China)

26 November – Yas Marina Circuit, Abu Dhabi (F1 event)

## TCR International Series 2017 Rounds 1&amp;2

Sorted on Laps

TCR RIM (Rustavi Motorpark) 4.120 km

Race 1 - Official result

4/2/2017 01:35 PM

Race (15 Laps) started at 13:36:11

Pos	No.	Name	Car	Laps	Diff	Gap	Total Tm	Best Tm
1	16	Davit Kajaia	Alfa Romeo Giulietta TCR	15			25:56.717	1:49.626
2	55	Ferenc Ficza	SEAT Leon TCR	15	0.374	0.374	25:57.091	1:49.998
3	1	Stefano Comini	Audi RS3 LMS TCR	15	1.176	0.802	25:57.893	1:50.008
4	5	Roberto Colciago	Honda Civic Type-R TCR	15	1.478	0.302	25:58.195	1:50.655
5	9	Attila Tassi	Honda Civic Type-R TCR	15	1.783	0.305	25:58.500	1:50.227
6	2	Jean-Karl Vernay	Volkswagen Golf GTi TCR	15	6.667	4.884	26:03.384	1:50.564
7	74	Pepe Oriola	SEAT Leon TCR	15	7.480	0.813	26:04.197	1:50.563
8	21	Giacomo Altoe	Volkswagen Golf GTi TCR	15	7.841	0.361	26:04.558	1:50.525
9	62	Dusan Borkovic	Alfa Romeo Giulietta TCR	15	10.842	3.001	26:07.559	1:50.409
10	10	Gianni Morbidelli	Volkswagen Golf GTi TCR	15	11.388	0.546	26:08.105	1:51.022
11	70	Mat'o Homola	Opel Astra TCR	15	15.494	4.106	26:12.211	1:50.709
12	23	Pierre-Yves Corthals	Opel Astra TCR	15	20.653	5.159	26:17.370	1:51.250
13	54	James Nash	SEAT Leon TCR	15	24.620	3.967	26:21.337	1:51.053
14	18	Duncan Ende	SEAT Leon TCR	15	54.323	29.703	26:51.040	1:52.718
15	15	Shota Abkhazava	Alfa Romeo Giulietta TCR	15	:07.582	13.259	27:04.299	1:53.109

Not classified (75% = 11 Laps)

7	Hugo Valente	SEAT Leon TCR	6	9 Laps	9 Laps	9:32.647	1:50.708
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Margin of Victory

Avg. Speed

Best Lap Tm

Best Speed

Best Lap by

0.374

142.916

1:49.626

135.296

16 - Davit Kajaia

Stewards

Orbits

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## TCR International Series 2017 Rounds 1&amp;2

Sorted on Laps

TCR RIM (Rustavi Motorpark) 4.120 km

Race 2 - Official result

4/2/2017 03:35 PM

Race (17 Laps) started at 15:36:59

Pos	No.	Name	Car	Laps	Diff	Gap	Total Tm	Best Tm
1	74	Pepe Oriola	SEAT Leon TCR	17			29:40.114	1:42.657
2	9	Attila Tassi	Honda Civic Type-R TCR	17	4.823	4.823	29:44.937	1:42.926
3	2	Jean-Karl Vernay	Volkswagen Golf GTi TCR	17	5.466	0.643	29:45.580	1:42.798
4	62	Dusan Borkovic	Alfa Romeo Giulietta TCR	17	16.878	11.412	29:56.992	1:43.731
5	54	James Nash	SEAT Leon TCR	17	19.012	2.134	29:59.126	1:43.445
6	16	Davit Kajaia	Alfa Romeo Giulietta TCR	17	19.835	0.823	29:59.949	1:43.568
7	10	Gianni Morbidelli	Volkswagen Golf GTi TCR	17	20.271	0.436	30:00.385	1:43.846
8	23	Pierre-Yves Corthals	Opel Astra TCR	17	33.498	13.227	30:13.612	1:44.498
9	7	Hugo Valente	SEAT Leon TCR	17	34.056	0.558	30:14.170	1:43.134
10	21	Giacomo Altoe	Volkswagen Golf GTi TCR	17	34.127	0.071	30:14.241	1:43.851
11	18	Duncan Ende	SEAT Leon TCR	17	42.065	7.938	30:22.179	1:44.493
12	5	Roberto Colciago	Honda Civic Type-R TCR	17	48.258	6.193	30:28.372	1:43.042
13	55	Ferenc Ficza	SEAT Leon TCR	14	3 Laps	3 Laps	24:45.857	1:43.182
Not classified (75% = 12 Laps)								
	1	Stefano Comini	Audi RS3 LMS TCR	6	11 Laps	8 Laps	11:04.316	1:45.792
	15	Shota Abkhazava	Alfa Romeo Giulietta TCR	1	16 Laps	5 Laps	53.002	
	70	Mat'o Homola	Opel Astra TCR					

## Announcements

Car 7 +30s penalty applied - Decision No.2

Car 5 +30s penalty applied - Decision No.4.

Margin of Victory	Avg. Speed	Best Lap Tm	Best Speed	Best Lap by
4.823	141.645	1:42.657	144.481	74 - Pepe Oriola

Stewards

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