



7 October 2017

Rounds 17 &amp; 18 – Zhejiang Circuit, China – 7 / 8 October 2017

**QUALIFYING REPORT****Rob Huff claims pole ahead of teammate Vernay**

On his last appearance in the TCR International Series during the current season, Rob Huff claimed his first pole position at the wheel of his Leopard Racing Volkswagen Golf GTI. His teammate Jean-Karl Vernay then provided the icing on the cake by qualifying second, locking out the front row of the grid of Race 1 for the team and Volkswagen. The four points awarded to the second-best qualifier also meant that Vernay reclaimed the leadership in the championship standings with a two-point margin ahead of Attila Tassi. Pepe Oriola put in a great effort and managed to qualify third in his Lukoil Craft-Bamboo SEAT León.

In an unusual situation, the two fastest drivers in Qualifying will not be at the front of the grid. In fact, Alain Menu and Gabriele Tarquini set the fastest laps in Q1 at a pace that nobody was able to match, but they were not admitted to Q2 because their Hyundai i30 N cars have been accepted with a temporary homologation form, meaning that they are not eligible to score points. They will start both races from 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> and promise to fight for good results.

Among those who were disappointed by the Qualifying results were Stefano Comini and Mat'ò Homola. The reigning champion couldn't achieve any better than a 16<sup>th</sup> position that greatly jeopardized his hopes to win a third consecutive title. As for Homola, he couldn't even try, as an engine failure sidelined him in both Practice 2 and Qualifying.

Frederic Vervisch qualified tenth and so won pole position on the reversed grid for Race 2 alongside Davit Kajaia.

The first race will start tomorrow at 14:30 local time (live streaming at [www.tcr-series.com](http://www.tcr-series.com) and [www.tcr-series.tv](http://www.tcr-series.tv)).

**Qualifying 1: Menu and Tarquini are fastest**

The pairing of Hyundai i30 N cars of Menu and Tarquini set the fastest laps in the first part of the session, the only ones to go under the 1:33 mark. After posting a provisional fastest lap of 1:33.392, Menu improved to 1:32.811 that nobody was able to beat. Tarquini tried twice and was clocked at 1:32.984 and then 1:32.935 to settle for second position.

With the Hyundai cars not eligible to qualify for Q2, the Volkswagen drivers were fighting to be the fastest of the rest of the field. Eventually it was Gianni Morbidelli who set the third best lap (1:33.279) ahead of Vernay (1:33.476) and Huff (1:33.503).

After struggling in Practice, Tassi was able to complete his last lap in 1:33.786 that placed him sixth overall, but fourth among those admitted to Q2.

The following drivers went through to Q2: Morbidelli, Vernay, Huff, Tassi, Colciago, Lloyd, Nash, Oriola, Kajaia, Dupont, Panis, Vervisch.

Among those who failed to make the cut were Borković and Comini.

**Qualifying 2: Huff and Vernay secure the front row**

Leopard Racing's Huff and Vernay had a thrilling fight to secure pole position. The Frenchman topped the timesheet with a provisional fastest lap of 1:33.341 but was pipped by his English teammate who improved to 1:33.173 under the chequered flag.



Also on his last lap, Oriola was able to climb to third with a lap of 1:33.486, demoting Morbidelli to fourth (1:33.804). Daniel Lloyd claimed the last qualifying point by posting the fifth fastest lap (1:33.817).

### Quotes after the Qualifying Session

Rob Huff (pole position): *"It's the first pole position of the year for the team and myself, so we are very pleased, of course, to take the front row with our two cars. It wouldn't be so if the Hyundai cars would have been allowed into Q2 and I congratulate them for the impressive show on their debut. The car worked perfectly throughout the sessions and on a track that is tremendously demanding and slippery. It's almost impossible to avoid any mistake. For tomorrow, we'll see what strategy we need to apply. Clearly the main objective is to have Jean-Karl and Leopard Racing Team WRT securing the title. For me, it is just a pity that this will be my last TCR event this year."*

Jean-Karl Vernay: *"The front row is a terrific result. I did a couple of very fast laps but eventually got beaten by Rob, which at least proved there are no team orders. I now have a 2-point advantage over Atila Tassi and we'll see what will happen tomorrow, but I stress: we are very competitive and I am very happy."*

Pepe Oriola: *"We struggled during all the sessions with the set-up, as the track is very slippery, and we made a lot of set-up changes which are starting to pay off. Tomorrow, I'll definitely go for a win as I have nothing to lose."*

Alain Menu: *"It's a shame we couldn't participate in Q2, but those are the rules, and it's great to be back racing at this level in touring cars. I am still learning the car, as I am a late addition to the project, and frankly, all the credit for the development and testing should be for Hyundai, the team and Gabriele, who have done a terrific job."*

### TCR Asia & China – Kantadhee Kusiri claims the TCR Asia title

Thai driver Kantadhee Kusiri of Liqui Moly Team Engstler secured the 2017 TCR Asia Drivers' championship with two cautious races at Zhejiang at the wheel of his Volkswagen Golf GTI. Kusiri greatly benefited from an engine failure that slowed down his countryman Tin Sritrai during the first race and focused on staying out of troubles to score the points he needed. Race 1 was won by guest drivers Jean-Karl Vernay in a TeamWork Motorsport Volkswagen, with Kusiri fourth overall and first of TCR Asia.

Sritrai won the second race, while Andy Yan was second overall and winner of TCR China. Vernay dominated the first race, overtaking Sritrai (Team Thailand Honda Civic) at the beginning of the second lap and consistently increasing his leading gap up to 20 seconds. Behind him, NewFaster teammates Yan and Huang Chu Han completed the TCR China podium in their Audi RS3 LMS cars, while Kusiri finished fourth overall and won the TCR Asia.

At the start both the Liqui Moly Team Engstler cars of Kusiri and Diego Moran stalled; Sritrai took the lead but was soon passed by Vernay; Kusiri then dropped from fourth to sixth behind Huang and Sunny Wong (TeamWork Motorsport Volkswagen).



For half of the race, Sritrai held on to the second position, leading TCR Asia, but on lap 10 his pace faded and he lost two places to Eric Kwong and Abdul Kaathir. On lap 16, Wong lost a wheel and the fourth position in TCR China. He pitted, rejoined and eventually was classified eighth.

Sritrai took a superb victory in the second race, but it wasn't enough to prevent Kusiri from securing the title. Sritrai made a brilliant start from second on the grid and powered past Kusiri; Yan also passed Moran to set up a four-way fight for the podium places that lasted the entire race.

With victory the only option for Sritrai, he held his nerve while others behind him were swapping places. Kusiri lost second when he was passed by Yan's Audi on lap 8 and then was passed for third place by Moran on lap 14. Kusiri knew that the title was within reach and only had to stay out of trouble for the remainder of the race. Moran then made several efforts to pass Yan for second but each time was thwarted, even nosing ahead briefly on lap 15 only to lose the position again when he ran wide at the next corner.

That was how it finished, with Sritrai taking the chequered flag 2.4 seconds clear of Yan, who finished as the best TCR China entrant. Moran was a frustrated third.

TCR China's final race of the weekend takes place at 10:00 on Sunday morning.

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

2 April – Rustavi International Motorpark, 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

18 June – Hungaroring, Hungary (DTM Event)

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

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

**8 October – Zhejiang Circuit, China (with TCR Asia & TCR China)**

18 November – Dubai Autodrome, United Arab Emirates



TCR International Series – Zhejiang, China – 7/10/2017

COMBINED QUALIFYING SESSION – Official Classification

Pos	No.	Name	Nat	Car	Q1	On Lap	Q2	On Lap
1	3	Rob Huff	GBR	Volkswagen Golf GTI TCR	1:33.503	4	1:33.173	6
2	2	Jean-Karl Vernay	FRA	Volkswagen Golf GTI TCR	1:33.476	7	1:33.341	3
3	74	Pepe Oriola	ESP	SEAT Leon TCR	1:34.266	4	1:33.486	6
4	10	Gianni Morbidelli	ITA	Volkswagen Golf GTI TCR	1:33.279	9	1:33.804	4
5	17	Daniel Lloyd	GBR	SEAT Leon TCR	1:33.893	5	1:33.817	5
6	5	Roberto Colciago	ITA	Honda Civic Type-R TCR	1:33.877	10	1:34.088	6
7	9	Attila Tassi	HUN	Honda Civic Type-R TCR	1:33.786	11	1:34.143	3
8	54	James Nash	GBR	SEAT Leon TCR	1:34.085	7	1:34.158	5
9	16	Davit Kajaia	GEO	Alfa Romeo Giulietta TCR	1:34.374	8	1:34.170	4
10	6	Frederic Vervisch	BEL	Audi RS 3 LMS TCR	1:34.539	5	1:34.494	6
11	4	Denis Dupont	BEL	SEAT Leon TCR	1:34.508	7	1:34.809	4
12	28	Aurelien Panis	FRA	Honda Civic Type-R TCR	1:34.515	7	1:34.929	2
13	33	Alain Menu	SUI	Hyundai i30 N TCR	1:32.811	5		
14	30	Gabriele Tarquini	ITA	Hyundai i30 N TCR	1:32.935	5		
15	62	Dusan Borkovic	SRB	Alfa Romeo Giulietta TCR	1:34.651	11		
16	1	Stefano Comini	SUI	Audi RS 3 LMS TCR	1:34.856	5		
17	81	Zhendong Zhang	CHN	Audi RS 3 LMS TCR	1:34.872	8		
18	18	Duncan Ende	USA	SEAT Leon TCR	1:36.328	8		
19	99	Rafael Galiana	FRA	Volkswagen Golf GTI TCR	1:36.496	9		

Qualifying maxima: 1:39.307

Car 71: All times disallowed, Stewards' decision 3 refers.

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