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Rounds 3 & 4 – Yas Marina Circuit, Abu Dhabi – 10 / 11 February 2017

RACE 2 REPORT

Josh Files joins Gdovic and Engstler in the title fight

The first appearance of Josh Files in the TCR Middle East Series resulted in a clean sweep for the British driver. Files and his Honda Civic TCR run by Dubai-based Lap57 Motorsport pocketed the maximum possible points haul during the second race meeting of the series: 5 for the pole position and 25 for each of the two races.

As a result, Files climbed to third place in the championship classification, only twelve points behind the leader Brandon Gdovic and six behind Luca Engstler, standing as a serious pretender in the title fight.

If Files had to work hard to beat Davit Kajaia's Alfa Romeo and claim victory in yesterday's Race 1, today he outshone his competitors with the greatest ease, pulling away at the rate of one second per lap. However, this supremacy has prompted an investigation: data have been downloaded from the ECU of Files' car and results remain provisional, pending checks by the TCR technical department.

Behind Files, Kajaia proved the excellent progress of the Romeo Ferraris-built Alfa Romeo Giulietta in both, speed and reliability. Speed was also shown by the Top Run Subaru that Italian teenager Giacomo Altoè drove to a brilliant third place in Race 1. However, the Japanese car failed once again to be reliable, as an engine problem prevented Altoè from taking part in Race 2.

The Liqui Moly Team Engstler duo of Gdovic and Engstler who had dominated the series opener at Dubai, struggled to be on the pace with their Volkswagen Golf cars laden by the success ballast. Eventually they fought each other for the points – even making contact at the end of the first race. Gdovic's score of 24 was better than Engstler's by one, which helped the American to stretch his leading margin to six points.

The TCR Middle East Series will hit the track again for its final event at Bahrain International Circuit on March 9 and 10.

Race 2: Files completes clean sweep of results

After setting the fastest times in Practice and Qualifying and then winning Race 1, Josh Files rounded off a near-perfect event in Abu Dhabi with another victory in Race 2. A brilliant start by Files saw the Lap57 Honda Civic storm through the field to take the lead by Turn 6 and he then never looked back.

In a repeat of the 1-2 result from Race 1, Davit Kajaia finished second in the Mulsanne Racing Alfa Romeo Giulietta while Luca Engstler salvaged third place after a disappointing opening race, in which he started from the back of the grid and was then involved in a collision with his teammate Brandon Gdovic.

Any thoughts of another podium finish by Giacomo Altoè were dashed when the Top Run Racing Subaru suffered a technical problem on the grid and the car had to be pushed back into the pit lane before the green flag lap. Files' teammate Mohammed Al Owais then stalled at the start after apparently failing to engage the Honda's launch control system. Five cars then finished the race, with the Liqui Moly Team Engstler duo of Gdovic and Stefan Goede bringing their Volkswagen Golf GTi cars home in fourth and fifth places respectively.

Key facts

Grid – Altoè's Subaru has a technical problem and is pushed back into the pit lane

Start – Files makes a great start, Al Owais stalls

Lap 1 – Files takes the lead by passing Engstler in Turn 6; Kajaia runs wide at Turn 17, but holds onto third place; Al Owais comes into the pits

Lap 2 – Kajaia runs wide in both Turns 3 and 20, but holds onto third place

Lap 3 – Kajaia passes Engstler in Turn 8 for second place; several cars run wide at Turn 18

Lap 4 – Goede receives a warning for infringing track limits

Lap 5 – Files' lead is now 7 seconds

Lap 6 – Goede runs wide at Turn 7

Lap 8 – Engstler runs wide at Turn 8

Lap 10 – Files' lead is now 12 seconds

Lap 11 – Files takes the victory from Kajaia and Engstler

Quotes from the podium finishers in Race 2


Josh Files (winner): *"It all comes down to the start; yesterday I got it wrong and today it was back to normal. I was actually in a position to go into the first corner four abreast with the Golf cars, but I thought 'this will end in a crash'. I got past two of them in Turns 3 and 4 and I then just had Luca in front of me and he pretty much let me past in the first chicane. Thanks to him for that – he probably thought he didn't have quite the same speed and let me go. It's quite difficult to maintain concentration when you have a big lead and with the heat here as well you can easily lose concentration if you back off. I made sure I was picking up every apex and looking after the car because cars can break. I made sure I was quite consistent. The car Lap57 and JAS produced this weekend was just awesome and I can't thank them enough."*


press release



Davit Kajaia (second): *“I’m very proud of the team and the car. I didn’t have a very good start because I had too much wheelspin and Josh overtook the other cars very quickly. It was a little bit difficult for me to overtake the others and I lost too much time, but finally I took second place. It wasn’t difficult, as I was in Engstler’s slipstream and overtook him quite easily. Then I saw Josh was a long way in front of me, so I just kept my pace and so I could control Luca behind me. Now I have to concentrate on Bahrain and try to get on the podium again there. Finally, I want to thank the team and the organization of TCR Middle East.”*

Luca Engstler (third): *“It was a crazy few days for us. I had a crash in the first race thanks to a stupid mistake from me; it wasn’t Brandon’s fault, it was definitely mine and I said sorry to him. The team worked all night to repair the cars and I said to myself that I had to achieve a good result to give them something back. I don’t think we had a chance against the Honda so P3 is a good result for us. It was important not just for the team for me to finish on the podium, it was also important for my confidence. Now we have to focus on Bahrain, but I don’t want to think about the title. I just want to do the best I can because I’m still only sixteen and I want to learn as much as I can. I have to learn from things like my mistake in Qualifying when I went over the track limits, not on my fast laps but on my slower ones. We’ll have to focus in Bahrain and not make this kind of mistake again.”*

		2017 POINT STANDINGS - DRIVERS									
		DUBAI			ABU DHABI			BAHRAIN			TOTAL
pos	driver	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	
1	Brandon Gdovic (USA)	3	15	25	0	12	12				67
2	Luca Engstler (GER)	5	25	8	0	8	15				61
3	Josh Files (GBR)	-	-	-	5	25	25				55
4	Davit Kajaia (GEO)	-	-	-	4	18	18				40
5	Stefan Goede (GER)	0	10	12	0	6	10				38
6	Mat'o Homola (SVK)	4	8	18	-	-	-				30
7	James Kaye (GBR)	0	12	10	-	-	-				22
8	Michela Cerruti (ITA)	1	18	0	-	-	-				19
9	Filip Sládecka (SVK)	0	4	15	-	-	-				19
10	Giacomo Altoè (ITA)	-	-	-	3	15	0				18
11	Mohammed Al Owais (UAE)	-	-	-	1	10	0				11
12	Kane Astin (GBR)	0	6	0	-	-	-				6
13	Luigi Ferrara (ITA)	2	0	0	-	-	-				2

		2017 POINT STANDINGS - TEAMS									
		DUBAI			ABU DHABI			BAHRAIN			TOTAL
pos	team	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	
1	Liqui Moly Team Engstler	9	40	43	0	20	27				139
2	Lap57 Motorsport	-	-	-	6	35	25				66
3	Mulsanne Racing	2	18	0	4	18	18				60
4	CadSpeed Racing	1	12	15	-	-	-				28
5	Top Run Motorsport	3	0	0	3	15	0				21
5	Red Camel-Jordans.nl	0	10	0	-	-	-				10