

11 March 2017

Rounds 5 & 6 – Bahrain International Circuit – 10 / 11 March 2017

RACE REPORT

Josh Files is crowned the first TCR Middle East champion

Josh Files took no prisoners at Bahrain International Circuit: with an authoritative double win at the wheel of the Lap57 Honda Civic, he secured the first edition of the TCR Middle East Series's title. The Brit also becomes the first driver to have two different TCR titles under this belt, adding this one to that of TCR Germany won last year.

Liqui Moly Team Engstler took the Teams' honours, but there was some disappointment among the German team's members, as Brandon Gdovic missed the title by only 5 points. The American collected two nice second positions, but it was not enough. Luca Engstler, who also was in contention to win the title, was third in Race 1, but had to retire in Race 2 with a broken driveshaft.

Italy's 16-year-old Giacomo Altoè continued his steady learning process and took good results (one fourth and one third) at the wheel of Team Engstler's third Volkswagen Golf. The Mulsanne Racing Alfa Romeo Giulietta of Davit Kajaia also proved fast, but lacked reliability and could not finish in any of the races.

The Bahrain event was a successful ending to the first edition of the TCR Middle Series, which has attracted great interest in the region.

Race 1 - Files' win paves the way to exciting finale

The first edition of the TCR Middle East Series will live this afternoon a breath-taking Race 2, as three drivers will go into it fighting for the title and being split by only 5 points.

By clinching an authoritative win in Race 1, Josh Files, at the wheel of the Lap57 Honda Civic, has reduced to 2 points his gap from the series leader Brandon Gdovic, who took a last-lap second place from his Liqui Moly Team Engstler's teammate Luca Engstler, now third in the standings, but only 5 points behind Gdovic.

Race 1: in an unusually cloudy morning at Bahrain International Circuit, delivered a first big surprise even before the start, as the Mulsanne Racing Alfa Romeo Giulietta of Davit Kajaia, had to pull out from the first row of the grid with a broken driveshaft.

Files took the lead from the start and built progressively a sufficient gap, although his race was far from easy: *"It was a very hard race on the tyres",* explained the Brit, *"there is nothing left of them and in the final laps, I had no grip, no traction, no nothing."*

Luca Engstler led the charge of the Golf cars for the entire race, but his efforts took a toll on his tyres; in the last lap, Brandon Gdovic, who had adopted a more conservative approach with regard to tyre consumption, was able to pass the young German for second. Both drivers admitted there was nothing to do against the Honda in this first race of the day.

Giacomo Altoè, on the third car of Liqui Moly Team Engstler, had to stop in the penultimate lap after a sudden drop of power, which ruined an otherwise consistent race.

Race 2 - Files secures title with another win

Josh Files was crowned the first TCR Middle East Series champion. The British driver of the Lap 57 Honda Civic left no chances to his opponents by winning also an eventful Race 2.

Both Luca Engstler (Liqui Moly Team Engstler Volkswagen Golf) and Davit Kajaia (Mulsanne Racing Alfa Romeo Giulietta) tried hard to challenge Josh, but both had to retire, leaving the podium to the other pair of Liqui Moly Team Engstler drivers, Brandon Gdovic and Giacomo Altoè, who ran together the entire race, and secured the Teams' title for the German squad.

Altoè, pole sitter on the reversed grid, almost stalled at the start, which saw some drops of rain, and Files overtook everybody before first corner to take the lead, with Kajaia keeping second only for a few corners, as he got passed by Engstler before the end of first lap. The group remained quite compact until Engstler suddenly slowed down (lap 4) and had to stop on the straight, prompting the safety car to be deployed.

The race resumed on lap 8, becoming a double battle between Files and Kajaia on one hand and Gdovic and Altoè on the other, but progressively, Files managed to pull away up to the chequered flag, while Kajaia stopped in the pits on lap 19, with severe understeer. Gdovic and Altoè finished their duel in the same order to complete the podium.

Quotes from the podium finishers in both races

Josh Files (1st in both races): *"It's great to take the championship with a double win. Things may look easy from the outside, but they were not. The entire weekend was about tyres, and I am very happy that we took the decision to save new tyres for the races. In both, the tyres were completely dead at the end. Otherwise, the car performed very well, although we could never solve the misfiring problem we had throughout the weekend."*


Brandon Gdovic (2nd in both races): *"It has been a frustrating weekend for me. We were able to improve the behaviour of the car and I am happy of the way I managed the tyres, but the Honda was absolutely unreachable."*


press release



Lucas Engstler (3rd in Race 1): *“I am quite disappointed. Not only there was nothing we could do against the Honda, but I also had twice a broken driveshaft, in Qualifying and in Race 2 and this also penalized me a lot.”*

Giacomo Altoè (3rd in Race 2): *“It was a positive weekend and I learnt a lot. I am relatively satisfied with my performance and of having being able to keep the pace of my team mate Gdovic in both races. It’s just a pity I made such a silly mistake at the start of Race 2, when I released to quickly the clutch and almost stalled.”*

		2017 POINT STANDINGS - DRIVERS									
		DUBAI			ABU DHABI			BAHRAIN			TOTAL
pos	driver	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	Q	R1	R2	
1	Josh Files (GBR)	-	-	-	5	25	25	5	25	25	110
2	Brandon Gdovic (USA)	3	15	25	0	12	12	2	18	18	105
3	Luca Engstler (GER)	5	25	8	0	8	15	3	15	0	79
4	Davit Kajaia (GEO)	-	-	-	4	18	18	4	0	12	56
5	Giacomo Altoè (ITA)	-	-	-	3	15	0	1	12	15	46
5	Stefan Goede (GER)	0	10	12	0	6	10	-	-	-	38
7	Mat'o Homola (SVK)	4	8	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	30
8	James Kaye (GBR)	0	12	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	22
9	Michela Cerruti (ITA)	1	18	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	19
10	Filip Sládečka (SVK)	0	4	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	19
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	5	33	33	210
2	Lap57 Motorsport	-	-	-	6	35	25	5	25	25	121
3	Mulsanne Racing	2	18	0	4	18	18	4	0	12	76
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