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New TC3 series could join F1 'flyaway' grand prix bills in 2015

By Peter Mills

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The proposed TC3 International touring car series is expected to hold its Formula 1 support races at long haul grands prix in 2015.

The congested nature of the European grand prix race card, occupied by the Porsche Supercup, GP3, and GP2, is believed to make it unlikely that TC3 can be accommodated in Europe for more than one round of the F1 calendar.

The championship has set its sights on joining F1 support bills from the outset next year.

Former World Touring Car Championship boss Marcello Lotti supplied further information on the series in a press release to media last week. The Italian indicated that the series is aimed at private rather than manufacturer-supported teams, and its entry will be restricted to eight teams of three cars.

Although TC3 aims to launch as an Asian and International series next year, Lotti believes the regulations could also be utilised at a national touring car championship level.

By incorporating a balance of performance system, the technical regulations echo the successful GT3 sportscar category's format, and is designed to ensnare existing and new machinery.

"There is one car that already meets all the criteria I've mentioned: the single-make SEAT Leon trophy (pictured)," explained Lotti. "It has already proved to be the perfect customer racing car, launching a number of young drivers to successful careers in national, regional and even world championships.

"A number of manufacturers have cars that are potentially eligible for TC3; to mention only a few others, there are Alfa Romeo Giulietta Quadrifoglio Verde, Ford Focus RS, Honda Civic Type-R, Mercedes CLA 45 AMG, Opel Astra OPC and the Volkswagen Golf GTI."

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Peter Mills, WTC correspondent

GT3 appears to be the inspiration for TC3 on many levels.

The sportscar series began life without manufacturer entries. It was only after three or four years, when arguably the balance of performance was recognised as being more effective, that manufacturers were represented.

We know now that TC3 is similarly to be pitched at private teams in its formative season.

Lotti made reference in his Q&A to "manufacturers and tuners... reinforcing and enlarging their customer racing communities".

It is this area that Lotti hopes could entice manufacturers to TC3. Indeed, he may wish to sell TC3 as a relatively low-cost option that national dealers could promote, while carmakers grow a customer business.

For example, a national dealer could take an existing car, of SEAT Leon Supercopa ilk, built by the likes of SEAT Sport, and thanks to the balance of performance rules, use it for TC3 without the development costs associated with other national championships such as TC2000.

There is no word yet of manufacturers building bespoke TC3 cars, but potential future 'Copa' cars on drawing boards could be utilised. SEAT Sport's reported 300-plus Leon Supercopa sales could perhaps be used as a carrot to other car companies.

Details are limited regarding TC3's Asian series. There is a dearth of high-profile international motor-racing series in the region for TC3 to pair up with, but an obvious exception is GT Asia, with its bill potentially a natural fit and an easy platform for TC3.

