



**THE AMBITIONS OF MARCELLO** Comini – previously the man behind the revival of the World Touring Car Championship – are fulfilled, the inaugural TCR International race supporting the Malaysian Grand Prix could be the start of something big for tin-tops. There's a long way to go for the cost-controlled, universal touring car concept, but it was a promising start. Seventeen cars and five marques appeared, but unsurprisingly it was SEAT Leon Racer, effectively the manufacturer's one-make machine, that dominated even though the JAS-

developed Honda Civic of American Kevin Gleason bagged pole. With performance balancing a key component of the series, and very little time to get the ballast levels perfect heading into the weekend, the Hondas gained 30kg pre-race. Gleason's lead lasted to the end of lap one, when former Megane Trophy champion Stefano Comini passed him at the last corner. The Target Competition driver pulled away, with Pepe Oriola and Sergey Afanasiev completing a podium lockout for SEAT, the Russian after a battle with Gleason, who faded to

sixth amid tyre troubles. Jordi Gene, who finished behind Gleason in seventh, started race two from reversed-grid pole thanks to qualifying 10th. He led from start to finish, but his Craft Bamboo SEAT was under near-constant pressure, alleviated only when the multi-car fight behind temporarily gave him breathing space. Initially, Ferenc Ficza was his main challenger, before he faded back. Oriola battled up to second, but couldn't find a way past Gene. Honda driver Gianni Morbidelli lost third to Andrea Belicchi on the last

lap, but reclaimed it in a final-corner dust-up during which Comini also jumped the sister Target SEAT. ● Edd Straw

**RESULTS**

**Race 1 1 Stefano Comini (SEAT Leon Racer)**, 9 laps in 21m26.159s; 2 Pepe Oriola (SEAT), +3.381s; 3 Sergey Afanasiev (SEAT); 4 Gianni Morbidelli (Honda Civic TCR); 5 Andrea Belicchi (SEAT); 6 Kevin Gleason (Honda).  
**Race 2 1 Jordi Gene (SEAT)**, 10 laps in 23m53.256s; 2 Oriola, +0.752s; 3 Morbidelli; 4 Comini; 5 Belicchi; 6 Rene Munnich (Honda).  
**Points 1 Comini, 40**; 2 Oriola, 36; 3 Gene, 31; 4 Morbidelli, 27; 5 Belicchi, 24; 6 Gleason, 19.