

Morbidelli leads the field at Shanghai



TCR INTERNATIONAL SHANGHAI (PRC), APRIL 11-12 RD 2/11

Victory gives Morbidelli points lead

THE NEW HONDA CIVIC TCR ONLY RAN for the first time two months ago, yet on just its second weekend of racing the car not only claimed its first win, but locked out the podium of a grand prix support race.

While this was a victory for a new car in a new championship, it had a familiar feel, for it was Gianni Morbidelli, a veteran of nearly two decades of tin-top racing, taking victory in a car built by long-time Honda touring car specialist JAS Motorsport and run by crack Swedish squad West Coast Racing.

Morbidelli's run to victory in the

first race from pole position was straightforward given the drama that unfolded behind him. A clash between SEAT driver Pepe Oriola and the Honda of Rene Munnich on the first lap not only eliminated the Spaniard, but secured a one-two finish for the West Coast team.

Honda's podium sweep wasn't secured until the very last lap, with Kevin Gleason prevailing in a tight scrap for third place against Stefano Comini in the strongest of the SEATs that had dominated the first round, but carried an extra 30kg of ballast at Shanghai.

In race two, Comini and Target Competition team-mate Andrea Belicchi claimed revenge for SEAT with a one-two finish. But while Belicchi led at the start and finish, he was shuffled as low as third at one stage.

Both Comini and Morbidelli took stints in the lead, with Morbidelli looking well placed for a double victory, only for his engine to cut out briefly with just over two laps remaining, allowing Belicchi and Comini to pass him.

Belicchi eventually saw off Comini's challenge, with the Swiss

having to repass Morbidelli at the penultimate corner on the last lap to secure second.

RESULTS

Race 1 1 Gianni Morbidelli (Honda Civic TCR), 10 laps in 23m18.758s; 2 Rene Munnich (Honda), +0.851s; 3 Kevin Gleason (Honda); 4 Stefano Comini (SEAT Leon Racer); 5 Andrea Belicchi (SEAT); 6 Franz Engstler (Audi TT).

Race 2 1 Belicchi, 10 laps in 23m19.292s; 2 Comini, +1.252s; 3 Morbidelli; 4 Pepe Oriola (SEAT); 5 Michel Nykjaer (SEAT); 6 Gleason.

Points 1 Morbidelli, 72; 2 Comini, 70; 3 Belicchi, 59; 4 Oriola, 49; 5 Gleason, 45; 6 Jordi Gene, 38.