

TCR INTERNATIONAL VALENCIA
(E), MAY 3 RD 3/11

Oriola scores in front of home crowd

SEAT MACHINERY DOMINATED THE European debut of the TCR International Series at Valencia, with Craft-Bamboo driver Pepe Oriola claiming his first victory in race one before Target Competition ace Stefano Comini consolidated his points lead with a win in race two.

Oriola made a perfect start to the opening race, which laid the foundations for a comfortable victory. He took it easy on the tyres as he controlled the race, ending up four and a half seconds clear of team-mate Sergey Afanasiev, who held second throughout ahead of Jordi Gene to ensure a podium sweep for the Craft-Bamboo squad.

Andrea Belicchi ran in fourth throughout in his Target SEAT, meaning that fifth was the most hotly disputed of the leading



positions. Ultimately this went to Mikhail Grachev in his Engstler-run Audi TT after a battle with Comini.

The second race was more dramatic, with the safety car deployed immediately after polesitter Gianni Morbidelli's West Coast Honda Civic and Oscar Nogues's Campos-run Opel Astra collided, wiping out Gene in the process.

Comini picked his way through to take the lead, converting that into a comfortable win ahead of team-mate Michel Nykjaer. The Dane clashed with Oriola mid-race, but survived, while Oriola slipped to fifth behind Dutchman Bas Schouten. Schouten eventually lost third with a fuel-pump failure late on, which initially handed the final podium slot to Belicchi, who was

then relegated to ninth because he ignored a drive-through penalty.

Belicchi was one of a glut of drivers penalised for passing under the safety car. Most served their penalties in the race, allowing Morbidelli – after pitting for repairs under the safety car – to take third.

RESULTS

Race 1 1 Pepe Oriola (SEAT Leon Racer), 15 laps in 26m06.049s; 2 Sergey Afanasiev (SEAT), +4.593s; 3 Jordi Gene (SEAT); 4 Andrea Belicchi (SEAT); 5 Mikhail Grachev (Audi TT); 6 Stefano Comini (SEAT). **Race 2 1 Comini**, 17 laps in 33m54.125s; 2 Michel Nykjaer (SEAT), +7.775s; 3 Gianni Morbidelli (Honda Civic TCR); 4 Kevin Gleason (Honda); 5 Oriola; 6 David Cebrian (SEAT). **Points 1 Comini, 106**; 2 Morbidelli, 91; 3 Oriola, 89; 4 Belicchi, 75; 5 Gleason, 57; 6 Gene, 53.