



PWC: Beretta, Este lead winners in opening COTA weekend

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Photo: PWC

The Pirelli World Challenge got its 2015 season off and running this weekend at Austin's Circuit of the Americas. Some quick recaps below...

GT, GTA, GT Cup presented by MOMO

The marquee GT class witnessed both a last lap pass and a crushing performance in the two races.

Saturday's Round 1 saw Olivier Beretta pull a sneaky but brilliant over/under move on Ryan Dalziel on the second-to-last lap exiting the final corner. Although Dalziel was briefly ahead, Beretta made the



winning pass up the hill into Turn 1 to seal the win in the season opener.

The Ferrari led home Dalziel's Porsche and **Johnny O'Connell**, the three-time defending series champion, to deliver the new Cadillac ATS-V.R a podium in its worldwide race debut.

Polesitter Nick Catsburg finished a hard luck 10th following a drive-through penalty issued for exceeding track limits.

Sunday's Round 2 saw Kevin Este utterly crush the field from start to finish. The Frenchman won by more than 30 seconds in the rain-drenched 50-minute race over Dalziel, to give the new McLaren 650S GT3 its first win in worldwide competition.

Catsburg finished third on Sunday. Besides Este, a fellow driver with his last name starting with E impressed. Ryan Eversley posted a stellar 25th to fifth drive in the all-wheel drive Acura TLX-GT.

Michael Lewis (GTA) and Colin Thompson (GT Cup presented by MOMO) swept the weekend in their respective classes. Beretta joked after Saturday's race that he felt "very young" flanked in the interview session by the two youngsters.

Unofficially Este will lead Dalziel in the points, but it's early days yet with only 2 of 20 races complete. St. Petersburg, the end of March, is next up.

GTS

The GTS races were split off from the GT/GTA/GT Cup races and featured two different winners, neither of whom was a GTS regular in 2014.

Kris Wilson, a last-minute fill-in for teammate Max Riddle, took Saturday's opening race in his Aston Martin Vantage GT4. Riddle was ill and Wilson, his veteran co-driver in the Continental Tire SportsCar Challenge, filled in nicely.

Meanwhile in Sunday's rainy Round 2, Michael Cooper posted an impressive drive from ninth to first in two laps, to take the lead and ultimately the win in his Chevrolet Camaro Z/28.R. Cooper is a past Touring Car champion and this marked his first GTS win.

TC/TCA/TCB

The Touring Car classes got their seasons off and running with a triple header.

Cody Ellsworth, another rising star and late entry addition, took the first two TC wins (Porsche Cayman) with Vesko Kozarov, a further late entry (only added after his GTS car had problems) took the win on Sunday in his Nissan Altima coupe.

Tony Rivera (Scion FR-S) won the opening two TCA rounds with last year's class champion Jason Wolfe (Kia Forte Koup) winning race three on Sunday.

Johan Schwartz made it look easy in TCB with a weekend sweep of the three races.

GTS will run next at St. Petersburg, while the TC classes are off until Canadian Tire Motorsport Park in May.