**KIA RACING ANNOUNCES DRIVER LINEUP FOR 2015**

**PIRELLI WORLD CHALLENGE SEASON**

*Mark Wilkins returns for his third season with Kia Racing to pilot No. 38 B.R.A.K.E.S. (Be Responsible And Keep Everyone Safe) Optima turbo; experienced newcomer Ben Clucas to pilot No. 36 DonorsChoose.org Optima turbo*

* Mark Wilkins finished third in Grand Touring Sport (GTS) driver standings two-straight years, and helped Kia win the 2014 GTS Manufacturer Championship
* British racer, Ben Clucas, rejoins Kinetic Motorsports to make Pirelli World Challenge (PWC) debut in No. 36 Optima turbo

**Irvine, Calif., February 5, 2015** – Following a historic 2014 season in which Kia claimed the Pirelli World Challenge (PWC) Grand Touring Sport (GTS) Manufacturer Championship, today Kia Motors America (KMA) and its racing partner, Kinetic Motorsports, announced the 2015 driver line-up that will defend that title during the upcoming PWC season. Canadian Mark Wilkins, who finished third in the GTS Driver Championship in each of the last two years, returns to pilot the No. 38 [B.R.A.K.E.S.](http://www.putonthebrakes.org) Optima turbo, while experienced British racer, Ben Clucas, reunites with Kinetic Motorsports to make his PWC debut behind the wheel of the No. 36 Kia Racing [DonorsChoose.org](http://www.donorschoose.org) Optima turbo when the new season begins at Circuit of the Americas in Austin, Texas, March 7-8, 2015.

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“The Kia Racing team has exceeded our expectations from the beginning of the program in 2010, and capturing the Manufacturer Championship in only our third season of Pirelli World Challenge competition took us to new heights in 2014,” said Michael Sprague, executive vice president of sales and marketing, KMA. “Last season’s success is a story of dedication, passion, and teamwork both on and off the race track, and is a testament to the reliability, durability and performance of the Kia Optima. We’re very pleased to have Mark Wilkins back with us, and the Kia family warmly welcomes Ben Clucas to our team.”

Clucas fills the large driving shoes of Kia Racing veteran Nic Jönsson, who remains with the team but will focus on vehicle testing and development instead of on-track PWC competition this season. Clucas’ 14-year driving career ranges from single-seat, open-wheel formula cars to high-powered Grand Touring (GT) tin tops. Most recently, Clucas competed in the 2014 Aston Martin Challenge, driving an Aston Martin V8 Vantage GT4 to one race win and two fastest race laps. He also competed in the Endurance GT VdeV Championship in a Mosler MT 900, recording one win in that series as well. Additionally, Clucas’ driving career includes experience in Spanish GT, Grand-Am Rolex Series, and Grand-Am Continental Tire Sports Car Challenge in which he drove a BMW M3 for Kinetic Motorsports in 2011. Clucas’ career has spanned four continents with highlights including the 1999 British Kart Championship, 2002 Formula Ford Championship, 2006 Formula 3 Championship, and the 2009 Spanish GT Championship.

 “I’m really excited for this opportunity to work with Kinetic Motorsports again and have a chance to drive this awesome Kia Optima, said the 31-year-old Clucas, who was born in Frimley, U.K., and currently resides in Nether Heyford, U.K. “I am anxious to get behind the wheel and compete in the Pirelli World Challenge, which will be a new series for me. The series’ growth has been astounding; I’m excited to be a part of it. And it’s an honor to represent Kia and their very worthy charity partner DonorsChoose.org.”

 Toronto, Ontario, native Wilkins rejoins Kia Racing for his third season behind the wheel of the No. 38 B.R.A.K.E.S. Optima turbo. Fresh off a podium finish at the 24 Hours of Daytona in January, Wilkins is ready to get the PWC season underway and pick up right where he left off.

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 “Winning the Manufacturer Championship for Kia last season was a true high-water mark for me professionally. I fell short of my personal goal of winning the Driver Championship, however, and that’s what every driver wants,” said newlywed Wilkins, who was married in the off season late last year. “I’m excited to get to race with Ben Clucas and am glad to have him as a new teammate. I’m really looking forward getting the 2015 season rolling and hoping our momentum continues.”

The PWC season kicks off at Circuit of the Americas in Austin, Texas, on March 6-8. GTS round 1 takes place Saturday, March 7, at 12:20 p.m. CT. Round 2 is Sunday, March 8, at 10:20 a.m. CT. Broadcast details are still to be announced. Live streaming is available online at www.world-challengetv.com, and race fans can keep up-to-date with the team via the Kia Racing Facebook page at www.facebook.com/kiaracing and by following along on Twitter: @KiaRacing.

**About Kia Motors America**

Kia Motors America (KMA) is the marketing and distribution arm of Kia Motors Corporation based in Seoul, South Korea. KMA proudly serves as the "Official Automotive Partner" of the NBA and LPGA and set an all-time annual sales record in 2014, surpassing the 500,000 unit mark for the third consecutive year. KMA offers a complete line of vehicles, including the rear-drive K900[[1]](#endnote-1) flagship sedan, Cadenza premium sedan, Sorento CUV, Soul urban passenger vehicle, Soul Electric Vehicle2, Sportage compact CUV, Optima midsize sedan, Optima Hybrid, the Forte compact sedan, Forte5 and Forte Koup, Rio and Rio 5-door subcompacts and the Sedona midsize multi-purpose vehicle, through a network of more than 765 dealers across the United States. Kia’s U.S. manufacturing plant in West Point, Georgia, builds the Optima\* and Sorento\* and is responsible for the creation of more than 14,000 plant and supplier jobs.

Information about KMA and its full vehicle line-up is available at www.kia.com. For media information, including photography, visit www.kiamedia.com. To receive custom email notifications for press releases the moment they are published, subscribe at www.kiamedia.com/us/en/newsalert.

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**\* The Sorento and Optima GDI (EX, SX & Limited and certain LX Trims only) are assembled in the United States from U.S. and globally sourced parts**

1. 2015 K900 V8 available in select trims and in select markets with limited availability.

2 2015 Soul EV in select markets with limited availability.

 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)