**KIA RACING STARTS PIRELLI WORLD CHALLENGE GTS-CLASS TITLE DEFENSE ATOP PODIUM IN SEASON OPENER AT CIRCUIT OF THE AMERICAS**

*Kia Racing’s New Driver, Ben Clucas, pilots the No. 36 DonorsChoose.org Optima turbo to a second-place finish in rain-soaked round two of Pirelli World Challenge in Austin, Texas*

* Mark Wilkins, driver of the No. 38 B.R.A.K.E.S. Optima turbo, finished the weekend with a pair of top-ten finishes and earned the “Move of the Race” in round one
* Kia Forte Koup privateer Jason Wolfe scores race victory and second-place finish in Touring Car A category

**Irvine, Calif., March 10, 2015** – Kia Racing’s defense of the Grand Touring Sport (GTS) Manufacturer Championship got off to a strong start with second and fifth-place finishes during the Pirelli World Challenge (PWC) season-opening weekend at Circuit of the Americas (COTA) in Austin, Texas. Kia Racing newcomer Ben Clucas, pilot of the No. 36 DonorsChoose.org Optima turbo, followed up a top-five finish in Saturday’s round one with his first-career PWC podium in Sunday’s rain-soaked round two, while teammate Mark Wilkins in the No. 38 B.R.A.K.E.S. Optima turbo scored a pair of hard-fought top-ten finishes during the challenging weekend. In addition, Kinetic Motorsports’ privateer Kia Forte Koup program, which claimed the Touring Car A (TC-A) class Manufacturer Championship for Kia last year, also started the season off in fine style, scoring two podium finishes, including a win for Jason Wolfe – last year’s Touring Car A (TC-A) Driver Champion and Rookie of the Year.

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“The Kinetic team made numerous changes in a very short period of time following the Sunday morning practice session to get us ready to race in the rain – so many changes, actually, that we thought we might be late getting the cars on the grid,” said Clucas. “But the team did a great job of setting up for the wet track, so it made my job much easier when the race began. The Kia Optima is really good in the wet; it’s just a challenge getting the power down with minimal wheel spin coming off the corners, but I’m very pleased to get some solid points on the board for Kia as we start our defense of the GTS Manufacturer Championship.”

Clucas’ Kia Racing debut weekend behind the wheel of the No. 36 DonorsChoose.org Optima turbo also included a top-five finish in round one in which he earned the “Hard Charger Award” for moving up the most spots on track – starting eighth and finishing fifth.

Teammate Wilkins, in the No. 38 B.R.A.K.E.S. Optima turbo, battled hard all weekend, finishing seventh and sixth in rounds one and two, respectively. He suffered a broken front shock absorber in round one, which took him out of podium contention, yet still managed to claim the “Move of the Race” with a phenomenal overtaking move exiting turn one.

“We fought hard all weekend, but never really got ourselves completely dialed in to where I could contend up front for a win. It was a real challenge, but we’ll be back and ready to go in St. Pete,” said Wilkins. “It was a good weekend overall for points for Kia, and I’m proud of Ben for capturing his first podium in this series – the first of many, I think. He’s got a lot of talent, and I look forward to a great season with him as my teammate.”

In addition to the factory-backed GTS Optima program, the Kinetic Motorsports privateer TC-A Kia Forte Koup program kicked off the first three rounds of their season at COTA. Defending class champion, Wolfe, in the No. 36 Richard Wolfe Trucking Kia Forte Koup, scored two podium finishes during the weekend, including a win in round three on Sunday in the rain.

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Televised coverage of the GTS races will be Saturday, March 14, at 11:00 a.m. ET on the CBS Sports Network. Televised TC-A coverage can be seen Wednesday, March 18, at 8:00 p.m. ET on the CBS Sports Network. Live-streamed coverage of all PWC races is available online at www.world-challengetv.com, and race fans can keep up-to-date with the Kia Racing team via the Kia Motors America Facebook page and on Twitter @Kia.

**About Kia Motors America**

Kia Motors America (KMA) is the marketing and distribution arm of Kia Motors Corporation based in Seoul, South Korea, and in 2014 was the #1 ranked mainstream brand according to Strategic Vision’s Total Quality Index. 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)