**KIA RACING CHARGES INTO THE STREETS OF ST. PETERSBURG FOR ROUNDS THREE AND FOUR OF PIRELLI WORLD CHALLENGE**

*2015 season’s only street circuit poses unique challenges as Kia Racing’s turbocharged Optimas return to St. Pete for fourth-straight year*

* With a podium and top-five finish in his debut for Kia Racing, Ben Clucas prepares to make his first street-circuit start since 2008 and first ever behind the wheel of the No. 36 DonorsChoose.org Optima turbo
* Kia Racing veteran Mark Wilkins will make his 11th start on a street circuit in the No. 38 B.R.A.K.E.S. Optima turbo

**Irvine, Calif., March 26, 2015** – Having successfully launched its defense of the Pirelli World Challenge (PWC) Grand Touring Sport (GTS) Manufacturer Championship with a podium and a top-five finish during the season opener at Circuit of the Americas (COTA) in Austin, Texas, Kia Racing charges into St. Petersburg, Florida, for rounds three and four knowing that the only street circuit on the 2015 PWC schedule poses a unique set of challenges – especially for the only front-wheel-drive cars in the field. But extensive off-season development work, concentrating on the handling and braking capabilities of the No. 36 and No. 38 turbocharged Optimas, combined with four consecutive years of racing experience on St. Pete’s narrow streets, has the team feeling good about the trip to Florida.

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“This being our fourth visit to St. Petersburg with the racing Optimas, we have accumulated a lot of technical data over the years, and not just from here but other street courses in general,” said Russell Smith, team owner, Kinetic Motorsports, Kia Motors America’s (KMA) official racing partner. “We’ve had success on temporary street courses before, so we know the Optima is capable of running up front. We just haven’t had the best racing luck at St. Pete, but we are confident in our off-season developments – and we have the driving talent to get the most out of the cars.”

Kia Racing has defied the odds to score wins on the streets of Detroit, Long Beach (California), and Toronto in previous years. Because of their often bumpy, inconsistent surfaces and tight corners, street circuits are notoriously difficult for teams as they search for the ideal compromise setup between stability and quickness, and for drivers as they thread the needle at high speed between concrete walls that loom just inches off the racing line. The St. Petersburg course is no different, and the Optima’s long wheelbase and front-wheel-drive configuration – often assets on longer, more flowing permanent road courses – make street circuits that much more difficult.

 “The St. Petersburg course is very technical, and the track is quite narrow, requiring a precise and stable car to ensure maximum speed. Adding bumps into the mix, combined with a slick track surface, makes St. Pete a real challenge,” said Wilkins, who has two street course victories to his credit, in Detroit and Toronto, in the No. 38 B.R.A.K.E.S. Optima turbo. “Balance those negatives against a very well-developed Optima with an aggressive street circuit setup, though, and I feel we can compete with anyone.”

 While veteran Wilkins is ready to make his 11th start on a street circuit for Kia Racing, Ben Clucas, pilot of the No. 36 DonorsChoose.org Optima turbo, prepares to make his first. Clucas hasn’t raced in a “concrete canyon” since 2008, when he drove a Formula Ford in Adelaide, Australia, but he is never one to back down from a challenge and plans to attack the 1.8-mile, 14-turn track like he does any other – with lots of preparation.

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 “I spend a lot of time studying tracks long before I ever get on them in a car. Doing my research ahead of time pays dividends in a more confident approach, which leads to faster lap times. Depending on the track, I will use a simulator or watch on-board video over and over to learn track layouts and points of reference,” said Clucas, who clinched his first-career PWC podium in round two at COTA. “The Kinetic team gives me all the data ahead of time, so I can see things like shift points, braking points, throttle pickup points, gear selection and anything else I may need. I’m looking forward to the challenge of racing on a street course in front of a great crowd and as a part of a great team.”

Round three of the PWC on the Streets of St. Petersburg takes place Friday, March 27, at 10:15 a.m. ET. Round four begins Saturday, March 28, at 5:45 p.m. ET. Tape-delayed televised coverage of the doubleheader weekend will air on the CBS Sports Network Sunday, April 5, at 5 p.m. ET. 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 and Instagram pages, 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.

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