

RAFAEL CAMARA IS THE DRIVER OF THE DAY: POLE POSITION, VICTORY, AND FASTEST LAP IN THE FIRST RACE OF THE YEAR

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There couldn't have been a better way for Rafael Camara to start the 2024 Formula Regional European Championship by Alpine season than with a victory in the inaugural race at Hockenheimring. He also set the fastest lap with a time of 1'37.108.

Second across the finish line was James Wharton, followed by R-ace GP driver Tuukka Taponen. However, with a post-race decision from the Stewards' Panel, the Australian was penalized with the loss of a position for a track limits violation in his overtake on Taponen, resulting in the Finnish driver moving up to the second step of the podium and Wharton dropping to third. Securing P5 overall and the top spot among the 15 rookies competing, Portuguese driver Ivan Domingues of Van Amersfoort Racing stepped on the first podium with the trio.

Race 1 immediately proved to be complex, as well as rich in emotions, twists and turns. Right from the start, the Brazilian Ferrari Driver Academy of Prema Racing saw his leading position threatened by the attacks of the Red Bull junior driver Enzo Deligny. The Frenchman of R-ace GP wasted no time and immediately launched an assault from the front row. Thus, the leadership changed hands in the early stages of the race, but Camara skillfully regained the position shortly after, maintaining it until the end of the race. Among others making a strong launch, Finnish driver Taponen positioned himself in the front during the early stages, only to lose ground again in the fierce battles of Race 1, which also saw him involved in some contacts. Deligny, a major protagonist today, was also at the center of numerous skirmishes,

particularly with the Finnish driver and Australian James Wharton. Wharton himself managed to climb positions with exceptional overtakes, culminating in a breathtaking maneuver passing the French driver on the outside of the Hairpin, leaving spectators breathless.

The first race of the year was full of excitement, witnessing several upheavals within the Top 10. Evan Giltaire of Art Grand Prix, later on forced to retire, was in a long battle for the top positions, offering a sensational show. The duels fought by Portuguese driver Ivan Domingues, first with Ugo Ugochukwu (Prema Racing), and then with Nikita Bedrin (MP Motorsport), until ending in an exhilarating head-to-head with teammate Brando Badoer (Van Amersfoort Racing), were also extremely intense. Just outside the points zone, there was no shortage of action even within Trident Motorsport, with a battle raging between Roman Bilinski and Nikhil Bohra. Also shining in that area of the group were Brazilian Pedro Clerot (Van Amersfoort Racing) and Italian Valerio Rinicella (MP Motorsport).

The final race standings saw Camara triumph, skillfully recovering after the start and impeccable throughout the rest of the race, which also saw him dealing with managing a restart behind the Safety Car, called into action due to Téophile Naël's (Saintéloc Racing) stoppage. Behind him was then Tuukka Taponen, Third, closing out the absolute podium of the first race of Round 1 of the Formula Regional European Championship by Alpine, was James Wharton. In fourth place was Italian Brando Badoer, who, climbing from the twelfth block of the starting grid, managed to reach the edge of the podium with overtakes. Fifth was Domingues, overtaken at the end by his teammate on the second attempt after already defending well once, in a race finale that saw him lose ground also due to slight damages to the front wing, due to the numerous battles he was involved in. Sixth place went to Nikita Bedrin, driving for MP Motorsport; the driver thrilled with a precise overtake on Ugo Ugochukwu. Ugochukwu, the talented McLaren junior of Prema Racing, finished in seventh position. Eighth in the first race of the year was Art Grand Prix's Frenchman Alessandro Giusti, followed by Roman Bilinski and Enzo Deligny. Just out of the points zone was Danish driver Noah Strømsted, the extremely fast RPM team driver, who finished eleventh and third among rookies behind Domingues and Deligny.



Hockenheim (GER), May 09-12 2024 – Round One of Formula Regional European Championship by Alpine 2024 at Hockenheim Ring. Podium race 1: Rafael CAMARA #05, Prema Racing, James WHARTON #13,

Rafael Camara: *"I'm so happy to start the year like this. It was not an easy race. I was struggling quite a lot with the car. The track was different, so it was very tough. Unfortunately, the start was not the best, and we lost 2 positions. After we could come back to P1, overtake quite quickly the guys in front, and the after that I managed a good race. The safety car was not in our way today, but we managed the race well after the safety car, we kept the position. A big thanks for Prema, my engineer Eimrich, Alberto and Ale, my mechanics. Is very nice to work with them, I'm trying to enjoy every single moment of this year, and it couldn't be better than this to start the Championship. Now let's focus for tomorrow, and look ahead for quali. Now we are going to reset, tomorrow is a new day, everything starts from zero, and we'll try to do the best that we can."*

Tuukka Taponen: *"my start was really good. Unfortunately, I went a bit wide in T1, so I lost back what I gained on the start. In T2 I got hit from the back, so I lost a place, and then two laps later I got another hit. I was also lucky to not have a puncture. We managed to be at the podium, which is always good for the Championship. We just need to stay consistent and score points in each race. Good way to start the Championship like this. I think we have a really good qualifying pace; I just need to put all together and it will help me in the starting position for the race."*

James Wharton: *"we had quite a bad start, which put us in the back foot into T1. I recovered quite nicely, I had good first lap and then felt the pace was really good. I can't thank the Team enough for how much speed we have. I think our team definitely has the fastest car, which obviously makes your life a lot easier. The move [on Deligny] was quite difficult, but when you have more pace than the other driver, you can do more things. Just looking forward to tomorrow, hopefully I can put my lap a bit more together in qualifying, so we can start a bit further up. At the end we take home our podium in the first race in this Championship for me, hopefully we can keep building from here."*

Ivan Domingues: *"It was a nice race. My start was alright, I was struggling a bit in the beginning to find pace, but once I found it, we really were making some progress up until the safety car. After safety car we also had a good fight and we passed, but I had a slight contact which damaged my front wing. I just started to struggle a bit in the end, we had a good battle with Brando, he got away with it, but it was still a good race. I'm looking forward for tomorrow, hopefully we will be on the overall podium."*

The weekend's schedule:

Tomorrow, on Sunday, May 12th, there will be qualifying sessions again, with Group B on track from 10:15 to 10:30, followed by Group A from 10:35 to 10:50. The final race of the weekend (30 minutes + 1 lap) will start at 16:10.

Qualifying and race sessions of the weekend will be live-streamed on [Formula Regional European Championship by Alpine's youtube channel](#)