

# RAIN MASTERY: TUUKKA TAPONEN CLINCHES MAIDEN WIN AT ZANDVOORT IN FORMULA REGIONAL EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP BY ALPINE

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The first race of the **Formula Regional European Championship by Alpine** at **Zandvoort** took place under heavy rain, which began falling just before the cars lined up on the track. The iconic and fascinating Dutch circuit, which allows no room for error, witnessed **Tuukka Taponen (R-ace GP)** celebrating his first victory in the series on the podium today.

Adverse weather conditions forced the race control to start the competition under the safety car, which stayed on track for five laps, followed by a long line of 31 cars ready to take action. Action commenced around 13 minutes before the end of the race, with a first twist seeing **Ugo Ugochukwu (Prema Racing)** spin at Turn 3, dropping from sixth place to the back of the field. Shortly after, his teammate **James Wharton**, who started from pole thanks to a strong qualifying session where he secured his second pole of the season, went off track at Turn 3 and rejoined in 16th place. This maneuver came under investigation and, after the race, cost the Australian driver a three-place grid drop for the next race.

Taponen took the lead, followed by another Ferrari Academy driver **Rafael Camara (Prema Racing)** and Williams Academy driver **Alessandro Giusti (ART Grand Prix)**. A neutralization was required after a collision involving the two Italian drivers **Valerio Rinicella (MP Motorsport)** and **Matteo De Paolo (Sainteloc Racing)** at Turn 10. Rinicella was stranded in the gravel, while De Paolo had to retire with a damaged suspension.

With the green flag, an exciting battle in the top 5 ensued, with Red Bull Academy's **Enzo Deligny** skillfully securing fourth place by passing **Pedro Clerot (Van Amersfoort Racing)**. Ahead of them, Camara put pressure on Taponen, attempting to overtake the Finnish driver multiple times, but Taponen managed to keep the current championship leader at bay, with Giusti closing in third. In the final stages, the rookie podium battle saw Clerot clinch his first victory in this grouping, finishing fourth ahead of **Evan Giltaire (ART Grand**

Prix) and Deligny, who crossed the line in fifth and sixth place, respectively.

The top 10 was completed by **Ivan Domingues** (Van Amersfoort Racing), **Zachary David** (R-ace GP), **Enzo Peugeot** (Sainteloc Racing), and **Brando Badoer** (Van Amersfoort Racing).

The international series will return to the track tomorrow morning at 9:35 AM for the second qualifying session of the weekend, with the concluding race taking place in the afternoon at 3:05 PM, both live on the official [YouTube](#) channel.



Zandvoort (NL), June 06-09, 2024 – FRECA Round 3 at Circuit Zandvoort, Netherlands. Podium race 1. © 2024 Diederik van der Laan / Dutch Photo Agency.

### **Tuukka Taponen (R-ace GP)**

"It was a rather complicated race. The rain started just before the beginning, and the conditions were quite challenging. Then from Race Control, the communication came that we would start, which I fully agreed with. I managed to win the race even though the speed wasn't the best despite testing in the wet, but today was different. We need to keep working on this because we did very well in the wet at Spa. In any case, it was nice to get my first win in FRECA."

### **Rafael Camara (Prema Racing)**

"The race was tough, as was the battle with Tuukka. I almost lost the car trying to push hard in an attempt to overtake him because I wanted to win, but the season is still long, and I didn't want to take any more risks. At the same time, I think we did a great job in defense. Now I look forward to getting back on track tomorrow, working hard, continuing what we've been doing so far, and bringing home more points."

### **Alessandro Giusti (ART Grand Prix)**

"Today's conditions with the rain were very challenging. In any case, the team did a great job with the car, and we managed to secure an important third place, which is significant for the entire team, making me very happy."

### **Pedro Clerot (Van Amersfoort Racing)**

"We spent quite a bit of time behind the safety car, and in the race, I made a couple of mistakes that cost us the podium. I'm still very happy; we did a good job after Spa, today we did well in qualifying with third place, and we were quite fast in both conditions. I hope this trophy is the first of many. I want to thank the team

*and my sponsors. Now we stay focused on the next qualifying session, hoping for dry conditions and aiming for a podium tomorrow."*

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