

MATTEO DE PALO SETS THE EARLY PACE IN BARCELONA'S OPENING COLLECTIVE TEST

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The **Formula Regional European Championship by Alpine** got underway at **Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya** this morning with the first of two collective tests scheduled as part of the third-to-last round of the season. With the championship battle heating up, **Matteo De Palo (Trident)** set the pace, stopping the clock at 1:36.048 to edge out **Michael Belov (CL Motorsport)** by just 0.034s.

Behind them, championship contender **Freddie Slater (Prema Racing)** confirmed his strong form in the run-up to the title fight, taking third with a lap of 1:36.262. The Briton, who remains locked in a close battle with De Palo at the top of the standings, once again showed his consistency at the sharp end.

The morning session also underlined the strength of **Van Amersfoort Racing**, with **Dion Gowda**, fastest among the rookies, slotting into fourth place at 1:36.531, just ahead of teammate **Pedro Clerot** in fifth. **Hiyu Yamakoshi** completed the VAR trio inside the top six.

Nikita Bedrin (Saintéloc Racing) secured seventh, while **Enzo Deligny (R-ace GP)** and **Ruiqi Liu (Trident)** were separated by a mere thousandth of a second in eighth and ninth. Rounding out the top ten was **Rashid Al Dhaheri (Prema Racing)**.

The group just outside the top ten included **Jack Beeton (Prema Racing)** in 11th, followed by **Taito Kato (ART Grand Prix)**, **Akshay Bohra (R-ace GP)**, and **Nandhavud Bhirombhakdi (Trident)**. **Evan Giltaire (ART Grand Prix)** closed the top 15 with a best lap of 1:37.002.

Among the fresh faces, **Yuanpu Cui** made his debut with Prema Racing as a wild card entry. The Chinese driver, part of the Mercedes-AMG F1 Team Junior Programme, gained valuable mileage in his first outing. **RPM** also welcomed back familiar names, with **Santiago Ramos**, fresh from racing in FIA Formula 3 and **Macéo Capietto** both returning to the FRECA paddock.

Action resumes this afternoon with the **second collective test**, again lasting 50 minutes, scheduled for 15:15 CEST.

Fans can follow the session live via the official live timing service: [Click here](#)