



FORMULA REGIONAL
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Bondarev takes pole on his FIA FREC debut for Race 3 at Imola



Oleksandr Bondarev will start the final race of the weekend at Imola from pole position. The Ukrainian Van Amersfoort Racing driver, making his first appearance in the FIA Formula Regional European Championship, set the fastest overall time at the end of Sunday morning's Qualifying 2 session.

After finishing runner-up in Race 2 on Saturday afternoon, Bondarev once again showed impressive form by setting a benchmark time of 1:38.728, faster than Emanuele Olivieri's best effort in the Group B session. The R-ace GP Italian, who moved into the lead of the Drivers' Championship by just two points over MP Motorsport's Sebastian Wheldon following his second victory of the season in yesterday's Race 1, will line up alongside Bondarev on the front row for Race 3.

CL Motorsport's Reno Francot also delivered another strong performance, finishing second in Group A just nine thousandths of a second behind Bondarev. PREMA Racing's Tomass Stolcermanis and Kean Nakamura-Berta finished third and fifth respectively, with ART Grand Prix's Alexandre Munoz in fourth.

Jules Roussel finished second behind Olivieri in Group B, completing another strong showing for CL Motorsport. Trident Motorsport's Maksimilian Popov was third, while Van Amersfoort Racing's Dion Gowda and MP Motorsport's Zhenrui Chi rounded out the top five.

GROUP B

The Group B drivers were the first to take to the track for Qualifying 2. With exactly five minutes remaining, Sebastian Wheldon led the timesheets with a 1:39.641, with G4 Racing's Marcus Saeter moving into second place, just 0.046s behind.

Shortly afterwards, Trident Motorsport's Andrija Kostić went off at Tamburello and became stranded in the gravel, bringing out the red flags and temporarily freezing the order.

When the session resumed, the drivers had enough time for a couple of flying laps. Roussel was the first to improve, moving to the top of the timesheets with a 1:39.632. Wheldon then reclaimed first place with a 1:39.367, followed by Gowda, 0.088s adrift, and Chi, just over a tenth further back.

Olivieri initially sat fourth after setting a 1:39.500, but improved by six tenths on

his following lap to post a 1:38.827. That effort put him at the top of the Group B standings, 0.248s clear of Roussel and more than three and a half tenths ahead of Popov.

GROUP A

Reno Francot was among the first drivers to dip below the 1:39 mark, initially setting a 1:38.937 before improving further to a 1:38.737 and claiming provisional pole position.

Alexandre Munoz moved into second place, 0.124s behind the Dutch driver, with Rashid Al Dhaheri third. However, after the chequered flag had fallen, Bondarev produced a final flying lap to beat the entire field and secure pole position.

Munoz was subsequently shuffled down to fourth, while Nakamura-Berta finished fifth, ahead of R-ace GP's Rashid Al Dhaheri.

Oleksandr Bondarev (Van Amersfoort Racing): *"It has been a mega weekend, honestly. I didn't expect it, to be honest. It was a really good lap, although we started qualifying slightly off the pace. I went off on one of my laps, which made me a little nervous, but I managed to put everything together on the final lap and take pole position. The car was amazing and I couldn't have asked for more. A massive thank you to the team for giving me a car I could fight with and put on overall pole. We'll have to see how the race unfolds. A lot will depend on the start and whether there is a Safety Car, but I'll try to stay calm, as I have done throughout the weekend. Hopefully, we can achieve another really strong result this afternoon."*

Emanuele Olivieri (R-ace GP): *"It was a really tough qualifying session for me. At the beginning, I was struggling to get temperature into the front tyres, so I had quite a lot of understeer and was only around fifth in the group when the red flag came out. After the restart, the team put me in a very good position, with a useful tow ahead of me. On the final lap, everything came together: the tyres were working well, the car was mega and I was really happy with my execution. It was a good lap and I'm delighted to be back on the front row. With only three races remaining in the championship, I won't attempt any silly moves, especially as my rivals are all starting behind me. I'll simply try to do my best. I think we have the pace to win, but even if we finish second, I would still be happy with that. We'll see what happens."*

The third and final race of the weekend, which as usual will run for 30 minutes

plus one lap, is scheduled to get under way this afternoon at 16:30 CEST. It will be broadcast in more than 200 territories and streamed live on the Championship's official YouTube channel, @fiaformularegionaleu.

Results are still provisional