



Popov becomes sixth different winner in FIA FREC season

Trident Motorsport's driver claims Race 3 victory at Spa

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Maksimilian Popov became the sixth different winner from six different teams in the opening seven races of the FIA Formula Regional European Championship season after claiming victory in the final race of the weekend at Spa-Francorchamps.

After securing the first pole position of his single-seater career in Sunday morning's Qualifying 2 session, the Trident Motorsport driver controlled the race from lights to flag despite two late cautions, with the race ending under Safety Car conditions.

MP Motorsport's Alexander Abkhazava celebrated his maiden podium in the series after climbing three positions to finish second. Rashid Al Dhaheri once again delivered a highly consistent performance, finishing third for R-ace GP and setting the fastest lap of the race which moved him to the top of the standings with a one-point advantage over Sebastian Wheldon. The MP Motorsport driver finished 10th, just ahead of team-mate Zhenrui Chi.

Jan Przyrowski also showed strong pace. After starting from the second row of the grid, the RPM driver crossed the line in fourth, ahead of PREMA Racing's Kean Nakamura-Berta. Rodin Motorsport's Alex Ninovic finished sixth, followed by the three rookies Marcus Saeter (G4 Racing), Emanuele Olivieri (R-ace GP) and Saturday's Race 1 winner Alexandre Munoz, who ended ninth for ART Grand Prix.

RACE REPORT

Pole-sitter Popov made a strong start to retain the lead ahead of Al Dhaheri. Behind them, Munoz attempted an attack around the outside at the end of the Kemmel Straight and briefly emerged at the head of the field after starting third. However, the ART Grand Prix driver cut the chicane and was forced to hand the position back, dropping behind Popov. The move also allowed Al Dhaheri to reclaim second place after initially slipping to third. The R-ace GP driver completed the move on Munoz at La Source on lap three and quickly set his sights on the race leader.

Further back, Przyrowski settled into fourth ahead of Abkhazava, Ninovic and Olivieri. Abkhazava then continued his charge through the field, overtaking Munoz for third before the Frenchman also lost out to Przyrowski. Wheldon, meanwhile, dropped to seventh and later surrendered another position to Olivieri, while Ninovic moved ahead of Munoz to secure fifth.

At the front, Popov controlled the pace from Abkhazava, Al Dhaheri and Przyrowski until the race was neutralised with 11 minutes and 30 seconds remaining. The Safety Car was deployed after Saqer Almaosherji came to a halt at the Bus Stop chicane following contact with Miguel Costa.

The race briefly returned to green-flag conditions, but a further incident involving Salim Hanna and Dion Gowda at the back of the field immediately triggered another Safety Car intervention. With insufficient time remaining for a restart, the race finished under Safety Car conditions, allowing Popov to secure a lights-to-flag victory.

Maksimilian Popov (Trident Motorsport, Race 3 winner): *"It's been an incredible day, to be honest. After yesterday, which was quite difficult for us with the race being postponed and all the uncertainty surrounding the schedule, to come away with both pole position and the win feels amazing. The car was fantastic throughout, and I'm extremely grateful to the team for all their hard work. I also want to thank my parents and everyone who continues to support me. Winning at Spa is something really special and a memory that will stay with me for the rest of my life. Hopefully we can carry this momentum into Monza*

and keep building on what we achieved here.”

Alexander Abkhazava (MP Motorsport, 2nd): *“It feels really good to be back at the front. I had a decent start to the season, but I struggled quite a bit over the last few rounds, so it's great to finally be back in contention. It was a tough race with plenty of overtaking and some really good battles along the way. To come away with this result means a lot, and I'm very happy with what we achieved today.”*

Rashid Al Dhaheri (R-ace GP, 3rd): *“To be honest, it's a very long championship, so at this stage the focus is simply on taking it race by race, being smart and scoring as many points as possible. Overall, I think this weekend showed that we have what it takes to fight at the front. As a team, we found something really positive in terms of pace, and that's very encouraging for the rest of the season. Now it's all about keeping our heads down, continuing to work hard and building on the momentum we've created here.”*

Marcus Saeter (G4 Racing, Rookie winner): *“I think we're working very hard as a team and, with such a long championship ahead of us, there's still plenty to play for. If we keep progressing like this, I'm confident we can achieve something special by the end of the season. It was a great weekend here at Spa and now the focus shifts to Monza, a circuit I know well. With its long straights, managing the Race Mode push-to-pass system will be particularly important, so we'll need to be smart and strategic in how we use it throughout the race. We've been working hard together at G4 Racing, especially after the Red Bull Ring weekend didn't go the way we wanted. We spent a lot of time analysing what went wrong and identifying the areas where we could improve. I think we've done a good job, and this weekend's result shows that we're moving in the right direction.”*

The FIA Formula Regional European Championship will return to action on 19–21 June at Monza, as it reaches the halfway point of the season.

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