



MP Motorsport celebrates home victory as Wheldon claims Race 1 honours at Zandvoort

The American converted pole position into his maiden FIA Formula Regional European Championship win

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MP Motorsport celebrates its first win of the season on home soil at Zandvoort courtesy of Sebastian Wheldon. The American claimed victory in the opening race of the second round of the FIA Formula Regional European Championship after setting the pace in Thursday's collective tests, topping Friday's free practice sessions and securing pole position in Qualifying 1.

Wheldon also moves to the top of the championship standings, while Reno Francot drops to second after finishing fourth for CL Motorsport.

Prema Racing's Salim Hanna delivered a standout performance to secure a hard-fought second place, crossing the line just 0.249 seconds adrift of the winner. Emanuele Olivieri (R-ace GP) secured his maiden podium finish, also setting the fastest lap of the race and claiming top Rookie honours.

Wheldon started from pole position after being the only driver to break the

1m30s barrier in Saturday morning's qualifying session. Alongside him on the front row was Hanna. However, it was Tomass Stolcermanis who swept into the lead at Turn 1 ahead of Wheldon and Hanna. Behind them, Alexander Abkhazava held on to fourth place with Olivieri applying immediate pressure.

During the opening lap, Kabir Anurag became stranded in the gravel, prompting the deployment of the Safety Car, while Giovanni Maschio was forced to pit following contact.

Meanwhile, Kean Nakamura-Berta - who had already been handed a ten-place grid penalty following the third race at the Red Bull Ring and had been disqualified from qualifying for a parc fermé infringement, a decision currently under appeal by his team - received a further penalty for his involvement in a collision with Yuki Sano.

Olivieri then made his way past Abkhazava to move into fourth place before closing rapidly on Stolcermanis, who had slipped to third. With 15 minutes remaining, the R-ace GP driver completed the move at Turn 1 to take over the final podium position.

Shortly afterwards, Francot also found a way past Abkhazava before overtaking Stolcermanis as well, climbing back up to fourth place.

The final lap saw Hanna close to the back of Wheldon's car, but the American withstood the relentless pressure to secure victory by a margin of just 0.249 seconds. Behind them, Olivieri held firm to seal an impressive third-place finish.

Stolcermanis was later handed a five-second time penalty for a jump start, dropping him down the final classification. Abkhazava also received a five-second penalty for forcing Rashid Al Dhaheri off the track.

Sebastian Wheldon (MP Motorsport, Race 1 winner): *"We knew we were quick, especially with the pace we had in practice and the speed we showed in qualifying. We were able to secure pole position. But, honestly, I think we struggled a little bit in the race. Salim was catching me quite a lot, so we need to work on improving our race pace. I can't thank MP enough for the car they've given me. It's really special because this is their home track, and for me to win here is something very special. It's my first win in the championship, and I'm sure it's just as special for them as it is for me."*

Salim Hanna (Prema Racing, 2nd): *"First of all, I want to thank the team for all the progress we've made throughout the weekend. In practice we were quite far off the pace, but we've improved session after session and we're continuing to*

move in the right direction. It was a really fun race. Of course, it could have gone a bit better, but the start wasn't ideal for me. After that, I knew I had the pace to catch my teammate. Following the Safety Car restart, I managed to get past him straight away and then focused on preparing for the final laps. On the last lap, we had both run out of Race Mode, which made overtaking a bit more difficult. It was a very close battle and a really enjoyable race. There are still some areas where we need to improve our pace, but we're making steady progress and we just need to keep moving forward."

Emanuele Olivieri (R-ace GP, 3rd and Rookie winner): *"Honestly, it was a really fun race. I started from P5 and had some great battles throughout the race. At times it was very close, but the wheel-to-wheel racing was really enjoyable and fair. Considering where we were in Free Practice, it was a very positive result. The team and I did a great job. We worked really hard throughout the weekend and our race pace was very strong. I think we also set the fastest lap of the race. I could see the drivers ahead and I was gradually catching them, although they were still quite far in front. Overall, this result shows what the team and I are capable of when everything comes together. It proves that we can do a very good job and continue fighting at the front."*

Track action will resume tomorrow with Qualifying 2 starting at 08:50 CEST, split into two 15-minute sessions for Groups A and B. The second and final 30-minute race of the weekend will get underway at 16:45 CEST. Both qualifying sessions and the race will be aired by more than 70 broadcasters across over 200 territories, including ACI Sport TV. Live streaming will be available on the championship's official YouTube channel [@fiaformularegionaleu](#).

Where to watch

** Race 1 result is still provisional.*

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