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Wheldon takes Race 1 pole as the title fight heats up at Hockenheim



Sebastian Wheldon will start from pole position for the first of two races at Hockenheim, the final round of the FIA Formula Regional European Championship, where the title will be decided this weekend. The MP Motorsport American earned two valuable points, reducing his deficit to championship leader Emanuele Olivieri (R-ace GP) to 18 points. The Italian, who set the fastest time in Group B, will line up alongside him on the front row.

Jan Przyrowski, who topped the overall timesheets at the end of yesterday's two Free Practice sessions, will start behind them on the second row. The RPM Polish driver will be joined by Tomass Stolcermanis, who finished ahead of his PREMA Racing team-mate Kean Nakamura-Berta in Group B. Nakamura-Berta arrives in Germany third in the championship and remains in title contention, as does R-ace GP driver Rashid Al Dhaheri, who finished fourth in Group A.

GROUP A

Rodin Motorsport's Alex Ninovic was the first driver to set a representative time, moving to the top of the order with seven minutes remaining thanks to a 1:35.290. Trident Motorsport's Maksimilian Popov then went 0.143s faster, with CL Motorsport Rookie Ary Bansal climbing to second behind him.

With five minutes remaining, Al Dhaheri moved into the lead with a 1:35.048, before Wheldon became one of the first drivers to break the 1m35s barrier with a 1:34.661. Al Dhaheri responded, reclaiming first place with a 1:34.501. Przyrowski, who had been quickest in Free Practice yesterday, then moved into third. Wheldon subsequently set a 1:34.353 to return to the top of the timesheets, while Przyrowski improved again to close to within 0.075s of the MP Motorsport driver. Al Dhaheri slipped to fourth behind Popov. Alexandre Munoz (ART Grand Prix) completed the top five.

GROUP B

MP Motorsport's Zhenrui Chi started the session with a 1:34.883, provisionally taking the top spot with a 1:34.883. Olivieri then moved into first place with a 1:34.645 before improving in all three sectors on his following lap to set a 1:34.424. Stolcermanis climbed to second, just over a tenth behind, followed by Miguel Costa (RPM) and Marcus Saeter (G4 Racing).

Olivieri was unable to improve in the closing minutes but remained at the top of the order. Stolcermanis finished 0.181s behind in second, followed by team

of the order. Storzmann finished 0.10s behind in second, followed by teammate Nakamura-Berta, who moved up to third ahead of Chi and Costa.

Sebastian Wheldon (MP Motorsport): *"I wasn't expecting to take pole position, especially as the second group is usually quicker. But I managed to put together a lap that was fast enough for overall pole, so I'm pleased. We'll see what we can do in the championship, starting from the front. The aim is to keep it clean into Turn 1. The hairpin at Turn 6 can also get a bit hectic, particularly on the opening lap, so I'll try to stay out of trouble and score as many points as possible."*

Emanuele Olivieri (R-ace GP): *"It has been another strong weekend so far and we have once again shown that we have good pace. We missed out on pole position this morning by a very small margin, but I'm still pleased with the result. We're starting from the front row, so we're in a good position for the race. We'll see what happens. The goal is to finish ahead of Sebastian, as that would obviously be very important. However, I'll focus on my own race and, if I have the pace, I'll try to overtake him."*

The 30-minute-plus-one-lap Race 1 will get under way today at 13:05 CEST and will be streamed live on the Championship's official YouTube channel, @fiaformularegionaleu.