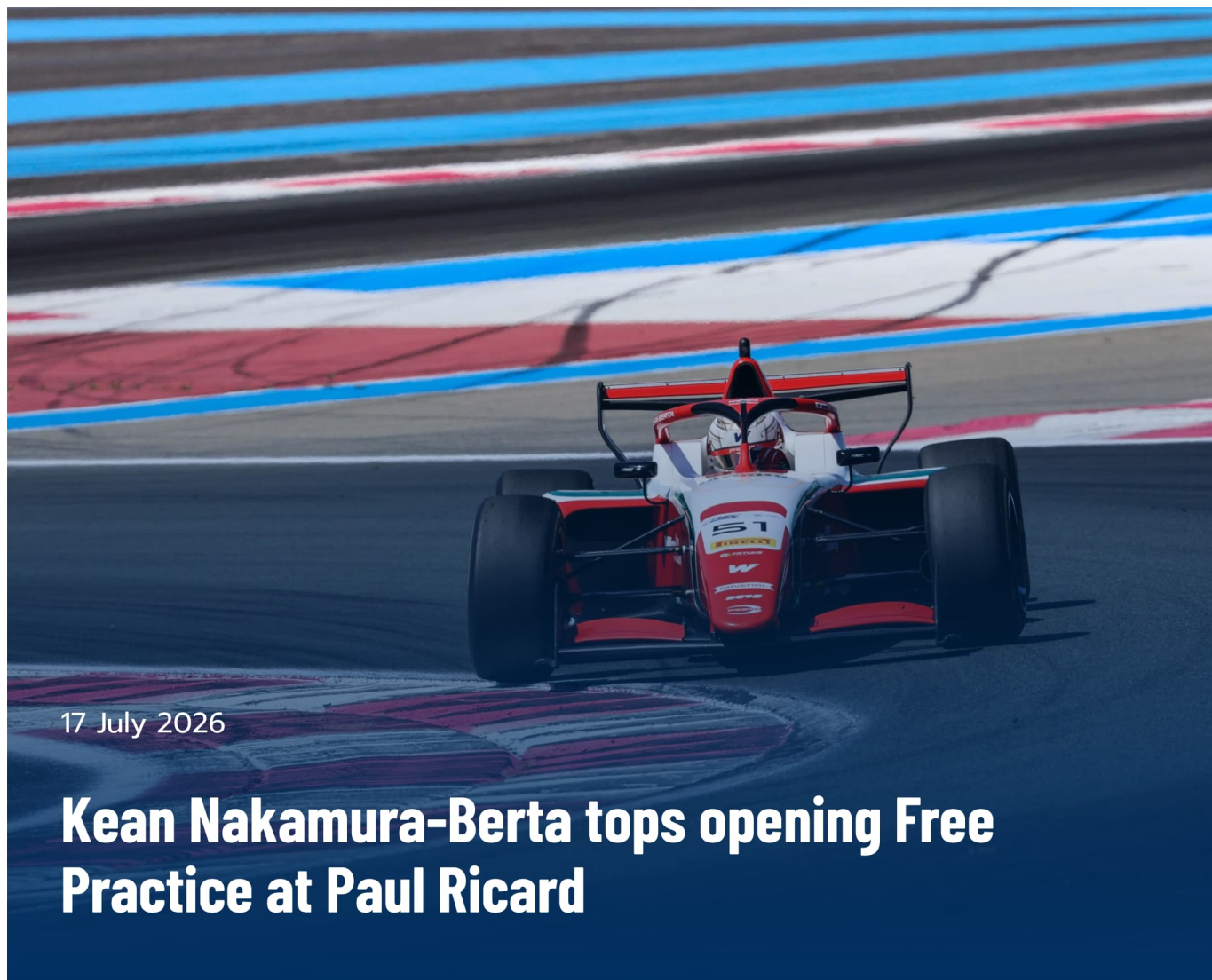




17 July 2026

Kean Nakamura-Berta tops opening Free Practice at Paul Ricard



Kean Nakamura-Berta topped Friday's Free Practice 1 at Paul Ricard with a best lap of 1:59.187 in an uninterrupted session. The PREMA Racing driver finished more than three tenths clear of team-mate Salim Hanna. Rodin Motorsport's Alex Ninovic climbed to third with a late improvement after the chequered flag had fallen, edging out PREMA Racing's Tomass Stolcermanis, who ended the session as the leading Rookie.

Championship leader Rashid Al Dhaheri finished seventh, behind R-ace GP team-mate Emanuele Olivieri. Miguel Costa (RPM), Reza Seewooruthun (Rodin Motorsport) and Sebastian Wheldon (MP Motorsport) rounded out the top ten.

Al Dhaheri was the first driver to break the two-minute barrier in the early stages, posting a 1:59.995 with just under 30 minutes remaining to move 0.074s ahead of Rodin Motorsport's Gabriel Gomez.

The benchmark was soon lowered by Van Amersfoort Racing's Francisco Macedo, who set a 1:59.843 to move to the top of the timesheets. Wheldon then moved into second with a 1:59.925, before improving on his next lap to a 1:59.767, which put him at the head of the field.

With seven minutes remaining, Nakamura-Berta produced a 1:59.353 to move into first place. PREMA Racing team-mates Hanna and Stolcermanis followed him up the order, the former just 0.160s adrift, while Stolcermanis posted a 1:59.592 to go third.

In the closing moments, Nakamura-Berta improved once more to a session-best 1:59.187. Wheldon, one of the first drivers to take the chequered flag, slipped to ninth, while Ninovic delivered a late improvement to secure third place, relegating Stolcermanis to fourth by the end of the session.

The second 50-minute Free Practice session gets underway at 16:46 CEST this afternoon.