



Kean Nakamura-Berta wins Race 1 at Paul Ricard to take the championship lead

The PREMA Racing driver claims his third victory of the FIA FREC season

Le Castellet, 18 July 2026

Kean Nakamura-Berta claimed victory in the opening race of the Paul Ricard weekend to secure his third win of the season, drawing level with Rashid Al Dhaheri and moving to the top of the standings. Having secured his fifth pole position of the year in Qualifying 1, the PREMA Racing driver made the perfect start to the sixth of eight rounds of the FIA Formula Regional European Championship.

Emanuele Olivieri finished second to secure his second consecutive podium. The R-ace GP driver also claimed Rookie honours and scored points for the tenth time this season, moving up to third in the standings behind team-mate Al Dhaheri, whose race unravelled after an unfortunate opening-lap incident. MP Motorsport's Alexander Abkhazava completed the podium in third, while team-mate Sebastian Wheldon, who had briefly taken the lead at the start, eventually finished fifth.

RACE REPORT

Even before the start, Saqer Almaosherji was forced to pull over with a technical issue, leaving his car stranded at the side of the circuit. Following an additional formation lap, Wheldon made an excellent getaway, diving to the inside into Turn 1 to snatch the lead from polesitter Nakamura-Berta.

Abkhazava retained third place, while Olivieri moved ahead of Al Dhaheri. The two R-ace GP drivers then made contact, forcing Al Dhaheri into the pits and dropping him to the back of the field.

Rodin Motorsport's Gabriel Gomez consequently inherited fourth place, ahead of Salim Hanna. However, Hanna's race also took a setback after contact with Alex Ninovic sent him into a spin at the exit of the final corner at the end of lap 2, relegating the PREMA Racing driver to the rear of the pack.

Nakamura-Berta reclaimed the lead on lap 3. Shortly afterwards, Abkhazava moved into second. On Lap 7, Olivieri overtook Wheldon as well to take third before closing in on Abkhazava. The pair engaged in a fierce battle for second place, with the Italian finally completing the move with just over two minutes remaining on the clock. At the same moment, Gomez also overtook Wheldon to move into fourth.

Nakamura-Berta eventually crossed the finish line more than four seconds clear of Olivieri, with Abkhazava completing the podium. Gomez finished fourth ahead of Wheldon, while Ninovic took sixth. MP Motorsport's Zhenrui Chi finished seventh, ahead of PREMA Racing's Tomass Stolcermanis and R-ace GP's Yuki Sano, with CL Motorsport's Reno Francot completing the top 10.

Kean Nakamura-Berta (PREMA Racing, Race 1 winner): *"It's been an incredibly hot weekend. The race was really demanding because we didn't have any Safety Car interruptions, so we were pushing flat out all the way to the finish. We even had an extra formation lap, which made it even tougher. The conditions were challenging for everyone, not just the drivers but also the tyres and the car, so there was a lot to manage throughout the race. I was pushing hard right to the final laps, which probably took a bit more out of me both mentally and physically, so I'm definitely feeling it now. But I'm really happy with the result."*

Emanuele Olivieri (R-ace GP, 2nd and Rookie winner): *"I knew I had to fight for the overall result. Starting from a good position here at Paul Ricard gave us a great opportunity, and the team provided me with a really competitive car. Our pace was strong throughout the race. It was a tough race with some contact*

and a few good overtakes, but I really enjoyed it. I'm delighted to finish P2 and score another podium."

Alexander Abkhazava (MP Motorsport, 3rd): *"It was a tough race. I managed to overtake my team-mate at the start and then spent a few laps chasing Kean. After that I had a good battle with Olivieri, but I lost second place towards the end. The beginning of the season was quite difficult, but I feel I'm in a much better place now. The MP Motorsport car has been really competitive and I'm happy to be back on the podium."*

Action resumes tomorrow with Qualifying 2 at 09:05 CEST, followed by the final race of the weekend at 16:20 CEST.

Both Qualifying 2 and Race 2 will be streamed live on the championship's official YouTube channel, [@fiaformularegionaleu](#). Race 2 will also be broadcast in more than 200 territories worldwide. Full broadcast details are available [here](#).

Race 1 results are still provisional.

FIA FREC PRESS OFFICE

[Dario Lucchese](#) +39 347 3717950

media@fiafrec.com
