



19 July 2026

Sebastian Wheldon on pole for Race 2 at Paul Ricard



Sebastian Wheldon will start from pole position for Race 2 of the FIA Formula Regional European Championship at Paul Ricard after Emanuele Olivieri was handed a post-qualifying three-place grid penalty. The MP Motorsport driver inherits the top spot on the grid, with team-mate Alexander Abkhazava joining him on the front row.

The Italian had initially claimed his second pole position of the season with a 1:57.350, beating Freddie Slater's lap record from last year by just one thousandth of a second. However, the R-ace GP driver was demoted three places on the grid after his mechanics worked on the car before it was correctly parked in the pit lane.

Race 1 winner and new championship leader Kean Nakamura-Berta finished third in Group A. In Group B, R-ace GP's Rashid Al Dhaheri was fifth, behind Wheldon, CL Motorsport's Reno Francot, MP Motorsport's Zhenrui Chi and Rodin Motorsport's Gabriel Gomez.

GROUP B

With temperatures slightly lower than earlier on Saturday, Wheldon set the pace with a 1:57.887, just shy of the Qualifying 1 pole time. Gomez slotted into second, 0.089s adrift, before Wheldon improved again to a 1:57.571. Francot then moved up to second, just 0.029s behind, while Gomez dropped to fourth behind Chi.

Wheldon continued to push, setting the fastest first sector before lowering the benchmark to a 1:57.429. Francot also improved to consolidate second with a 1:57.600, while Chi and Gomez remained third and fourth respectively, with Al Dhaheri completing the top five.

GROUP A

PREMA Racing's Salim Hanna was the first to set a competitive benchmark with a 1:57.949, before Olivieri moved to the top of the timesheets with a 1:57.874. Abkhazava then climbed to second, just 0.010s adrift, while Nakamura-Berta improved to third with a 1:57.905 before going quickest on his next lap with a 1:57.680. Abkhazava remained second, 0.078s behind.

With only a few minutes remaining, Olivieri was forced to return to the pits after damaging his front wing in an off-track excursion. The R-ace GP driver

rejoined the session and, with just 11 seconds left on the clock, began his final flying lap. After improving in the second sector and setting the fastest third sector, he set the fastest time overall. Abkhazava finished second, more than three tenths adrift, just 0.013s clear of Nakamura-Berta. Hanna and RPM's Jan Przyrowski completed the top five in fourth and fifth respectively.

The final race of the weekend will get underway at 16:25 CEST and will be broadcast in more than 200 territories worldwide, and will be also live streamed on the championship's official YouTube channel, @fiaformularegionaleu.

Full broadcast details are available [here](#).