



Kean Nakamura-Berta converts pole into victory in FIA FREC season opener

Rashid Al Dhaheri claims victory in the second race

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Kean Nakamura-Berta claimed victory in the opening race of the FIA Formula Regional European Championship season at the Red Bull Ring. The Prema Racing driver converted Friday's pole position into a commanding win. Finishing second was Rashid Al Dhaheri (R-ace GP), while MP Motorsport's Sebastian Wheldon took third place. Marcus Saeter (G4 Racing) topped the Rookie class.

Race 2, which featured a reverse-grid start for the top 12 of the qualifying, was won by Al Dhaheri, who charged through the field to gain ten places. Behind him, Reza Seewooruthun (Rodin Motorsport) and his team-mate Alex Ninovic completed the podium in second and third respectively. Although he crossed the line first, Dion Gowda (Van Amersfoort Racing) was dropped to sixth after receiving a penalty for a false start.

Race 1. Starting from pole on the outside line of the track, Nakamura-Berta lost the lead to Al Dhaheri. Ninovic made a strong launch to hold onto third place, ahead of Reno Francot, who moved past Sebastian Wheldon. A difficult start,

however, for Emanuele Olivieri, who stalled on the third row and dropped to the back of the field.

After just one lap, the season's first Safety Car was deployed following Gabriel Gomez's car stopping trackside with a broken right-rear suspension after a contact with Mattéo Giaccardi. With the field bunched up once again, racing resumed at the end of lap four with Al Dhaheri still leading. However, on lap six, at the top of the hill into Turn 3, Nakamura-Berta made his move to take the lead as well as Wheldon passed Ninovic to claim third place, before overtaking Al Dhaheri shortly after to move into second.

The battle between Ninovic and Francot intensified, but on lap eight the Safety Car was deployed once again following an incident involving Saqer Almaosherji, whose car ended up overturned in the gravel trap at Turn 4. After a couple of laps under caution, racing resumed with Nakamura-Berta maintaining the lead and pulling away, taking advantage of the fierce battle behind him between Wheldon, Al Dhaheri and Ninovic. It was Ninovic who ultimately came out on top, moving into second place. Further back, Alexandre Munoz ran tenth overall and led the Rookie standings, while Olivieri mounted an impressive recovery to climb up to 16th.

Attention soon returned to the fight at the front, with Ninovic closing in on Nakamura-Berta. However, with just over a minute remaining, the situation changed. Wheldon attempted a bold move at Turn 3, allowing Al Dhaheri to reclaim second place ahead of both him and Ninovic. Further down the order, Zhenrui Chi delivered a strong performance to pass Maksimilian Popov and Francot and secure sixth position.

With the leading positions unchanged to the chequered flag, Nakamura-Berta crossed the line first ahead of Al Dhaheri. Ninovic completed the podium and also set the fastest lap of the race. Munoz confirmed his status as top Rookie, followed by Marco Saeter, while Olivieri finished third in class despite his difficult start and a track limits penalty.

After the race, however, Alex Ninovic was handed a 10-second penalty for forcing Reno Francot off the track and was demoted to 12th. Third place therefore went to Wheldon, who finished ahead of his MP Motorsport teammate Zhenrui Chi and Francot. Alexandre Munoz also received a penalty for contact with Reza Seewooruthun, while the Rookie class victory went to Marcus Saeter of G4 Racing.

Kean Nakamura-Berta (Prema Racing, Race 1 winner): *"It was a great way to start the championship, taking pole yesterday and then converting it into a*

win today. The race was quite chaotic, almost like a sprint, with constant battles throughout. Even when leading with a comfortable gap, you always had to stay focused and keep checking your mirrors. Overall, I think we delivered a strong race, so I'm really happy. Huge thanks to the team as always – they did an incredible job.”

Rashid Al Dhaheri (R-ace GP, 2nd): *“Honestly, it was quite a chaotic race. The push-to-pass is crucial, and how you use it can make a big difference. There’s still a lot to learn and, of course, we made some mistakes, but that’s part of the process. I think our pace is strong. We still have a few things to improve on the car, and there’s definitely more to understand in terms of strategy.”*

Race 2. Starting from pole position for Race 2 was Rodin Motorsport's Reza Seewooruthun. Dion Gowda took the lead, moving early from the front row and earning a five-second penalty. Alexandre Munoz, who had started fourth, stalled and dropped to the back, while Alexander Abkhazava had a contact with Marcus Saeter, sending the latter into a spin and into the barriers, bringing out the Safety Car.

Racing resumed on lap four, but the race was quickly neutralised again following another incident at Turn 4 involving Saqer Almaosherji, Miguel Costa and Enea Frey. With 12 minutes remaining, the race restarted once more, with Gowda still leading the field. Tomass Stolcermanis defended third place from the attacks of Reno Francot, with Maksimilian Popov also joining the battle.

On lap ten, Francot overtook Stolcermanis, who had been leading the Rookie classification. Francot then set his sights on Seewooruthun, while Rashid Al Dhaheri climbed to fourth after gaining seven positions, before passing Francot as well to move into third. Alex Ninovic progressed to fourth, while Kean Nakamura-Berta ran seventh.

With two laps to go, Al Dhaheri overtook Seewooruthun to take second place. Gowda crossed the line in the lead, but due to his earlier penalty, he dropped down the order after the finish. Victory therefore went to Al Dhaheri, with Seewooruthun on the second step of the podium. Ninovic finished third but was penalised for contact, handing the position to Reno Francot. Emanuele Olivieri finished sixth overall to secure the win in the Rookie class.

Rashid Al Dhaheri (R-ace GP, Race 2 winner): *“It’s difficult to see me smiling, but honestly after that race I really can’t complain. Of course, we got the win, and starting from P11 makes it even more special. It’s a shame we didn’t take*

maximum points due to the reverse grid, but for me it's more about how the race unfolded and the quality of the performance. There are always areas to improve, and I'll definitely look back at a few things, but it was such a fun race, lots of overtaking and some bold moves into Turn 3, which was great. I think it also shows how much we've learned and developed from Race 1 to Race 2."

Reza Seewooruthun (Rodin Motorsport, 2nd): *"It's quite tricky in dirty air around here, particularly in the high-speed corners, but I'm happy with the result. We still scored some good points, especially after the DNF earlier, so overall it's been a positive weekend so far."*

Emanuele Olivieri (R-ace GP, Race 2 Rookie winner): "It was a very tough race. The start was quite good, but then I got squeezed on the straight and it was a bit scary as I ended up very close to the wall. I was hit from behind, which is a shame because the car had really strong pace. I think we could have been fighting for the podium, as we saw with the others. The car was very fast, so that's frustrating, but at least we know we have the performance. This isn't where we want to be, even if we still managed to score in the Rookie standings. We'll be pushing for an overall podium tomorrow."

The action resumes tomorrow at 08:45 with Qualifying 2, split into Group A and Group B, which will set the grid for Race 3 (30 minutes), scheduled to get under way at 16:40. Qualifying and the race will be broadcast live on the championship's official YouTube channel, @fiaformularegionaleu, and on television by 78 different broadcasters across more than 200 territories. [Discover where to watch.](#)
