



Ugochukwu, Sztuka, and Wharton in pole position in the three races of the Italian F.4 Championship at Paul Ricard

Extremely close gaps in the spectacular double qualifying session of the fifth round of the Championship

Paul Ricard Circuit, Saturday, July 22nd, 2023 - After the day dedicated to free practice, the fifth event of the Italian F.4 Championship at the Paul Ricard Circuit kicks off with the morning qualifying session. Ugo Ugochukwu, the junior McLaren driver for Prema Racing, emerged victorious from the first qualifying and will lead the pack in Race 1, starting today. In the two Sunday races, it will be Kacper Sztuka, the Polish driver for US Racing, who will start from the pole position in Race 2, while James Wharton, the Ferrari Driver Academy member of Prema Racing, will take the first spot in Race 3.

The first qualifying session saw the American driver take the lead, clocking a time of 2'04.988, closely followed by Sztuka, who recorded a gap of 0.112. James Wharton came in third with a gap of 0.167. Following him was the Finnish Ferrari Driver Academy driver, Tuukka Taponen, representing Prema Racing. Taponen, after holding the best time for part of the session, finished with a gap of 0.179. Zachary David, the Maltese-Filipino driver for US Racing, secured the fifth position, earning an excellent starting position with a gap of 0.230 from Ugochukwu. Brando Badoer, the Italian driver for Van Amersfoort Racing, came in sixth with a gap of 0.449. Ivan Domingues, representing Frits Van Amersfoort's team, claimed the sixth spot in qualifying with a gap of 0.571. James Egozi followed in seventh for PHM Racing, with a recorded gap of 0.579, followed by the championship leader, Arvid Lindblad. The London-based driver, representing Prema with the unmistakable Red Bull livery, recorded a gap of 0.581. The ninth spot went to the Australian driver for US Racing, Gianmarco Pradel, with a gap of 0.647, while Akshay Bohra, from Team US Racing, closed the top 10 with a gap of 0.760.

In the second session, the times further decreased, with Sztuka setting the fastest lap at 2'04.702. The Polish driver was among the session's early leaders, continuously improving his time, engaging in a close battle with Wharton, who ultimately finished second, only 6 milliseconds behind. Ugochukwu claimed the third position with a gap of 0.137, followed by Taponen at 0.277. In the second qualifying, Arvid Lindblad secured the fifth position with a gap of 0.352. Badoer finished sixth with a gap of 0.390, followed by another Italian driver. Nicola Lacorte, the Tuscan driver for Prema Racing, claimed the seventh position with a gap of 0.555. Zachary David secured the eighth spot with a gap of 0.645, followed by Egozi at 0.684. Closing the top 10 in the second qualifying was the home driver, Raphael Narac. The French driver for R-ace GP achieved a gap of 0.761. The session was interrupted with a red flag a few minutes before the scheduled end. The decision came after a collision between Ariel Elkin from Jenzer Motorsport and Rashid Al Dhaheri, resulting in a spin for the Israeli driver Elkin. Al Dhaheri received a penalty, moving him back two positions on the starting grid for Race 1.

The starting grid for Race 3, determined by the second-best time recorded in the two sessions, will see James Wharton starting in front with a time of 2'04.795. The Polish driver Sztuka is still in second place, trailing by 0.127, securing a front-row start for all the



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weekend's races. The second row in the final race at the Paul Ricard Circuit will be occupied by Taponen and Badoer, with gaps of 0.474 and 0.480 seconds, respectively, from Wharton.

Race 1 will start today, Saturday, July 22, at 16:50, with a duration of 30' + 1 lap. On Sunday, July 23, Race 2 will start at 10:10 (30' + 1 lap), followed by Race 3 at 17:30 (30' + 1 lap).

The weekend's races can be watched live with English commentary on the Italian F.4 Championship's Youtube and Facebook pages, and with Italian and English commentary on Motorsport TV (<https://eu.motorsport.tv/>). The three races will also be broadcasted with Italian commentary on ACI Sport TV (Sky channel 228), on www.acisport.it, and on the Facebook page @acisporttv.

Ugo Ugochukwu: *“Overall I’m super happy to put it on pole in Q1, we saw from practice that the pace was really good. I knew, coming into quali, I just had to put the lap together and I managed to do so. I’m really happy with the lap. I’m going to try to get a good start, as much as I can, and from there on try to focus on my tires.”*

Kacper Sztuka: *“It was a good lap. In Q1 we didn’t put it together, then in Q2 the lap was decent, then the red flag came. I’m happy to be on pole in Race 2, P2 in first and third race. I’m in a good position to start the weekend.”*

James Wharton: *“It was good quali in Q2, but a mistake from me cost us in Q1. Definitely I had the pace today for pole in all three races, I’m quite disappointed, but still is pole on Race 3. Time to get back on top in today’s race to fix my mistake from earlier.”*

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