



Kacper Sztuka returns to the victory in the Italian F.4 Championship The Polish driver from US Racing conquers the first race at Paul Ricard with an exceptional start

Paul Ricard Circuit, Saturday, July 22nd, 2023 – The first race at Paul Ricard Circuit marks the return to victory for Kacper Sztuka. The Polish driver from US Racing had already won the season opener and now triumphs again in the fifth round of the Italian F.4 Championship with a pass on Ugochukwu right at the start of Race 1. The American junior McLaren driver for Prema Racing, starting from pole position, had an imperfect start and was immediately attacked by the Polish driver, who made his move at Turn 1 and passed him. He then pursued him, closing the gap significantly in the final stages of the race, but had to settle for the second step of the podium. The leading duo pulled away from the rest of the pack, running at an exceptional pace. Completing the podium in the third position was James Wharton Ferrari Driver Academy from the Team Prema Racing. Wharton was among the main competitors of Race 1 at Paul Ricard, earning his third podium in the series promoted by ACI Sport and WSK Promotion, adding to his two previous victories. The Australian driver had to defend his position in the early stages of the race from his teammate in pursue, and then chose to manage and preserve his tires for the double race on the following day.

In the fourth position was Tuukka Taponen, Ferrari Driver Academy driver from Prema Racing, who put up a tough fight at the start, held onto P4, and finished Race 1 just outside the podium but secured victory in the Rookie category. Behind him was American James Egozi, representing PHM Racing, who claimed the fifth position overall and also stood on the Rookie podium in second place. Following them was a duo from Van Amersfoort Racing: Portuguese driver Ivan Domingues crossed the finish line in sixth, followed by the Italian driver Brando Badoer. Arvid Lindblad, the Championship leader and junior Red Bull driver for Prema Racing, finished in eighth place after battling to gain positions following a qualifying session that saw him start from ninth on the grid. His fight with the Italian driver was exhilarating. Australian driver Gianmarco Pradel of Team US Racing finished ninth in Race 1. Following him was the Sicilian driver Alfio Spina of BVM Racing, who once again performed consistently to secure points. Spina put on a show with his battle against Rashid Al Dhaheri, the Emirati driver from Prema Racing, who finished in eleventh place. Another standout in the race was the Maltese-Filipino driver from US Racing, who held a position in the leading group for a long time before coming to a halt just over a minute and a lap before the end. His teammate Akshay Bohra also experienced issues with his car, visibly slowing down before returning to the pits.

Race 1 at Paul Ricard Circuit also offered a fascinating spectacle in the middle of the pack, with French driver Pablo Sarrazin making his debut in the series with Team Van Amersfoort Racing, finishing in 12th place ahead of Thai driver Nandhavud Bhirombhakdi from PHM Racing. In 13th place overall, Aurelia Nobels, the Ferrari Driver Academy driver from Prema Racing, secured the victory among the female drivers. Second among the women was Victoria Blokhina, representing PHM Racing, while Swiss driver Tina Hausmann from AKM Motorsport finished third after being penalized with a 10-second penalty for a jump start.



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The action resumes tomorrow, Sunday, July 23rd, with Race 2 starting 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.

Kacper Sztuka: *"It's great to win in such a competitive Championship. In the first half there was a really nice fight, then I was leading, basically controlling the pace and managing the tires. I'm super happy of the Team and the job they did. I'm super happy to be back. The start was really good, both reaction and then traction were great. Thanks to all my sponsor, my new sponsor Extral, and Orlen of course. We will keep pushing for the rest of the weekend."*

Ugo Ugochukwu: *"The start wasn't the best, I slipped into second position. Sztuka was very fast at the beginning, and it was tough to keep up with him. Towards the middle of the race, my pace started to improve, and I managed to catch up to him, but not enough to overtake. I definitely wanted a win, but second place is good. We have two more races where I start from the front, we'll try to fight."*

James Wharton: *"It was a nice race. The start was quite tough, I thought I got to run outside there in T10, but it went back in in T11. We lost a lot of time there, I think without that we probably would have caught Kacper. I'm still happy with the result. It's not exactly what I want, but we still have another 2 races starting from the front row."*

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