



## **After Wharton's double victory, Ugochukwu succeeded in Race 3** **Race 3 closed the third round of the Italian F.4 Championship at Spa-Francorchamps. David finished in second place on the final podium, followed by Wharton**

Spa, Sunday, May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023 – The third round of the Italian F.4 Championship at Spa-Francorchamps concluded with Race 3. It was certainly a challenging weekend for young drivers on their path to Formula 1, as they took part in the Belgian event of the single-seater series promoted by ACI Sport and WSK Promotion. Thirty-one drivers took to the track to challenge the roller coaster of the Ardennes. After an exceptional performance in qualifying, which earned him pole position in the first two races of the weekend, James Wharton of Prema Racing's Ferrari Driver Academy secured his first two victories in the series. On Saturday's podium, Zachary David of US Racing and Italian driver Brando Badoer of Van Amersfoort Racing took second and third place, respectively. In the closing stages of a masterfully conducted race, Badoer saw his position at risk due to the attacks from Ugo Ugochukwu, McLaren junior driver of Prema Racing. The American driver managed to overtake him on the track, but the race ended with a red flag due to an incident, and the classification was rolled back by one lap. On Sunday, Wharton claimed his second victory, with Kacper Sztuka of US Racing taking second place among the main competitors on the track. Sztuka had reached the front of the race and passed the leader on the final lap before the race was interrupted due to an incident involving several drivers, resulting in another premature closure of the race and the classification being reset to the previous lap. British driver Arvid Lindblad, Red Bull junior driver of Prema Racing, finished third in Race 2. Race 3 was Ugochukwu's triumph as he crossed the finish line ahead of Zachary David. James Wharton secured third place, thus bringing home the richest haul from the third round of the Championship and making his mark in the top positions of the drivers' standings.

The battles on the track were intense in the final race of the weekend, with a heated fight for the top 10 positions. Starting from pole position was Sztuka, who initially maintained the lead despite Lindblad's fierce attacks. However, a contact between the two in the first lap ended the race for the British driver, forcing the incredibly fast Sztuka to continue from the back of the grid. The lead was taken over by Zachary David, who held the advantage for a long time. Ugochukwu, starting from the sixth row on the grid, gained third place by overtaking his teammate Wharton. Then, there was a race neutralization due to a contact between Ariel Elkin of Jenzer Motorsport and Rashid Al Dhaheri of Prema Racing, prematurely ending the race for both drivers as their cars came to a stop in the gravel. David managed the restart well but was soon overtaken by Ugochukwu, who took the lead in Race 3. Behind the leading trio, the ranks were tightly contested, with Brando Badoer in fourth place closing in on Wharton, while being chased by Matheus Ferreira of Van Amersfoort Racing, Alpine Academy driver. The battle for the top 10 positions remained intense and vibrant, with Akshay Bohra of US Racing finishing the race in sixth place, ahead of Prema Racing's Ferrari Driver Academy driver, Tuukka Taponen. Nicola Lacorte of the Vicenza-based team finished the race in eighth place. Lacorte was also one of the key figures in the action at the front of the group. He finished ninth in the last race of the weekend, closely behind the Tuscan driver and James Egozi, the American driver of PHM Racing. The final point in Race 3 went to another driver



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from the German Team, with Valentin Kluss securing the tenth position. Kluss achieved this by overtaking Sicilian driver Alfio Spina of BVM Racing in another intense battle between the two, which had already taken place in Saturday's race. With his second-place overall finish, David also claimed victory in the Rookie standings for the second time this weekend. In the Woman trophy's race, Bianca Bustamante made her debut in the Italian F.4 Championship with Prema Racing and secured victory with a nineteenth-place finish. Her direct rival, Tina Hausmann of AKM Motorsport, started the race from the back of the grid due to a penalty but managed to climb up to twenty-first place. However, Hausmann received a 10-second penalty during the race for a jump-start. Race 3 ended after completing 8 laps, with the checkered flag being shown earlier due to the strict Belgian noise regulations, which did not allow the remaining minutes to be completed due to the accumulated delays during the Sunday races.

**Ugo Ugochukwu:** *“End of the weekend here in Spa, I managed to get off with the win. I’m super happy about the race. Starting from P6, I wasn’t expecting to win. I managed to capitalize on some people’s mistakes, make some good moves and get into the lead. From there on I was just pushing as much as possible to open the gap until the end. I’m super happy to take home this win, I want to thank the whole Prema Team. I’m really looking forward the next round in Monza.”*

**Zachary David:** *“Overall was a good weekend. We were able to score good points and be consistent into the points for the Championship. If we keep this scoring up, I think we should be in the fight. Everyone in the Team is being working hard, now it is just up to me to deliver the result.”*

**James Wharton:** *“I am extremely happy with the weekend. First pole position, first wins in the Italian F.4, after some time. I think it was necessary to finally get it done. Now it is time to keep pushing, 3 podiums, 2 win. Solid weekend, but still a long way to go in the Championship. Such an amazing track as well, probably one of the hardest to win at. To win twice, I know that I can move forward now and start fighting for the title.”*



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