



Surprising finish and great spectacle: Kean Nakamura-Berta secures his maiden win in Race 3 at Paul Ricard

Weather tricks front runners in tyre choice, contributing to a spectacular finish in the fifth round of the Italian F.4 Championship

Le Castellet, Sunday, July 21st, 2024 – The final race at Paul Ricard was full of drama, adding excitement and high emotions to the fifth round of the Italian F.4 Championship. Even during the end of Race 2 this morning, a few drops of rain began to fall. The bad weather intensified in the afternoon, with heavy rain hitting the Le Castellet track, which stopped just before Race 3. This added uncertainty for the 11 teams in the championship regarding which tyres to mount for the final race of the weekend. Several drivers started on Pirelli rain tyres to tackle the wet track. This choice was also adopted by all the drivers in the front rows. However, the track dried very quickly, favoring those who gambled on slicks. In this context, Kean Nakamura-Berta from Prema Racing's Alpine Academy secured his first victory. The Japanese driver started from P9 and managed to recover ground before engaging in a spectacular battle with Gustav Jonsson, who started from P8 and led for much of the race. Nakamura-Berta's attack began on the penultimate lap, culminating in one of the most thrilling duels of the season, ending with an overtake on the final lap. The Swedish driver from Van Amersfoort Racing, also delivering an exceptional race, had to settle for the second step of the podium, rewarded for the courageous tire choice and perfect race interpretation. Completing the podium in P3 was Tomass Stolcermanis. For the Latvian driver of Prema Racing, it was his first overall podium, after often topping the Rookie podium.

Fourth place went to Reno Francot, representing Jenzer Motorsport, followed by his teammate Enea Frey. The Swiss driver Frey, along with Nakamura-Berta and Stolcermanis, completed the Rookie podium. Sixth place went to Emanuele Olivieri, the best among the Italian drivers on track in France, representing Team AKM Motorsport. Seventh place was claimed by Dion Gowda, an Indian driver for Prema Racing. Eighth at the finish line was Luca Viisoreanu. However, the Romanian driver from Real Racing was penalized with a drive-through converted to 25 seconds, issued for the incident that ended the race of Nicola Larini (PHM AIX Racing), dropping him out of the top 10 and losing his first points of the season. The P8 was thus awarded to Dutchman Lin Hoenius, representing Van Amersfoort Racing. Ninth and tenth places went to two drivers from PHM AIX Racing, Maximilian Popov and American Evertt Stack.



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Freddie Slater (Prema Racing), Hiyu Yamakoshi (Van Amersfoort Racing), Akshay Bohra (US Racing), Jack Beeton (US Racing), and Alex Powell (Prema Racing), the top drivers in the championship standings, all finished outside the points, tricked by the weather that led them to an unfavorable tire choice, forcing them to make a pit stop. Thus, the top 5 of the championship remained unchanged, while Kean-Nakamura Berta, thanks to today's victory, overtook his teammate Rashid Al Dhaheri to move into sixth place.



Now comes the summer break, with the Italian Championship returning to the track at the end of September in Barcelona for the penultimate round of 2024. However, it will not be necessary to wait so long to see Italian Formula 4 back on track, with the season debut of the Euro 4 Championship at Mugello Circuit on the weekend of August 25.





Kean Nakamura-Berta: *"I was in a similar scenario a while back. Based on that experience, I knew these conditions, I asked my engineer for some extra information, and we gambled on slicks. The track was already drying on the out lap from the pit lane. We knew that if we could just hold on, we could arrive and get a good result. Starting from P9, we had to try something. Well, it dried much quicker than expected. We were really competitive from the get-go. This is a good way to end the first half of the year. It has been a tough season for me so far, but I hope we can continue from here and push through the second half of the season. At the end, I was slowly catching up to Jonsson, it looked like he was struggling a bit with his tires. On the penultimate lap, I had a go into T14, we had light contact, and then on the exit of the last corner, into the last lap, he had a bit of wheel spin and went off. I managed to get a good run. Into T1, I knew we were both going to go deep for P1. I knew I had to brake late, and we both ended up off track. It was just a stressful scenario when I knew that, for the team's sake, I was the only driver who could win for our team. I pushed like crazy in the last three laps. I'm just thankful that the tires stayed on long enough, and we managed to snatch P1 on the last lap. My heart was beating fast, very fast, but overall, it's just a mega way to end the first half."*

Gustav Jonsson: *"on the grid, it looked quite right, so I gambled, and it was the right call. That was really nice, we led the whole race, picking them off one by one. Towards the end, the tires fell off massively. Nakamura-Berta also caught up to me. On the last lap, he overtook me, and we were off track. Overall, really good job with the strategy, I'd say, to the team as well. We keep working, it's been a positive day. Finally, back on the podium, hopefully, we will soon get P1. On the out lap, we were on wet tires. We were discussing whether to switch to slicks because it was drying in some parts. I asked my engineer Alejandro, it was a bit on the limit, then we saw a few others switching, and we did it as well, directly from the first lap. It was the right choice, for sure."*

Tomass Stolcermanis: *"the whole weekend was very tough. First race, just in the points, P10, not what we wanted. Second race DNF. I think after this weekend, the third place was just fantastic to end the half season. Incredible finish, and obviously, I'm very happy for the podium. [During the summer break] I will definitely train. I don't think I'm good enough to win races yet, I will definitely train a lot, as much as possible, physically and mentally. Also, I will spend some time with family since I'm not at home much. I will definitely prepare myself for the second half."*



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