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changing hierarchies**

For the first time since its creation in 2020, the Champions of the Future Euro Series visited France, for the second of five events in this top-level competition. The 173 drivers present (95 in OK-Junior and 78 in OK) discovered the Val d'Argenton circuit, which proved to be very interesting from both a technical and sporting point of view. Joel Pohjola won the Juniors Final, while Dries Van Langendonck took the provisional lead. In the OK class, Thibaut Ramaekers made the difference in the Final, while Zac Drummond took the overall lead. In both categories, the racing was intense, with countless changes of leaders from Qualifying to the Finals.

Renowned for having hosted battles between Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg in the early 2000s, or Max Verstappen and Charles Leclerc a decade later, the Val d'Argenton circuit has been given a new lease of life by once again welcoming some of motorsport's greatest international hopefuls. As organisers of the Champions of the Future Euro Series, RGMMC once again proved its ability to satisfy the demanding requirements of the drivers and teams involved, whatever the challenge and the specific characteristics of the circuit chosen. As the days went by, the meeting grew in intensity, culminating in some particularly lively Finals.

No fewer than 18 different drivers representing numerous teams managed to win Qualifying Heats, confirming the sheer number of potential winners at Val d'Argenton. Lehtimaki, Sala, Van Langendonck, Rajpold, Coronel, Iliffe, Lovatt, Walz, Kamyab and Pohjola in OK-Junior, as well as Helias, Drummond, Gomez, Francis, Ramaekers, Pesl, Dubnitski and Wolfe in OK, were among those who demonstrated their competitiveness on this French circuit located not far from the famous chateaux of the Loire Valley. Whether it was the drivers who put in fine performances or those who fell short of their objectives, they all came away with a wealth of technical information and a much better understanding of this 1280-metre track, with the aim of shining at the FIA European Karting Championship from 25th to 28th April.

Now a partner of the OK-Junior and OK categories in the Champions of the Future Euro Series and FIA Karting in 2024, Maxxis tyres contributed to the success of the event, which was particularly well attended thanks to the live streaming set up by RGMMC. In addition to the arrival of on-board cameras offering spectacular images, an additional upgrade in the tv optics further enhanced the quality of the broadcast!

What a comeback by Joel Pohjola in OK-Junior!

Starting from the front row, Italy's Filippo Sala (RFM) and Finland's Sebastian Lehtimaki (Koski Motorsport), who had already claimed pole position on Friday, had to be content with 7th and 9th respectively in the Final. It has to be said that a lot happened during the 20 laps of the decisive race. Briton Kenzo Craigie (Prema Racing) was the first to get the better of Sala. Belgian driver Dries Van Langendonck (Forza Racing) tried to follow in his wake, but found himself outpaced by Austrian Niklas Schaufler (DPK Racing). Schaufler made a great effort to come back from 11th place at the start.

At the same time, another driver got off to a stunning start. Starting from P9, Finland's Joel Pohjola (Tony Kart Racing Team) overtook all his rivals one by one to take the lead of the Final on lap 6. With the fastest lap of the race, he increased his pace as the laps went by and took the lead by more than four seconds. Behind him, Schaufler won his duel with Craigie and Van Langendonck for 2nd place. For his first season in OK-Junior, Craigie was delighted to be on the podium, while Van Langendonck reassured himself by taking the series lead from Schaufler.

A magnificent duel took place for 5th place, which narrowly went to American Jack Iliffe

(Forza Racing) at the expense of Dutchman Rocco Coronel (Victory Lane) and Japan's Kosei Oguma (AKM Motorsport). Coronel had hoped for a better result, but lost a number of places in the scramble at the start. Oguma eventually finished P8, with the top ten completed by a young Swiss driver on the rise, Paul Andriotis (RFM). The biggest comeback came from Spaniard Christian Costoya (Parolin Motorsport), who climbed from 35th to 13th place behind China's Jiang Hou Zai (RFM) and Great Britain's Asher Ochstein (CRG Racing Team). On the other hand, there were disappointments for Australian William Calleja (Parolin Motorsport), P2 after the Qualifying sessions, and for Poles Kacper Rajpold (Koski Motorsport) and Borys Lyzen (Sodikart), who started the Final race P6 and P8 respectively.

Thibaut Ramaekers' first victory in OK

The first laps of the Final set the tone, with an incredible battle between several drivers. Brazilian Gabriel Gomez (CRG Racing Team) surprised American Zac Drummond (Parolin Motorsport) and Belgian Thibaut Ramaekers (VDK Racing) by jumping from P3 to P1 at the very first corner. The hierarchy changed even before the end of the first lap, with Brazilian Matheus Morgatto (CL Racing Team) taking the lead. Having taken pole position on Friday, Romanian David Cosma Cristofor was forced to retire on lap 4. While Morgatto handed over the lead to the duo of Gomez Drummond, two KR Motorsport drivers, Briton Joe Turney and Australian Lewis Francis, put the pressure on the leaders, along with Ramaekers.

Shortly after the halfway point, the situation began to clear up, with Ramaekers pulling off a fine manoeuvre on Gomez and Drummond. Turney and Francis took advantage of the situation to break away. Positions froze. After Irishman Fionn McLaughlin at the last round, VDK Racing secured a second consecutive win in the Champions of the Future Euro Series. Turney secured 2nd place ahead of his team-mate Francis. Drummond and Morgatto finished neck and neck in 4th and 5th places, with the American taking the overall lead. A penalty cost Gomez a fall from 6th to 14th, which also deprived him of the series lead.

Czech driver Jindrich Pesl (ASD Monster K Factory Team) concluded his brilliant weekend in 6th place ahead of Dmitry Matveev (KR Motorsport), who moved up to 21st. Belgian Kai Rillaerts (Sodikart), Spaniard Aaron Garcia (DPK Racing) and Noah Monteiro (KR Motorsport) took the final places in the top 10, just ahead of Dutchman Mees Houben (Birel Art Racing). Colombian Salim Hanna (Prema Racing) was forced to retire in 8th place. Frenchman Jimmy Helias (Victory Lane) and Monegasque Matteo Giaccardi (Forza Racing), both ranked in the top 10 after the heats, recovered from their difficult starts to the season.

