



Press Release
25 March 2024

2024 Alpine Academy Australia Report – Double Podium Down Under

Alpine Academy's FIA Formula 2 pair – Victor Martins and Kush Maini – and FIA Formula 3 trio – Gabriele Minì, Nikola Tsolov and Sophia Flörsch all ran on the Formula 1 support bill in Melbourne, Australia last weekend.

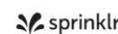
Gabriele (PREMA Racing) secured his first podium of the 2024 season, finishing third in the Feature Race at Albert Park, whilst Kush (Invicta Racing) claimed third in the Formula 2 Sprint Race having been promoted to the top three following a post-race penalty.

Gabriele started strong for Round 2 of FIA Formula 3, topping the timings in the Practice session before missing out on pole position by just 0.019secs in Qualifying. The Italian started the reverse grid Sprint in 11th, going on to gain five positions to finish the race in sixth place. On Sunday, the Italian driver battled with Luke Browning before claiming the third step on the podium to move himself up to third in the championship standings.

Nikola (Art Grand Prix) and Sophia (Van Amersfoort Racing) both faced a challenging weekend in Australia. Nikola finished the Sprint Race in 20th and the Feature in 19th, whilst Sophia finished the Sprint in 19th and did not finish the Feature after brief contact put an early end to her race.

Kush had a weekend of mixed fortunes in Round 3 of FIA Formula 2. The Indian driver made up three places in the Sprint Race, crossing the chequered flag in fourth before being promoted to third following a post-race penalty for Isaak Hadjar. In the Feature, Kush once again demonstrated strong pace and led the race with a comfortable margin but lost out on the alternative strategy when a Virtual Safety Car, which turned into a full Safety Car, gave others the chance to pit, dropping him out of points-paying positions in twelfth.

Victor (ART Grand Prix) made strides to recover in the races after a spin put an early end to his Qualifying session, which meant he would start at the back of the grid. Putting in an incredible show of pace in both races, Victor made up 14 places to finish seventh in the Sprint Race and 13 places to finish eighth in the Feature Race for his first points of the year.



All five drivers made the most of their time Down Under with a visit to AFL squad Carlton in Melbourne. The Academy Drivers learnt Australian Rules skills before exchanging insights into professional sports life with some of Carlton's young athletes.

FIA Formula 2 and Formula 3 will return to the track at Autodromo Enzo e Dino Ferrari in Imola after a seven week break on April 17-19.

Victor Martins (ART Grand Prix)

Practice: 6 / Qualifying: not classified / Sprint Race: 7 / Feature Race: 8

"Both races went well in Melbourne. We were able to score points which was important for the weekend but in the end seeing our pace in the races and how we were able to come back makes my mistake in Qualifying even more frustrating. We managed to keep our heads up despite a tough start to the weekend and we focused on the races to score the maximum points that we could. I believe we are making the necessary steps forward in terms of on track performance and I can see some good things coming for the future races. We are coming back as a team as we prepare for the upcoming test which will provide us an opportunity to keep working on the car and working on my confidence in the car ahead of the next round in Imola. We continue to move forward and the hope and confidence as a team are certainly there."

Kush Maini (Invicta Racing)

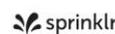
Practice: 7 / Qualifying: 4 / Sprint Race: 3 / Feature Race: 12

"It has been a weekend of two halves in Melbourne. We made up places in the Sprint to cross the line in fourth before being promoted to third post-race. It is never the way a driver would like to get a podium, but the extra point could be decisive in the championship. It was a tough day on Sunday. We had a lot of pace in the car, we were comfortably leading the race on the alternative strategy and a win was on the cards. Unfortunately, the safety car came out at the wrong time for us and we finished out of the points as a result. There were still positives to take from the weekend and we have shown our capabilities over the first three rounds, and I look forward to bouncing back in Imola."

Gabriele Minì (PREMA Racing)

Practice: 1 / Qualifying: 2 / Sprint Race: 6 / Feature Race: 3

"It was a good weekend in Melbourne with a solid haul of points for the championship. We started the weekend strong, topping the timings in Practice but we missed out on pole position by a slim margin. We recovered from 11th to sixth in the Sprint Race with lots of good battles. On Sunday we struggled with graining on the tyres in the first few laps and lost a lot of time as a result which meant we dropped down to fourth. I managed to regain third in the last lap and take the last spot on the podium. There will always be room to do better until you get the win but, in the end, it was a solid weekend. We head to Barcelona for testing next and then onto Round 3 in Imola. We will work hard and bring everything we can to my home race in Italy."



Nikola Tsolov (ART Grand Prix)

Practice: 10 / Qualifying: 7 / Sprint Race: 20 / Feature Race: 19

"It definitely was not the weekend we had expected. Coming from Bahrain we had high hopes for what we could achieve in Australia. It was a tough Free Practice session, but we managed to resolve our difficulties and bounce back to claim seventh in Qualifying. Unfortunately, we struggled with various elements in the Sprint Race and had similar issues in the Feature which meant it was a weekend which gave us no results. There is a lot of time for us to analyse between now and the Round 3 in Imola and we will have testing in Barcelona, giving us the opportunity to improve for the next race weekend. The season is long, and we need to continue looking forwards as we implement our learnings from each round."

Sophia Flörsch (Van Amersfoort Racing)

Practice: 23 / Qualifying: 25 / Sprint Race: 19 / Feature Race: DNF

"Australia was a weekend I was really looking forward to taking part in. The track is amazing and coming here also gives you a smile knowing that so many fans will be out there cheering you on. The weekend did not go as wanted in the end. We struggled on our final run on the new set of tyres in Qualifying which meant we would start from the back of the grid for both races. Finishing 19th in the Sprint Race was the maximum we could do unfortunately, and a DNF in Sunday's Feature after getting hit from a car spinning completed a weekend of ill fortune. There are always positives to take, we learned a lot and we know where to put the focus for the upcoming test in Barcelona. We will come back stronger."

