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## ROK CUP WINTER TROPHY – RACE REPORT

The ROK Cup Winter Trophy opens the new single-brand season by Vortex in the best possible way, with a total of 144 entries from all over Europe (and beyond) at the South Garda Karting in Lonato (Italy). A two-day competition that crowned the 2023 champions: Shen Zeyu (Mini ROK), Maksymilian Rafalik (Junior ROK), Patrik Fraboni (Senior ROK), Martin Hudec (Expert ROK), Davide Cicognini (Super ROK) and Marco Tormen (Shifter ROK).

### Mini ROK

After last year's large attendance, the Mini ROK 'expands' and welcomes a record number of 43 drivers at the starting grid.

The participants are divided into two qualifying sessions and the combined ranking regulates the four groups for the eliminatory heats on Saturday and Sunday. Alessandro Nanni wins the challenge against the

chrono timing and is able to record the best time of 55.510 seconds, i.e. 22 thousandths better than Norbert Plaszewski, second. Martina Rumlénova, winner of last year's edition, is third, ahead of Gustav Christensen, fourth, Dario Palazzolo, fifth, and Angelo Pecoraro, sixth. The reigning ROK Cup Italy champion Shen Zeyu is seventh, ahead of Justin Paul Di Lucia, eighth, Milosz Smuk, ninth, and Ilias Mitaki, tenth. The ranking continues with Antonio Ianni, Kacper Rajpold, Shae Shield, Manuel Ranica, Mateusz Wal, Patrick Salistean, Lorenzo Zucchetto, Mikolaj Gawlikowski, Victor Thomas Gorun, Jan Gardzielik, Patrick Orvandi, River Nilsson, Franciszek Bal, Julian Frasnelli, Iven Ammann, Kacper Kluk, Jan Michaleczko, Marcell Zsebo, Raul Teodor Secara, Carlo Pongratz, Diego Bertellini, Endrik Peets, Johannes Buchhammer, Ksawery Dudkowski, Dawid Tyndel, Davide Di Filippo, Tommaso D'Ambrosio, Alberto Masotto, Dominik Wojcik, Robin Semet, Pavel Petras, George Matei Gavril and Luca Muzzolon.

As often happens in this category, the qualifying heats shuffled the cards on the table, but not for the leader: Zeyu wins two races and finishes the last one with a second place: just enough to gain the leadership of the intermediate ranking. A victory came also for Palazzolo, second, while Di Lucia gained the third place. Plaszewski and Smuk are fourth and fifth respectively, while Pecoraro gains a success and remains steady in sixth position. Seventh is Nanni, eighth Mitaki, ninth Rajpold and tenth Gawlikowski.

At the start of the final, an excellent start is performed by Zeyu, followed closely by Di Lucia, Smuk, Nanni and Rajpold, while Palazzolo runs in sixth position. Shen tries to shake off his rivals, but Di Lucia, Smuk and Nanni do not lose sight of the race leader. On lap 5, Di Lucia runs ahead of Shen, but the Chinese driver gives his answer on the next lap. On the last lap, it's Nanni (who in the meantime has moved up to second place) trying to attack Shen, but the latter remains firmly in first position and wins the race, just ahead of Nanni. Di Lucia defends himself against Rajpold and finishes in third place.

### **Junior ROK**

Fought and uncertain to the last metre is the Junior ROK, another great protagonist of the weekend in Lonato.

Maksymilian Rafalik is the fastest driver in Saturday's qualifying, with a time of 49.414 seconds. Nicolas Marchesi follows in second position with a delay of 155 thousandths of a second, while Antoni Kosiba takes third place. Fourth is Lukas Horcicka, ahead of Guido Bruno Bidoli, fifth, Giulio Mazzolini, sixth, and Franciszek Czapla, seventh. In the top ten we can also find Elia Epifanio, eighth, Alex Desario, ninth, and Oskar Chmiel, tenth. The ranking then continues with: Filippo Pola, Adam Sydor, Alex Laghezza, Morgan Knudsen, Andrea Brusino, Fred Saareks, Luigi Pace, Lorenzo Lenzi, Marcel Matyjewicz, Matteo Rainalter, Zackary Taylor, Riccardo Maglioli, Kacper Bonder and Piotr Maluszynski.

Even during the three eliminatory heats on Saturday and Sunday, Rafalik confirms himself as the man to beat in view of the final. The Polish driver scores two victories, a second place and remains firmly at the top of the intermediate ranking, with Marchesi still in the role of first chaser thanks to one success and two third places. Behind them are Kosiba, Knudsen, Horcicka, Czapla, Epifanio, Desario, Mazzolini and Taylor, the latter having climbed from 21<sup>st</sup> place in qualifying.

At the start of the final, Rafalik runs safe from Marchesi, Horcicka, Epifanio, Kosiba and Czapla, while Knudsen loses several places until settling in tenth. Marchesi does not let Rafalik get away and even attacks him on lap 2, succeeding in taking for a while the lead in the race. Meanwhile, Czapla overtakes the Kosiba-Epifanio pair, reaches Horcicka and gains the third place at his expense. Marchesi seems launched towards victory, but the race direction applies him a 5-second penalty for not respecting the starting procedure. As a result, the Italian finds himself virtually third: he tries hard to grasp Rafalik and Czapla, but the latter two do not let up. Marchesi, Rafalik and Czapla cross the chequered flag in that order, but the victory goes into the hands of Rafalik. Czapla and Marchesi thus complete the final podium.

### **Senior ROK**

Once again, the Senior ROK category offers excitement and continuous turnarounds.

Saturday opens under the banner of Patrik Fraboni, author of the best time in the chrono practice. The Italian stops at 48.427 seconds, almost a tenth faster than the second classified Andrea Giudice. Lorenzo Bedetti takes the third, followed by Vittorio Maria Russo, fourth, Samuele Di Filippo, fifth, and Emanuele Bruscano, sixth. Fourth row for Aleksandar Bogunovic and Colin Würthenberger, while fifth place is the prerogative of Adrian Labuda and Piotr Orzechowski. The ranking continues with Clon Mazny, Nicolò Coppotelli, Lukasz Grabowski, Adam Tomasz Piszczako, Christian Canonica, Antonio Parlapiano, Gabriel Moretto, Jakub Jarosz, Mateusz Piszczako, Sachel Rotgé, Nicole Ameglio, Andrea Lopetrone, Edoardo Prioglio, David Stefan Dragan, Filip Bartos, Marcin Zajac, Radim Guichen, Lorenzo Bertonelli, Michael Jelinek, Emanuele Romanelli and Oli Kobiela.

The situation at the top changes considerably over the course of the three eliminatory heats, with Giudice able to move up from second to first place followed by Di Filippo and Dragan in third, the latter author of two victories despite his 24<sup>th</sup> place in the qualifyings. Bogunovic takes the fourth position, while Fraboni slips to fifth despite a success in the first heat. Moretto, Russo, Wazny, Bedetti and Adam Tomasz Piszczako complete the the top 10.

Giudice does not waste the chance to start in pole position: the Italian driver takes the reins of the race, with Dragan, Fraboni, Russo and Bedetti immediately behind them. On the other hand, Di Filippo cannot

perform a good start and drops back to sixth position. Making his way through the leading group is Fraboni who, in just two laps, takes the lead and begins to stretch out over Giudice and Russo, who has meanwhile moved into third place. Behind them, a severe battle for the fourth place between Dragan, Bedetti, Bogunovic, Moretto, Di Filippo and Würthenberger: the first two, Dragan and Bedetti, emerge and quickly reduce the gap to Russo. In the meantime, Fraboni is now unreachable and triumphs alone at the finishing line. Giudice finishes second, more than three seconds behind the leader, while Dragan overtakes Russo gaining the lowest step of the podium. However, after the race, due to the front spoiler in the wrong position, Dragan gets a five-second penalty so Russo regains the third place.

### **Expert ROK**

A unique show by the protagonists of the Expert ROK, the category of the most experienced ROK Cup drivers.

Tino Donadei returns to the ROK Cup Winter Trophy strong after his victory in the 2022 edition, and indeed, the Italian does not disappoint expectations with a pole position of 49.519 seconds. Michele Zampieri, on the podium last year, sets the second best time, followed by Martin Hudec, third, and Davide Gherardi, fourth. Antoni Bal takes the fifth, ahead of Sona Ptackova, sixth, Alessandro Viganò, seventh, and Pier Giuseppe Di Landro, eighth. Fifth row for Filippo Repetto and Marco Beretta, while Andrea Biccio, Daniel Zajac and Fabio Cretti close the group.

The eliminatory heats see a perfect score from Bal, with three victories out of three races run. Ptackova climbs to second position with three podiums, ahead of Gherardi, third, and Hudec, fourth. Donadei and Zampieri drop to fifth and sixth respectively, with Beretta, Viganò and Di Landro in the next positions. Cretti leaves the bottom of the standings and climbs to tenth place, overtaking Repetto, Biccio and Zajac.

In the final, Bal does not miss the start and takes the lead at the first bend, with Ptackova covering his teammate's back from Hudec, Zampieri and Donadei. A quartet of Bal, Ptackova, Hudec and Zampieri quickly runs ahead, but without anyone daring to attack in the early laps. But soon arrives the first shock: the sporting stewards deem Ptackova's starting procedure incorrect and give her a five-second penalty. The Czech driver then decides to take the lead and attempts the difficult overtake, but Bal, Hudec and Zampieri do not give an inch. The chequered flag sees Ptackova first, Bal second, Hudec third and Zampieri fourth, but the winner goes back to the fourth place for a penalty and, as a result, the victory goes to her teammate, Bal. But, once again, the outcome of the classification changes: due to the front spoiler in the wrong position, Bal falls behind Ptackova. Thus, Hudec is the winner of the race, Zampieri takes the place of honour and Ptackova finishes on the lowest step of the podium.

### **Super ROK**

Starring as always is once more the Super ROK category, the highest performance category of the single-gear karts by the Vortex single-brand.

Domenico Cicognini is back as the Super ROK leader, after a year in the Shifter ROK class. The Italian driver puts his seal on the qualifying with a best time of 47.851, 119 thousandths faster than Bartosz Grzywacz, the reigning Senior ROK champion of the ROK Cup Italy. Lynn Neuhaus finishes third, with Paolo Dung Pastori fourth and Gaia Cardinali fifth. Kinga Wojcik and Michael Bartoszuk finish sixth and seventh respectively, while Matilde Seregni occupies the eighth position.

Cicognini also reaffirms his supremacy in the eliminatory heats, with a perfect series of three wins out of three and zero penalty points. Grzywacz always takes the second place and firmly maintains his position playing as the first chaser, while Lynn is third in the intermediate ranking. Pastori is still fourth, ahead of Bartoszuk, Cardinali, Wojcik and Seregni.

With this in mind, Cicognini is the number one candidate for the final victory. At the start, the Italian firmly holds the lead while Grzywacz runs close to the rear of his rival, even though he fights against Neuhaus in the first few corners. Cicognini is a real jackhammer and, to the sound of fast laps, increasingly distances Grzywacz. Behind them, Neuhaus, Cardinali and Pastori begin a lively fight for the third position, until the latter has to raise the white flag just three laps to the end. In the meantime, Cicognini is the winner of the race, more than a second ahead of Grzywacz, who is second, while Neuhaus excels in a duel with Cardinali and finishes third. However, a misbehaviour during the return lap by Grzywacz towards the other drivers does not go unnoticed by the sporting stewards, who consequently decide to disqualify him. The podium is thus conquered by Cicognini, Neuhaus and Cardinali.

### **Shifter ROK**

The Shifter ROK, the shifter category of the one-make series by Vortex, never stop to give constant excitement all along the weekend at Lonato.

The qualifying heats see Federico Mascialino at the top, with a time of 47.053 seconds. By just 16 thousandths of a second, Nicola Rossini misses the pole position and finishes in second place. Also very fast is Marco Tormen, third, 76 thousandths behind, as well as Andrea Zemin, fourth. Riccardo Rigodanza places fifth, ahead of Niki Taylor, sixth, Daniele Demartis, seventh, and Gabriele Bensi, eighth. Davide Cugini and Andrea Aliberti complete the top 10, with the next positions occupied by Filippo Calligaris, Fabrizio Morardo, Manuel Daziano and Massimiliano Pezzucchi. We then find Mattia Rossetti, Alessio Foresto, Marco Acquarella, Edoardo Sabatino, Philippe Ehrensberger, Victor Martin Odin, Francesco Buffa, Patrick Di Giuseppe, Ferruccio Alacqua, Pietro Gobbi and Andrea Antonello.

With three second places in the eliminatory heats, Demartis takes the lead in the intermediate ranking, followed by Zemin, Taylor and Bensi. Rigodanza and Cugini run in the fifth and sixth places respectively, while Rossini is seventh with two victories and a 24<sup>th</sup> place to spoil his path. Daziano is eighth, with Foresto ninth and Tormen, author of a win, tenth. The poleman Mascialino, on the other hand, falls to 23<sup>rd</sup> place.

Sunday's final becomes the stage for a no-holds-barred show. Zemin burns everyone at the start and takes the lead, with Demartis in second place; however, the poleman is overtaken by Bensi at the first bend and has to defend himself against Cugini, Tormen and Rigodanza. With a clear field in front of him, Zemin attempts a breakaway and goes to half a second on his pursuers, but the symphony changes when Demartis moves up to second position: the Italian catches Zemin and, halfway through the race, overtakes him. Without forcing his hand too much, Demartis ends the weekend successfully by crossing the finishing line first, while, behind him, the Tormen-Rossini duo mocks Zemin and takes the remaining two steps on the podium. But after the scrutineers, a cold shower arrives for Demartis: the stewards discover that his front spoiler is in the wrong position and penalise him by five seconds. Demartis thus relegates to seventh position, while Tormen is elected winner. Rossini gains the second position, Zemin, on the other hand, is third.