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25th September 2016 - Italian Formula 4, Imola

Imola hosted the penultimate round of the **Italian Formula 4** Championship this weekend and VSR entered an unchanged driver line up of **Marino Sato**, **Jaden Conwright** and **Simone Cunati**.

Qualifying took place on Friday afternoon and in Q1 Cunati once again finished in the top ten, setting the 9th fastest time. Sato, struggling with a cold, was 17th fastest and Conwright 23rd. In the race all three drivers made significant progress through the field. Cunati was up to 5th by lap three and gained another place when race leader Schumacher was penalised for a jump start. Cunati's battle with Colombo provided much of the excitement during the seventeen lap race and the VSR driver held off the increasingly desperate Italian until a late Safety Car neutralised the race. 4th overall was also 2nd in the rookie Championship for Cunati. Sato took the flag in 8th place and finished in the points having made up nine places from his qualifying result. Conwright took the flag in 11th but was given a five second penalty which, with the field bunched up behind the safety car demoted him to 22nd. Post race penalties later promoted Cunati to 3rd overall and also moved Sato and Conwright up one place in the classification.

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Sato took his first F4 win at Imola in a weekend which saw him score points in all three races (photo by Photo 4)

Qualifying for race two saw Sato the fastest VSR driver. He qualified in 10th place with Cunati in 15th and Conwright 24th. Sato and Cunati picked their way through the chaos of the start, with Bertonelli anticipating the lights and Schumacher crashing out, gaining places to complete the opening lap in 7th and 12th. As the race progressed the Japanese driver slipped back to 10th while Cunati worked his way up to 7th. With fourteen minutes left the Safety Car came out and when racing resumed Cunati picked up a further two places and was soon in the thick of a five car battle for 4th place. Sato hung on to the group as well and when the flag came out the two VSR drivers were 5th and 8th. Cunati was the 3rd rookie home and took his second podium of the weekend. Conwright made a good start to the race and ran as high as 19th before he was forced off the track by one of his rivals. He fought back from 24th to finish 20th and collected the last points scoring place in the rookie classification.

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Cunati returned to the podium finishing 2nd in the rookie classification in race one and 3rd in race two and three (photo by Photo 4)

The grid for race three was decided according to the classification of race two so Sato started from row two, Cunati from row three and Conwright from row nine. As the lights went out for the start of the eighteen minute sprint race Sato made an aggressive getaway, muscling his way into the lead as the field streamed into the first corner. Cunati made up two places and Conwright, after surviving a scary off-road moment, completed the opening lap in 15th. A brief safety car period closed up the field and there were thirteen minutes left when racing resumed. At the restart Sato withstood an attack from Shlom in 2nd place whilst Cunati was passed by Artem who fought his way through to 2nd place as the race progressed. With four laps to go he was right on Sato's tail but the Japanese driver defended faultlessly, bravely holding his line as Artem tried everything to steal his win. Sato held on and took the chequered flag in first place to claim the first F4 victory of his career. Cunati passed Shlom with two laps to go and finished 4th overall, 3rd of the rookies. His brace of podiums at Imola has re-ignited his Championship hopes and he now sits just a handful of points behind Vips in the rookie classification. Conwright finished in 13th place and scored rookie points once again.

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Conwright scored rookie points in race two and three (photo by Photo 4)

The Italian F4 Championship will conclude with an exciting triple-header race weekend at Monza at the end of October.



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