

News

Päivärinta and Christie close in on 2026 FIM Sidecar World Championship lead in Croatia

Publish Date

05/11/2026



Podium at 2026 FIM Sidecar World Championship – Grobnik-Rijeka in Croatia © Mark Walters

With a perfect two wins from two starts, the Finnish/British pairing of Pekka Päivärinta (ARS Yamaha) and Adam Christie closed to within four points of the series lead when round two of the 2026 FIM Sidecar World Championship was staged over the weekend at Grobnik-Rijeka in Croatia.

Returning to the **Automotodrom Grobnik for the first time since 2022**, hot sun ensured conditions were challenging for **Saturday's eleven-lap Sprint race and while it was cooler for the eighteen-lap Main race the following day**, at the front of the field the pace remained scorching throughout the weekend.

Former champions **Harrison Payne (ARS Yamaha)** and **Kevin Rousseau** drew first blood when they topped Qualification ahead of Päivärinta/Christie and defending champions Sam and **Thomas Christie (LCR Yamaha)**, but with almost identical times there was hardly anything separating the leading three crews.

Powering **across the track from pole position to get the best possible line** into the first corner at the start of the Sprint race, the British/French pairing of Payne/Rousseau led Päivärinta/Christie and the Christie brothers into turn two and from here the top three positions remained unchanged for the first half of the race, although the **British brothers did make a number of attempts to move into second** with some brave late-braking manoeuvres.

Double winners at the opening round at Le Mans last month, Payne/Rousseau looked as though they were heading to a third consecutive win, but Päivärinta/Christie began to reel them in and with the clock ticking down the veteran Finn – a five-time **FIM Sidecar Rider World Champion and official FIM 'Legend'** – out-braked the leaders into the long left-hand corner before the start straight.

Once at the front, **Päivärinta/Christie immediately began to check out and won** by just over four-and-a-half seconds from Payne/Rousseau with the **Christie brothers almost another eight seconds further back**.

Following an earlier battle with **Tim Reeves (ARS Yamaha)** and **Mélanie Farnier** that ended when the British/French pairing appeared to partially lose power, Swiss star **Markus Schlosser (LCR Yamaha)** and his German passenger Lucas Krieg made a late pass on the French son and father team of **Ted and Vincent Peugeot (LCR Yamaha)** for fourth with **Todd Ellis (ARS Yamaha)** and **Emmanuelle Clément** close behind in sixth.

In a repeat of the Sprint race start the previous day, when the lights went out for the Main race it was 2024 champions Payne/Rousseau who led Päivärinta/Christie and the Christie brothers into the first turn, but this time around there was nothing to separate the **leading two crews who staged a race-long battle for supremacy**.

Looking **incredibly evenly matched, lap-after-lap the two crews hounded each other** with neither able to make a decisive move and when the chequered flag came out it was Päivärinta/Christie who took it by less than a second with the third-placed **Christie brothers almost twenty seconds adrift of the winners' pace**.

Following a war of attrition that saw a **number of teams withdraw with mechanical issues**, including Peugeot/Peugeot who pulled out while fourth and Reeves/Farnier – who nursed their outfit to seventh in the opening race – who managed just three laps, Schlosser/Krieg crossed the line in fourth chased by two-time champions Ellis/Clément and the Dutch pairing of **Bennie Streuer (ARS Yamaha)** and **Manon Vissenberg**.

The focus now shifts to Pau-Arnos in France for round three of the six-round series on 19-21 June.

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[RACE TWO RESULTS](#)

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