

American airshow star Melissa Burns races from Florida as Japan's Yoshihide Muroya claims Race 2 and the series lead

In the semifinal, Muroya beats long-time rival Martin Sonka; in the final, he holds off 2025 champion Patrick Davidson in a head-to-head duel.

JAPAN, July 22, 2026 /

EINPresswire.com/ -- Race 2 of the AIR RACE X 2026 series took place on Sunday, July 19, and from qualifying through to the final race not a moment allowed anyone to look away. Four storylines collided – the breakout star of the season opener, last year's series champion, and two long-time rivals. The pilot who came out on top was Japan's Yoshihide Muroya (LEXUS PATHFINDER AIR RACING), fighting back after a third-place finish in Race 1.

Race 2 also marked a milestone for American fans, Melissa Burns, the first American pilot to join the series, flew her races from Keystone Heights Airport in Florida, one of four pilots now racing in the US. (full story below).



RACE 2 ©AIR RACE X



RACE2 Top3 ©AIR RACE X

□ Watch Race 2 in full on the official YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/@AIRRACEX>).

Qualifying | a result that hinted at the upsets to come

Muroya topped qualifying, followed by Race 1's breakout winner Aarron Deliu (Australia) and European powerhouse Martin Sonka (Czech Republic). With Deliu looking to carry his opening-race momentum into the series standings, and 2025 champion Patrick Davidson eager for

redemption, both pilots were already inside the top tier heading into the final race, a result that raised expectations even further.

Semifinals | a champion’s resolve, and a long-awaited rematch
Semifinal A: Patrick Davidson vs. Aaron Deliu

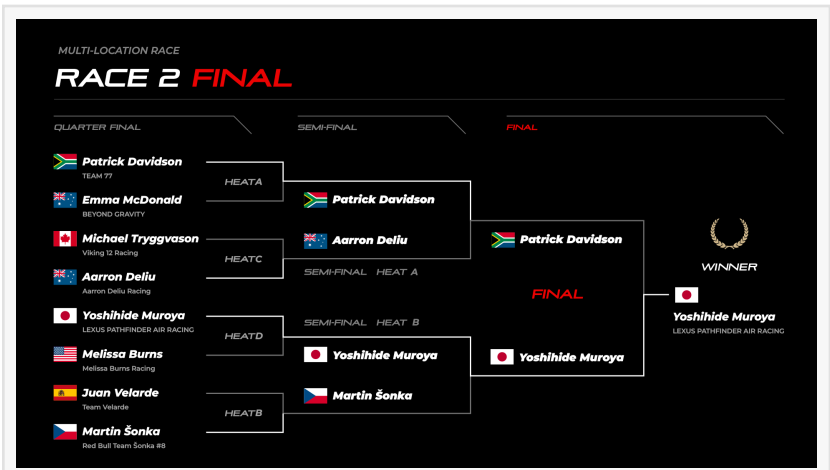
Reigning 2025 champion Davidson faced Deliu, who had just taken his first win in the season opener in only his second year in AIR RACE X. Still smarting from a fourth-place finish after losing the Race 1 third-place match to Muroya, Davidson brought the full weight of his experience to bear and advanced to the final - a result that showed exactly why he’s the reigning champion.

Semifinal B: Yoshihide Muroya vs. Martin Sonka

Semifinal B was personal, Sonka, who finished second in the Race 1 has raced Muroya since their former Red Bull Air Race days, and their head-to-heads have always drawn attention. After a back-and-forth battle that gave no ground, Muroya came out on top by the narrowest of margins - beating his old rival.

Third-place match | Sonka vs Deliu
Deliu and Sonka met in the third-place match. The rematch between Race 1’s two breakout stars stayed tight to the very end. Drawing on his former Red Bull Air Race experience Sonka flew a composed run to take third. Deliu finished fourth, the result confirmed that in just his second season, he’s already one of the series’ key players.

Final | Muroya wins



RACE2 result1 ©AIR RACE X

CHAMPIONSHIP POINTS STANDINGS									
RANK	PILOT NAME	#	TEAM	RACE 1	RACE 2	RACE 3	RACE 4	TOTAL	
1 st	Yoshihide Muroya	31	LEXUS PATHFINDER AIR RACING	15 pt + 5 Qpt	25 pt + 8 Qpt			53 pt	
2 nd	Aaron Deliu	7	Aaron Deliu Racing	25 pt + 3 Qpt	12 pt + 5 Qpt			45 pt	
3 rd	Martin Sonka	8	Red Bull Team Sonka #8	18 pt + 8 Qpt	15 pt			41 pt	
4 th	Patrick Davidson	77	Team 77	12 pt	18 pt + 3 Qpt			33 pt	
5 th	Emma McDonald	86	BEYOND GRAVITY	10 pt	10 pt			20 pt	
6 th	Juan Velarde	26	Team Velarde	8 pt	8 pt			16 pt	
7 th	Michael Tryggvason	12	Viking 12 Racing	6 pt	4 pt			10 pt	
8 th	Melissa Burns	22	Melissa Burns Racing	4 pt	6 pt			10 pt	

Rave2 result2 ©AIR RACE X



American star Melissa Burns ©AIR RACE X

The final pitted 2025 series champion Davidson against on form Muroya, who led throughout the race and despite a one-second smoke penalty held on to win. It capped a remarkable turnaround from his third-place finish in the Race 1 and delivered him the Race 2 title.

Top 3 pilot comments

1st | Yoshihide Muroya (Japan)

After the disappointment of finishing third in the opener, I went back to basics with my tactician and rebuilt my flying from the ground up. I think what made the difference this time was really honing my gate entry angles, how I build my turns, and a new turning technique we brought in.

The final came down to the wire right to the end, all the work the team has put in paid off, and we were able to turn it into a win. That said, the series is still long. I'm not going to be satisfied with one win - we'll keep sharpening our precision and preparing to deliver a stable performance.

2nd | Patrick Davidson (South Africa)

Race two for me was quite a tricky one. We were fast, but we weren't consistent. The track itself was also quite difficult, so race one and two for me was quite demanding. There were a lot of hard Big G turns. The smallest margin pushed the times out drastically. So to get it so consistent all the time was, for me anyway, was virtually impossible.

I think we did well to stay so close to Yoshi. I can only hope that we can maintain the momentum going forward.

3rd | Martin Sonka (Czech Republic)

I felt good because this time we were lucky with the weather.

We had more or less calm winds with just a slight headwind for the track entry which makes a big difference to the race.

We were not that happy or lucky with the other races.

The first American pilot in the series

Race 2 also carried a milestone for American fans, Melissa Burns (Melissa Burns Racing, #22) is the first American pilot to join AIR RACE X, flying her race from Keystone Heights Airport in Florida. She is one of four pilots now racing in the US, alongside Canadian Mike Tryggvason and Australians Aarron Deliu and Emma McDonald.

Burns comes to racing after more than 20 years as one of America's best-known airshow pilots, performing on six continents in her Edge 540. In 2006, at 22, she became the youngest female

pilot ever selected for the United States Unlimited Aerobatic Team. She competed at the Unlimited world level for ten years, took third place at the 2015 World Aerobatic Championships, and in the same year won the women's world title in wingsuit racing. For Burns, racing has been a long-held ambition, and AIR RACE X is where she gets to pursue it.

In Race 2 she qualified eighth and drew the eventual winner, Muroya, in the quarterfinals. Her run was penalty-free, and while it was not enough to advance, her pace through the opening gates showed her natural style that made her name in airshows. Adapting that style to air racing is her challenge for the season, she finished race 2 seventh, one place up on her result from the opener.

“Through airshows, I've always encouraged people to chase their dreams. AIR RACE X is where I get to live that message myself.” – Melissa Burns

AIR RACE X series championship wide open

- 1st: Yoshihide Muroya – moves to the top of the series championship board from third in the opener
- 2nd: Aarron Deliu - the second-year breakout star keeps his opening-race momentum going
- 3rd: Martin Sonka - the former Red Bull Air Race pilot with experience to match
- 4th: Patrick Davidson - AIR RACE X 2025 champion, unable to build on his fourth-place opener

The order has shifted dramatically since the end of Race 1, and the season is shaping up to be a battle with several contenders. A rising star's breakthrough, a former champion's comeback bid, and a long-standing rivalry renewed - Race 2 turned out to be essential viewing. Eight points separate first and second in the series standings, Race 3 is pivotal.

Race 3 of the 2026 series streams Sunday, August 16, at 21:00 JST (8:00 a.m. EDT / 5:00 a.m. PDT) on the official AIR RACE X YouTube channel. (<https://www.youtube.com/@AIRRACEX>).

About AIR RACE X

AIR RACE X is the pinnacle of air racing – races flown live at locations around the world and brought together as a single global championship. Eight of the world's elite pilots fly an identical racetrack from their home base, every run measured to the thousandth of a second using AIR RACE X technology. In 2026 the races run simultaneously at locations around the world – a distributed format that reduces the environmental impact of shipping aircraft from venue to venue, letting pilots' race live from home, sustainably.

Redefining what's possible. Inspiring the next generation. AIR RACE X is the future of motorsport

Official site & social

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For interviews and for photography and video materials, please contact the address above. Melissa Burns is available for interviews in English. Images & materials: Google Drive folder (<https://x.gd/4v1nD>)

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