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## **2004 USA Formula Renault 2000 Winter Invitational Homestead-Miami Speedway Report**

Lebanese Formula Renault 2000 pilot Basil Shaaban, driving with CT Motorsport and sponsored by BRICC, media partner Beirut Times and internet and graphics designer Harb Designs, has just completed the final three rounds of the 2004 Formula Renault 2000 USA Winter Championship. Held over five days at the Homestead-Miami Speedway in Florida with races on the 14th, 15th and 17th of February, the event proved to be a demonstration of how rough formula racing can be.

While Basil enjoyed adapting to the car's various grip, handling, and engine problems, his luck in the races was tough. In the first race on the 14th, a section of the car's aerodynamic underbody failed, sending the car permanently off the circuit into the gravel-trap on lap 2 in a 190 km/h (120 mph) corner. In the race on the 15th, on the first lap a fellow competitor crashed into the back of Basil's car under braking, inflicting terminal damage to Basil's left-rear suspension. In the third and final race, Basil's engine began overheating five laps from the finish, forcing the third race retirement for the Lebanese talent.

In the face of such adversity Basil maintains his optimistic outlook: "After our mechanical troubles in the first two races at Sebring last month, we were hoping to have better mechanical luck at Homestead and show our potential. Yet racing can be this difficult and by remaining positive, life can still teach from the least desirable of outcomes. Even though we didn't finish any of the three races, and were strangely off the pace the entire weekend, the event was a lot of fun and held many valuable lessons to be learned. The team did an amazing job of replacing engines and repairing the race damages. I am thankful for such trying moments and would also like to thank my sponsors for such fantastic experiences."

Ex-Formula One driver and Formula 3 champion Tommy Byrne has been coaching Basil and rates the karting champion highly: "Basil is a natural and talented driver. His speed, aggression, ability to learn new circuits quickly and his bravery show that the lad has all the necessary qualities for success. He should prove this as he gains more experience in formula cars."

Basil is scheduled to test with a top team in England second week of March for a drive in the 2004 UK Formula Renault Championship. After his test he will be returning to the Middle East to secure sponsoring partnerships with companies interested in capitalizing on this exciting development in Arab motorsport.