



### **BASIL SHAABAN TOP-FIVE DEBUT IN BRITISH F3 INTERNATIONAL SERIES AT FAMED SPA CIRCUIT**

Basil Shaaban, A1 Team Lebanon driver, competed in his first British F3 races at Spa Francorchamps this weekend and enjoyed the challenges of the famed Belgian circuit in the sixth round of the championship. Shaaban showed his strong intentions by finishing both races within the top-five of the National Class, impressing on his debut while gaining valuable race experience during the summer season break from A1 Grand Prix.

In the two qualifying sessions Shaaban used the time to develop the setup of the car for the Spa circuit and continue to improve his lap times over the course of the sessions, netting 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> place National Class starting positions for the two races. He was pleased with his progress saying, "I was satisfied with our lap times in my first British F3 qualifying sessions. In first qualifying I was doing a low fuel run on new tires for the first time and learning the handling of our F3 car in qualifying trim. In the second qualifying session I was looking to improve on our earlier times and we did this, getting within one percent of the Class pole-position time set by the National Class championship leader. As this is my first British F3 race weekend against guys in at least their sixth event, these qualifying sessions were good beginnings for my preparations to hopefully compete in a full F3 championship in 2007."

The track conditions for the first race lived up to the circuit's challenging reputation with the high elevation sections wet and the lower areas dry, making tyre choice very difficult. On the warm up lap the drivers assessed the conditions and Shaaban, along with around half of the grid, opted to change to wet tyres and start the race from the pitlane. The mix of dry and wet track challenged the

drivers and Shaaban raced conservatively for the first part of the race to preserve the soft wet tyres. When the expected rainstorm arrived midway through the race, Shaaban began gaining ground and overtook several cars on the way to his respectable 4<sup>th</sup> place debut finish within the National Class. Shaaban was fighting to finish within the National Class top-three, but was still happy with the result of his first British F3 race.

The weather had changed for the second race the next morning with dry, sunny conditions. Shaaban did not get the best start and lost a few positions in only his second-ever F3 standing-start. When the race settled, Shaaban spent several exciting laps fighting off a race rival behind him who was driving a faster, Championship Class car. Unfortunately, while attempting in vain to get past Shaaban approaching the famous Eau Rouge corner, the rival made contact and damaged the rear of Shaaban's car. This left the Lebanese driver with an unbalanced car which he was still able to bring across the finish line in 5<sup>th</sup> place within the F3 National Class.

Shaaban said after the races, "Overall, it was a very challenging and exciting weekend for my first British F3 races, particularly at one of the most difficult circuits in the world. Racing in both the wet and the dry gave me conditions with this car which I hadn't yet experienced, adding a lot of fun and emotion to this early part of my learning curve for which I have my sponsor BRICC to thank. My attentions are now turned to the Silverstone races, when we'll be looking to taking the performance level up another notch. On a personal note I must express that my feelings go out to the courageous citizens of my country for the events occurring now in Lebanon."

ART Sport will be broadcasting in the Middle East the highlights of Shaaban's exciting first British F3 races at Spa Francorchamps. The British F3 International Series returns to track action in two weeks time, racing at Silverstone Circuit in Northamptonshire, England.

Ends.