

A1 TEAM LEBANON EXPERIENCES AN EXCITING A1GP SEASON OPENER

The new season of A1GP opened with a dramatic, hectic race in Zandvoort, Holland. The main race featured five different leaders, changing weather conditions which saw teams changing from dry tyres to wet and back to dry, and numerous drivers sliding around the track to cope with the challenging Dutch circuit. Shaaban and A1 Team Lebanon also faced gearbox problems at the beginning of the weekend, which put back the team's progress and made the races an even more exciting challenge.

The action kicked off with the 20 minute Sprint race this morning. A1 Team Lebanon gridded in 19th place and at the green flag for the rolling start left the line well, maintaining track position. In the scramble through the first few corners Shaaban tangled with the Italian car, but was able to continue. At the end of the opening lap the Lebanese driver had been able to make up ground and lie 16th. Over the course of the 12 lap race Shaaban was challenged by the Czech car behind him, but he defended his position and held off the European rival until the chequered flag.

A new grid position formulation for A1GP determines grid position by an amalgamation of points awarded for Sprint race start, Sprint race finish and fastest lap times. This system resulted in A1 Team Lebanon starting in 17th position for the main Feature race.

The Feature race in A1GP has a standing start format, and Shaaban got away cleanly off the line and fought hard, gradually climbing his way up to twelfth, before pitting for the first time, for his mandatory stop, staying on dry tyres. Unfortunately the weather turned a few laps later, with heavy rain making conditions on slick tyres treacherous and, like all the teams except for USA, the Lebanese driver had to make an unscheduled stop to change to wet tyres. As Lebanon started to change tyres, the Indonesian car mistakenly slid into the Lebanon pit box, tipping over a crew member, who luckily was unhurt in the incident.

Returning to the race Shaaban was experiencing the track in the wet, but like so many drivers was caught out on the slippery turn one, locking wheels and sliding off line and into the gravel. This resulted in an early retirement for Team Lebanon on lap 15.

Shaaban said, "The conditions out on the track were very difficult. It's a highly competitive field and right from the green flag we were racing hard. I successfully fended off the persistent challenges of the Czech Republic in the Sprint race and went the distance. The feature race was much tougher. The weather was changing all the time, and varied at different points on the circuit, so the track grip levels were very variable. The slippery track caught me out and ended my race, but I gained so much valuable racing experience with this car, at one of the most technical, physical tracks on the A1GP calendar. With the technical problems we had at the beginning of the weekend, I am looking forward to having a trouble-free chance to show what I'm capable of the next time I race for Lebanon."

Tameem Auchi, Seatholder, A1 Team Lebanon added, "This first weekend of A1GP racing in the second season was one of the most frenetic and demanding that I've experienced. Basil coped well and was unlucky to be caught out in the Feature race. A1GP is very competitive and unpredictable; these opening races certainly lived up to this reputation."

The A1GP World Cup of Motorsport will be back out racing in less than a week with the Series moving to Eastern Europe for the second round of competition. Brno in the Czech Republic will host the A1GP teams, the first visit of the Series to this country.

Ends.