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HOCKENHEIM SETS SHAABAN DEMANDING TEST ON F3 SERIES DEBUT

Basil gives new Shell-backed car competitive debut at famous German circuit steeped in motor sport history

Hockenheim, Germany, 19th April, 2007: Basil Shabaan's mission to become the first Arab driver in Formula One racing begins in earnest tomorrow (Friday) on a circuit steeped in motor sport history and presenting a stern challenge on his debut in the Formula 3 Euro Series.

Shaaban makes his first competitive appearance in his Shell-sponsored Dallara-Mercedes-Benz in the opening round of the world's most competitive Formula 3 championship at Hockenheim, Germany, this weekend.

"This is a tremendously exciting new chapter in my career, and while I have a huge challenge ahead of me I'm very optimistic about the future," he said.

"I'm competing against drivers who have three and four years of experience in this series, which gives them a big advantage. But I'll be looking to use the first few races to establish myself before increasing my challenge as the season progresses."

Boosted by the two-year sponsorship agreement he signed with Shell earlier this week, Shaaban gets his first experience of the famous Hockenheimring during a one hour free practice session tomorrow (Friday) morning.

He then lines up the 30-minute afternoon qualifying session ahead of the two races to follow, both of approximately 110 km, with a maximum 40 minutes duration, on Saturday and Sunday.

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Shaaban, born in Beirut and raised in Abu Dhabi, often dreamt of being a Formula One driver while growing up in the UAE capital.

He was in Abu Dhabi in February for the announcement that the city is to host a Formula One Grand Prix from 2009. Two months on has seen his dream move closer to reality with the arrival of a major global brand and current Ferrari F1 sponsor to propel him on his intended path to the pinnacle of world motorsport.

Originally built in 1932, the Hockenheimring was redesigned for the 2002 German Grand Prix by Hermann Tilke, who has designed the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix track.

“I’m beginning the season on a very challenging circuit, and it would be nice to think that this could be the start of a journey that will eventually lead me to a place in the F1 starting line-up in Abu Dhabi,” said Shaaban.

“But while that’s the ultimate goal, I’m only thinking about the F3 Euro Series at present, and my immediate focus is on getting the most I can out of the practice session tomorrow to prepare me for qualifying and the two races over the weekend.”

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