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SHAABAN TRACES HAMILTON'S PATH TOWARDS BRANDS HATCH

Arab driver heads for Magny-Cours to link up with coach who guided new Formula One sensation

Dubai, UAE, 23rd April, 2007: Basil Shaaban will be following in the footsteps of new Formula One sensation Lewis Hamilton when he heads for France next week to prepare for his next event in the Formula 3 Euro Series.

Shell-sponsored Shaaban will have two valuable days of testing at Magny-Cours under the scrutiny of specialist instructor Marc Hynes in readiness for round two of the 2007 Formula 3 Euro Series at Brands Hatch in England on 9-10 June.

Hynes worked with Hamilton for four years, helping the British driver to develop the skills which saw him capture the F3 Euro Series crown in 2005 and win the GP2 Series the following year before taking Formula One by storm this season.

"I'm looking forward to working with Marc this year," said Shaaban. "At Magny-Cours we'll be fine tuning everything to help me increase my pace. He's a former F3 champion and has a huge amount of advice to pass on to me. I'll also be getting a lot of valuable experience on the Magny-Cours circuit, which is one of the most technical, and that will help me prepare me for the fourth round of the series there later."

By comparison, Shaaban had never seen the Hockenheim circuit before arriving there last Friday morning for his F3 debut in his Shell-sponsored Dallara-Mercedes-Benz.

Recording a fastest lap within 1.2 seconds of first race winner Sebastien Buemi, and outpacing his more experienced Russian team-mate Sergey Afanasiev, Shaaban had race finishes of 18th and 19th after being hindered by braking problems.

Shaaban 2

“The problems started in the back end of the car during qualifying,” he said. “The brakes were locking prematurely, and when that happens you can lose two or three tenths of a second in the strong braking zones.

“The problem compromised my race weekend, but overall it was a positive exercise in my development. All weekend I was improving, and my new team were very happy with my pace in my first event. They believe I could be a top ten contender by the end of the season, which will give us a lot to build on for next year.”

Shaaban, Born in Beirut and raised in Abu Dhabi, added: “The second race was only my fifth day in the car. Over the next six weeks before we go to Brands Hatch I’m going to do everything I can to make up for the testing I’ve missed. I need to work on my starts, and find a balance between aggression and reliability.”

Meanwhile, his Austrian-based HBR team have traced last weekend’s problems to a bad set of brake pads, and they are now carrying out intensive work to fine-tune his Shell-sponsored Dallara-Mercedes-Benz.

Fomula 3 Euro Series, leading positions after 1st of ten rounds:

1. Sebastien Buemi (SUI) 15pts;
2. Romain Grosjean (FRA) 10pts
3. Nico Hülkenberg (GER) 8pts
4. Franck Mailleux (FRA) 7pts
5. Yelmer Buurman (NED) 6pts
6. Jean Karl Vernay (FRA) 5pts
7. Renger van der Zande (NED) 5pts
8. Edoardo Mortara (ITA) 3pts
9. James Jakes (GBR) 2pts

Ends