

For further press information please contact

Tony Lewis / Ahmad Huzayen

Total Communications

Tel: + 971 4 336 9909 Fax: + 971 4 336 9905

Email: tony@totalcompr.ae / ahmad@totalcompr.ae

SHAABAN RELISHING DUTCH OUTING AFTER PASSING SEVERE ITALIAN TEST



Basil Shaaban is eager to get back behind the wheel of his Shell Dallara-Mercedes-Benz in Holland.

Arab driver overcame food poisoning, punctures and first corner pile-up at Mugello to win team's respect

Dubai, UAE, 20 July, 2007: After surviving a major test of character in Italy with flying colours, Basil Shaaban is relishing a return to action in the F3 Euro Series in Holland next week.

The Arab driver emerged with great credit from a bizarre spate of misfortunes at Mugello last weekend and is in high spirits as he takes his Shell Dallara-Mercedes-Benz towards the 11th and 12th races of the 2007 series at Zandvoort on 28-29 July.

Shaaban could have been excused for feeling that the motor racing demons had singled him out for special treatment in Italy where he suffered punctures both in official practice and then in qualifying.

The double setback destroyed his chances of setting a competitive time, dropping him to the back of the grid. By the time he started race one the following day he was suffering from a severe bout of food poisoning which almost sent him to hospital.

After shrugging off the illness and battling bravely from 23rd at the start to an 18th place finish, his race two challenge the following day was ended by a multi-car pile-up at the first corner.

Shaaban, however, emerged from the trail of bad luck to receive high praise from his Austrian-based HBR Motorsport team for refusing to give in to adversity.

.

Shaaban 2

In the Thursday test session he was 19th fastest out of 23 cars, and before the first puncture in qualifying the next day he had climbed to 13th place.

“The two punctures really knocked me back, but even then I was feeling positive because my pace had been good, and it was a real blow to go down with food poisoning,” said Shaaban, who was born in Beirut and raised in Abu Dhabi

“Two of our mechanics who also had the same seafood meal were also very ill, and my two team-mates, Filip Salaquarda and Sergey Afanasiev, suffered as well. At one point I wasn’t sure that I could start the first race, but I decided to give it a shot. I was still sick, but started to feel better as the race went on, and was setting lap-times less than a second off the podium finishers and was pulling away from the cars behind me for the first time this season.”

Shaaban's feedback helped the team's engineers isolate a mechanical problem and improve the performance of the three cars throughout the weekend. He said: "The chief engineer was very happy with my input, and the team believes my technical feedback is something that will be a growing asset as I gain more experience."

"Despite all the problems at Mugello I got some key mileage under my belt on a difficult, technical circuit and it has made me stronger. I now have to focus on Zandvoort and keep the momentum going."

Ends