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SHAABAN READY TO STEP UP AFTER TOUGH F3 START



Basil Shaaban takes his Shell Dallara-Mercedes-Benz back into F3 Euro Series action in Spain at the weekend.

Arab driver is coming to terms with F3 Euro Series as Spanish test beckons

Dubai, UAE, 19th September, 2007: Basil Shaaban approaches a big Spanish test in the F3 Euro Series at the weekend believing he is ready to take the next step up after successfully negotiating one of the most difficult chapters in his career.

With seven out of ten double race meetings behind him, Shaaban is coming to terms with the demands of the world's toughest F3 championship as he prepares to take his Shell Dallara-Mercedes-Benz back into action at Barcelona's demanding Circuit de Catalunya.

He has faced a major disadvantage this season, which he began without the benefit of extensive testing and no previous time behind the wheel of an F3 car.

“Only now am I starting to be at one with my car, and beginning to understand how it needs to be driven, and how it needs to be set up in order to go quicker,” said Shaaban.

“The fact that I didn’t have a winter test programme, and missed out on any meaningful testing before the season began, was a big disadvantage. Other drivers are in their second, third or even fourth year of F3 competition, so they are much further along the development curve than myself.

“While they’ve had full seasons of formula competition before entering F3, this is my first full season in a formula car. But I love this challenge, I’m making good progress and I’m confident I can now build on the solid foundations I’ve laid so far.”

Frenchman Romain Grosjean carries a six point lead over Sébastien Buemi onto the 2.9km Spanish Formula One Grand Prix circuit. The F3 Euro Series title is clearly a two-driver race, with Germany’s Nico Hülkenberg another 30 points away in third place.

Grosjean has five race wins to his credit this season compared with Buemi’s solitary victory, while the Swiss driver has secured 11 podium finishes compared with Grosjean’s nine.

Shaaban says: “Grosjean is a very complete driver. He’s quick in all conditions, seems to know what he wants from the car and seems to facilitate his team’s capacity to give the car the best characteristics for each circuit.

“He’s very aggressive and precise under racing conditions, and it’s no wonder that he’s the lead F3 driver in the Renault Driver Development programme, and is with what

seems to be the best F3 team in the world. If Grosjean avoids bad luck and mechanical problems, he should end up as champion.”

After free practice and qualifying on Friday, rounds 15 and 16 of the 20 round F3 Euro Series take place on Saturday and Sunday at the Circuit de Catalunya.

2007 F3 Euro Series, leading positions:

1. Romain Grosjean (FRA) 79pts
2. Sebastien Buemi (SUI) 73pts;
3. Nico Hülkenberg (GER) 43pts
4. Kamui Kobayashi (JAP) 41pts
5. James Jakes (GBR) 37pts
6. Franck Mailleux (FRA) 27pts
7. Yelmer Buurman (HOLL) 27pts
- 8 Jean Karl Vernay (FRA) 19pts

Ends