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SHAABAN EYES FRENCH CONNECTION TO TOP DRAWER



Basil Shaaban – eager for a return to action in France after a battling performance in Italy.

Arab driver in high spirits after gritty climb in Italy

Dubai, UAE, 6th May, 2008: Arab driver Basil Shaaban can't wait to tackle a new challenge in the F3 Euro Series later this month after producing one of the best performances of his career in Italy last weekend.

Shaaban heads for the French street circuit of Pau in high spirits after overcoming a major mechanical problem at Mugello to display the form which could make him a serious challenger in the world's toughest F3 championship.

Aiming for a top-ten breakthrough in the second stop on the 2008 F3 Euro Series, his hopes looked to have been destroyed when his Shell Dallara Mercedes was halted by rear suspension failure in practice.

It resulted in him qualifying at the back of the field in 29th position, but he fought his way to a 20th place finish in race one on Saturday and on Sunday climbed again to finish 14th with another impressive drive through the field.

“The finishing positions aren’t anything to shout about by themselves, but the places I gained after that disaster with the rear suspension was a good indication of the progress I’m making,” said Lebanese-born Shaaban, who was raised in Abu Dhabi.

“If I can make up so much ground after being dropped to the back of the field by a mechanical failure, I know I’m close to breaking into the top ten. From there I can start to push for points, and ultimately my first podium place.”

Shaaban 2

Shaaban showed determination to bounce back from his mechanical setback by overtaking four cars on the first corner in race one. He made similar early progress in race two and also fought off, and eventually pulled a gap on, German Christian Vietoris, who had been third fastest in qualifying following a second place at Hockenheim.

“It was easily my best race weekend in the series so far,” said Shaaban. “I gained a lot of confidence, and overall this was a breakthrough performance for me.”

“My pace throughout was very good in comparison to some of the quickest F3 drivers in the world, some of whom couldn’t catch me at various stages. This has reinforced my belief that I can compete with the best in F3, and I can’t wait to get to Pau to build again.”

Shaaban and his HBR Motorsport team learnt some valuable lessons at Mugello ahead of his first visit to the famous Pau Grand Prix circuit in southwestern France for the next F3 Euro Series weekend on 30th May-1st June.

“I used a different brake pad compound for the first time in the opening practice session and it was quite good so we kept it for the rest of the weekend,” said Shaaban. “Now I’m fairly sure I’ve found my brake system specification for the rest of the season.”

In final practice at Mugello one of the mounting points for rear-suspension failed under braking for turn one on his first flying lap, throwing his Shell Dallara Mercedes into the gravel. After losing the entire practice session, and with little time for repairs, Shaaban entered qualifying with the car handling erratically, and extensive overnight work by his mechanics was needed to correct the problems.

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