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SHAABAN AIMS TO SHOW HE'S A STREET FIGHTER



Basil Shaaban returns to action at the wheel of his Shell Dallara Mercedes in Pau after a four-week break for the F3 Euro Series.

Arab driver gets help from race simulator for tough F3 Euro Series test in France

Dubai, UAE, 28 May, 2008: Arab driver Basil Shaaban is hoping valuable time on a race simulator can help him pass a challenging test with flying colours when the 2008 F3 Euro Series resumes in France at the weekend.

After a four-week break, the championship arrives at the demanding Pau street circuit, which Shaaban tackles for the first time at the wheel of his Shell Dallara Mercedes in Friday's opening test session before the two-race European weekend.

“Pau is a unique street circuit which presents a special challenge, especially when you’ve never raced there before,” said Shaaban. “To help me in my learning-curve I’ve been playing a simulation-game on my laptop that includes Pau.

“While there’s no substitute for time on the actual track, the simulator has at least given me an idea of the racing line and the basic contours of the circuit. Pau poses an exciting challenge, and I’m just looking to enjoy every moment of it and to get the most out of myself.”

The Formula 3 lap record at Pau was set three years ago by a certain Lewis Hamilton, who underlined his liking for street circuits with victory in last weekend’s incident-packed Monaco Grand Prix.

“Like most street circuits, where it’s difficult to pass, your starting position can have a huge influence on your finishing result, so getting the most out of the car in qualifying will be crucial,” said Shaaban, who was born in Beirut and grew up in Abu Dhabi.

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“With the kerbs and walls so close to the track, I’ll need to maintain 100% concentration at all times, especially as we have only two 30-minute practice sessions before qualifying on Friday. I need every minute on the track that I can get.”

Shaaban is in a confident mood after battling back from a mechanical disaster at Mugello in Italy last month to show the tenacity which could make him a serious challenger in the world’s toughest F3 championship.

After rear suspension failure had dropped him to the back of the qualifying field in his Shell Dallara Mercedes, he rose from 29th starting position to finish 20th in race one and climbed again to fill 14th place in race two.



“For sure I’m feeling confident after Mugello,” said Shaaban. “I showed what I’m capable of, and what I need most is a trouble free weekend and the chance to take my best form into qualifying.

“As with any street-circuit, avoiding mistakes is crucial, as we saw in Monaco last weekend. Sigi Mueller, my team-manager and 1980 European Touring Car Champion, has told me that if I drive at 90% I will do well, because no-one has ever driven at 100% there.

“I want to find the limit, and drive the circuit without any level of fear, but at the same time I have to be wary of the tricky and bumpy nature of the track. The team has been doing development on the dampers on our car to cope with the bumps and heavy kerb-jumping we’ll be experiencing. We’ll also try a long-life brake pad as the circuit is relatively hard on brakes and I’ll need braking consistency until the last lap on Sunday.”

Ends