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## **SHAABAN RELISHES NEW TEST ON MASTERS LEARNING CURVE IN BELGIUM**



*Arab driver hopes podium visit at Spa is a sign of things to come*

Dubai, UAE, 7<sup>th</sup> August, 2008: What was good for Lewis Hamilton on his way to Formula 1 is being gratefully accepted by Basil Shaaban as another important part of his racing education in Belgium at the weekend.

Shaaban lines up his Shell Dallara Mercedes in the RTL GP Masters of Formula 3 at Zolder and will be looking to build on his first “podium finish” in last weekend’s British F3 championship meeting at Spa-Francorchamps

Placed second in the invitation class for race two at Spa, the Arab driver hopes Saturday’s entry in one of Europe’s premier International F3 races can help propel him to more meaningful appearances on race podiums in the near future.

“Drivers like David Coulthard, Juan Pablo Montoya, Ralf Schumacher, Rubens Barrichello, and Lewis Hamilton, have all tackled this race on their way to F1, and it’s another big challenge which I’m excited about,” said Shaaban.

“Obviously, F1 is where I want to go, and while that may seem a long way off at the moment you have to take these things one step at a time, and that’s exactly what I’m doing.”

“The visit to the podium at Spa last weekend meant very little in real terms, but the overall experience I gained from competing on another of Europe’s most demanding race circuits was invaluable, and something I’m taking a great deal from.”



*Basil Shaaban: excited about the challenge ahead in Belgium this weekend.*

Shaaban joins a line-up of top teams and drivers from the F3 Euro Series and the British Series going head-to-head at Zolder this weekend. The Masters event had to be moved there from Zandvoort in Holland last year because the use of unrestricted silencers in the race took noise levels above the local legal limit.

The Lebanese driver, raised in Abu Dhabi, know his chances of making some real noise at Zolder will depend on his ability to quickly adapt to the one-off specification Kumho tires he'll be driving on for the first time.

"I have never been to Zolder before, but we are the main event there this weekend so we will have two full hours of practice on Friday get to know the circuit, and I'm hoping to make the most of that," he said.

Saturday brings qualifying for a single one-hour race on Sunday afternoon, compared to the two 40 minute races that make up weekends on the F3 Euro Series, and Shaaban believes he is long overdue a trouble-free build-up.

His Shell Dallara Mercedes was plagued by handling problems at Spa as Shaaban and his team fought to get to grips with unfamiliar tires, and an engine cut-off problem added to his woes in qualifying.

Shaaban was forced to retire from race one after Angolan driver Ricardo Teixeira smashed into the side of his car, but he battled understeer problems in race two to climb from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 15th place at the finish. "Overall it was a good, challenging weekend," he said. "I learned some valuable driving and racing lessons, and the team now has some developments in the pipeline to improve the car overall."

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