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SHAABAN CLOSING THE GAP ON F3 PACE SETTERS



Brands Hatch speed shows Arab driver is making good progress in world's toughest F3 series

Dubai, UAE, 6th September, 2008: Basil Shaaban believes a battling display at Brands Hatch has proved that he is making great progress in the F3 Euro Series en route to his ultimate goal in motor racing.

While being disappointed with his results at the famous English circuit last weekend, Shaaban showed that he is continuing to close the gap on the quickest drivers in the world's toughest F3 series, and he can't wait for a return to action in Barcelona in a fortnight's time.

“I’d been looking forward to going back to Brands to see how much I had improved since last year, and it’s clear I’ve come a long, long way,” said the Lebanese driver, who was raised in Abu Dhabi.

“I’m able to run well within the pace now, and I’m making much fewer mistakes and able to hold a consistently quick race speed. This bodes well for the future, as I’m getting closer to the fastest drivers all the time, and the differences now lie in very small details.”

In free practice at Brands Hatch, Shaaban in the Shell Dallara Mercedes was just 0.6 seconds off the quickest lap time set by Dutch driver Renger van der Zande,

Hoping to build on that performance to clinch a good starting position, a vital requirement on a circuit where overtaking is notoriously difficult, his hopes were ruined in qualifying by handling problems which dropped him to back of the grid.



Basil Shaaban – closing the gap on the world’s top F3 drivers

Race one saw Shaaban make a great start as he homed in on German driver Jens Klingmann, but on lap ten he carried too much speed into a corner and slid wide into the gravel and was forced to retire. “Though I was losing front downforce running close behind Klingmann’s car, I was too eager and made a mistake.”

In race two, Shaaban had the pace to climb the 26-car field, but with the circuit's nature making overtaking a rare occurrence, in the end he had to settle for finishing where he had started, in 23rd spot.

“I now have to tighten up my consistency, be more precise in qualifying and the races,” said Shaaban, who wants to be ready to test and help develop a Formula One car by the time the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix is staged next year. “It’s not so much about trying to drive on the limit anymore. I’ve proved that I can do that.

“It now comes down to selecting the right on-limit approach for the corner, doing that across the full lap especially for qualifying, and adapting quickly in the races. The old saying in formula motorsport goes ‘The last second is the hardest one to find’ and I love that I’m now working in this window.”

Remaining rounds in the 2008 F3 Euro Series:

19-21 Sept - Circuit de Catalunya, Spain

3-5 Oct - Le Mans Bugatti Circuit, Italy,

24-26 October - Hockenheimring Baden-Württemberg, Germany

F3 Euro Series leading positions after 7 of 10 events:

1. Nico Hülkenberg (D) 61pts
2. Edoardo Mortara (I) 48pts
3. Renger van der Zande (NL) 37pts
4. Mika Mäki (FIN) 34pts
5. Franck Mailleux (F) 27pts
6. Jules Bianchi (F) 27pts
7. Yann Clairay (F) 26pts
8. Christian Vietoris (D) 25pts
8. Koudai Tsukakoshi (J) 24pts
10. Jean Karl Vernay (F) 23.5pts