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SHAABAN SAYS LE MANS CAN INSPIRE HIM



I'm getting better all the time and results will soon reflect that, says Arab driver

Dubai, UAE, 1st October, 2008: Basil Shaaban hopes the legendary appeal of Le Mans, one of the world's most famous motor racing venues, can inspire him to his best performance of the season in the F3 Euro Series at the weekend.

Greatly encouraged by his most recent outing in Barcelona, Shaaban has arrived in northern France to begin practice tomorrow (Thursday) morning for the penultimate leg of the world's toughest F3 championship, which concludes at Hockenheim, Germany, from 24-26 October.

Some time between the season's last two race weekends, the leading Arab circuit driver will find out the precise nature of the mechanical problem which, so far this season, has been hindering his attempts to break into the top ten.

After an eventful two days in Barcelona, where Shaaban's top race speed was up with the best, only to be undermined by car handling problems, his Austrian-based HBR Motorsport team packed up the differential of his Shell Shell Dallara Mercedes and dispatched it to the manufacturers.

“We've sent it for inspection because we think there might be something wrong with it which could be a major cause of the negative handling characteristics I've been experiencing with the car,” said the Lebanese driver, who was raised in Abu Dhabi.

“For the time being, I'm shutting all that out of my mind and giving Le Mans my total concentration. This is the first time I've been here and I'm really looking forward to the weekend.



Basil Shaaban – inspired by Le Mans after good signs in Barcelona

“We're on the Bugatti circuit, which includes the core of the circuit used for the famous 24-hour Le Mans endurance race, and it's such an atmospheric venue.

“This place is overflowing with motor racing history, and you feel part of that when you walk out here for the first time. It's an inspiring place to be, and I hope it will bring out the best in me this weekend.”

Shaaban, who aims to be ready to test a Formula One car before the end of next year, is already fit enough for the task, and was grateful for that in view of the hot conditions in Barcelona which made the drivers sweat hard in the cockpit.

In pre-event testing, hampered by significant oversteer in the corners, he finished the day in 20th position from 29 cars.

Video analysis of qualifying the next day showed that Shaaban was outbraking pole-sitter Nico Hulkenberg by over a car length into the hairpin, and still coming out of the corner ahead. With abnormal instability at various parts of the circuit affecting his lap times, he qualified down in 27th, still less than a second outside the top three.

It was a similar story in both races, with Shaaban finishing 22nd and 23rd. “I really drove well the whole weekend, so it’s disappointing that this was not reflected by the race results,” he said. “We have to analyse why my car was so off the pace, especially in the third sector of the circuit, and hopefully the differential investigation will supply an answer.”

”But every aspect of my driving and race craft continues to improve, and there’s more to come. It’s now more and more about focusing on the smallest details. Video analysis shows I’m closing up on the top drivers in terms of my speed and technique. I’m confident the results will start coming soon.”

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