

***FIA Middle Eastern Rally Championship 2008
Round 6 – Troodos Rally – 7-9 November 2008***

Strong Line-Up for 2008 FIA Troodos Rally

10 foreign crews and 35 Cypriot crews sign; Geroskipou welcomes region's rallying elite

With just days to go until the Cyprus Troodos Rally, the penultimate round of the 2008 FIA Middle East Rally Championship (MERC), the organizers are busy putting the final touches to what promises to be another exciting world-class event

Held from Friday (7th) till Sunday (9th), the 2008 Troodos Rally is round 6 of this year's MERC and the organizers, the Cyprus Automobile Association, have confirmed a top-notch field of international and local talent.

Entries have now closed and the crews are bound for the west coast of Cyprus, where the Troodos Rally will be held for the first time. The event, which will be based around the town of Geroskipou, near Pafos, has been dominated by Qatar's Nasser Al-Attiyah in recent years. He has won the last 5 consecutive events, and only needs to finish this weekend in 2nd-place to secure the 2008 Middle East Championship title.

But Al-Attiyah and Ulster co-driver Chris Patterson will have to push their Subaru Impreza hard to ensure victory as there are plenty of drivers from across the region looking to break that winning streak - Cypriot Nicos Thomas prominent among them. Thomas wrote himself into the history books at this year's Cyprus Rally where, at the age of 20, he became the youngest ever winner of a MERC event!

Al-Attiyah will also face tough competition from other top drivers from across the region, including Lebanon's Nick Georgiou (Mitsubishi Evo IX) – who currently sits 2nd on the Championship leaderboard with 25 points, and Misfer Al-Marri of Qatar (Subaru Impreza 2008) – currently 3rd with 22 points. Lebanon's Roger Feghali (Mitsubishi Evo IX) and Michel Saleh (Subaru Impreza) will also be in Cyprus at the weekend, tackling the island's challenging stages. Saudi Arabia's Yazeed Al-Rajhi will also be competing, as will Oman's Nizar Al-Shanfari, and Kuwait's Mshari Al-Thafiri.

The Cypriot rallying elite will be out in force, with Nick Thomas leading the way in his Mitsubishi Evo IX. Charalambos Timotheou – the winner of the 2007 Cyprus Rally – will also be competing in his Mitsubishi Evo VIII. Other Cypriot drivers lining up for their shot at the podium include Constantinos Tingirides, Andreas Tsouloftas, Savvas Savva, and Stavros Antoniou. After being away from the action for a number of years, Dimis Mavropulos – the winner of the 1990 Cyprus Rally - also returns this year, piloting a Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX with co-driver George Alexandrou.

This weekend's Troodos Rally will also be pivotal in terms of the Pirelli Star Driver competition. Pirelli is the official tyre supplier to the FIA World Rally Championship and its 'Star Driver' competition is a search for upcoming talent from the FIA Regional Championships – with the successful driver earning six World

Championship drives next season. Nick Georgiou's 2nd place finish at last month's Rally Jordan increased his advantage over Nick Thomas in the competition. Thomas will now be hoping to finish ahead of Georgiou and thus take the battle for the coveted WRC slots to the last MERC event of the season in Dubai.

The change of venue for this year's Troodos Rally to Geroskipou means that rally fans and competitors alike will get the chance to enjoy a world-class sporting event in the sunshine. They'll also get to take advantage of the many cafes, restaurants and other local attractions.

The Rally Headquarters will be situated at Geroskipou's prestigious Aliathon Hotel, as will the Service Park giving the public plenty of opportunity to see the competing crews and cars first hand. The Ceremonial Start of the event will take place on Friday at 8.30pm at Geroskipou's picturesque CTO Tourist Beach, with the rally proper getting underway on Saturday morning. The Ceremonial Finish will be held at Geroskipou's CTO Tourist Beach at 5pm on Sunday.

The main sponsor of the 2008 Troodos Rally is the Cyprus Tourism Organisation, with Cyta, the Geroskipou Municipality, Golden Telecom, Travelscope and Compusource as supporters.

For further information about this year's Troodos Rally, visit www.caa.com.cy or telephone the CAA on 22313233.

For further information about Geroskipou, visit www.geroskipou-municipality.com

2008 FIA Middle East Rally Championship Standings ahead of Troodos Rally

Pos	Drivers	QA	CY	SYR	RL	HKJ	Pts
1	Naser Saleh AL ATTIYAH	10	8	10	0	10	38
2	Nick GEORGIOU	0	6	3	8	8	25
3	Misfer AL MARRI	8	5	6	0	3	22
4	Nizar AL SHANFARI	3	4	5	3	6	21
5	Michel SALEH	4	3	0	4	5	16
6	Nicos THOMAS	0	10	4	1	0	15
7	Rojer FEGHALI	0	0	0	10	0	10
	= Abdullah AL QASSIMI	0	0	8	2	0	10
9	Salah BIN EIDAN	5	0	2	0	0	7
10	Khalifa Saleh AL ATTIYAH	6	0	0	0	0	6
	= Yazeed AL RAJHI	0	0	0	6	0	6
12	Suhail MAKTOUM	0	0	0	5	0	5
13	Faris BUSTAMI	0	0	0	0	4	4
14	Mazen TANTASH	0	0	0	0	2	2
	= Ahmad AL QUWARI	2	0	0	0	0	2
16	Faris HIJAZI	1	0	0	0	0	1
	= Meshari AL THAFIRI	0	0	1	0	0	1

- Ends -

**Stakis Christodoulou – 2008 Troodos Rally Press Officer
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