

## **PRESS OFFICE**

### **2008 FIA TROODOS RALLY**

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

#### **NASSER AL-ATTIYAH MAINTAINS LEAD IN 2008 FIA TROODOS RALLY**

*Al-Attiyah eyes Championship title; Feghali exits early on Day 2 after run of bad luck*

Qatar's Nasser Al-Attiyah maintained his overnight lead in this year's Troodos Rally up to lunchtime today.

The penultimate round of the 2008 FIA Middle East Rally Championship (MERC), this year's Troodos Rally has been as exciting as ever, with plenty of action and surprises.

Al-Attiyah has dominated the Cyprus event in recent years, and got off to a flying start here yesterday in his bid to clinch both his 6<sup>th</sup> consecutive Troodos win and the 2008 Middle East Championship title. If Al-Attiyah and his Ulster co-driver Chris Patterson can steer their Subaru Impreza to a top two finish here this afternoon, they will secure the 2008 Middle East title. It will also see Al-Attiyah enter the record books as the first driver ever to win 3 FIA Championships in the same year.

Al-Attiyah set an impressive pace from the off. He was fastest through 4 of Saturday's 6 special stages. Lebanon's Roger Feghali set fastest times through SS3 and SS4, undaunted by a wrist injury picked up early in the day. Feghali's luck would worsen in SS6 though when a collision ultimately forced him to restart under Superally this morning. Despite the setback, he remained upbeat at the Sunday start aiming for a 10th place finish to secure the Lebanese Championship. But it wasn't to be and mechanical failure ended Feghali's event after the first stage of the day.

The other battle drawing attention is the ongoing fight between Cypriot Nicos Thomas and Lebanon's Nick Georgiou in the Pirelli Star Driver competition. The ultimate winner of which will secure guaranteed World Rally Championship drives next year.

Georgiou started the Troodos Rally ahead in the Pirelli competition, but if Thomas can maintain his fast pace here this afternoon he will draw level with Georgiou and the competition will go to sudden death in the last round of the 2008 MERC in Dubai.

Any Cyprus event is challenging and this weekend's event has been no different. Of the 41 crews that started the event yesterday, 33 cars left the Service Park this morning. Retirements included the afore-mentioned Feghali, Saudi Arabia's Yazeed Al Rajhi, and Cypriots Stavros Antoniou and Andreas Tsouloftas.

Speaking at the start of Day 2, Al-Attiyah admitted to concerns about the overheating problems that showed up yesterday. As a result they were not planning to push hard. Cypriot Constantinos Tingirides held a 2<sup>nd</sup>-place position overnight and started today planning to maintain his current position. As for the Pirelli Star Driver battle, Nicos

Thomas' approach promised to be the "same as yesterday". Georgiou started the day planning to push a little more.

After an early start from the Service Park, the first driver entered SS7 (Anadiou) – the first of the day - at 07:58. Cypriot Paraskevas Paraskeva set the early pace in his Mitsubishi Evolution VII – flying through the stage. Fellow Cypriot Charalambos Timotheou was 2<sup>nd</sup> fastest, with Al-Attiyah close behind. Nicos Thomas was 4<sup>th</sup> fastest, and Nick Georgiou was maintaining the pressure in 6<sup>th</sup>. Qatar's Misfer Al-Mari managed 7<sup>th</sup> fastest in his Subaru, followed by Oman's Nizar Al Shanfari. Feghali came through the stage 11<sup>th</sup>.

SS8 (Stavros) once again saw a fastest drive from Paraskeva, while Al-Attiyah eased off the pace to prevent any recurrence of Saturday's overheating problems – 11<sup>th</sup> fastest through SS8. Nicos Thomas took advantage of Al-Attiyah's slip to push further up the field with a 2<sup>nd</sup> fastest time. Al Shanfari came through 3<sup>rd</sup> with Nick Georgiou and Al-Mari in joint 6th. The UAE's Suhail Al-Maktoum was behind Al-Attiyah in 12<sup>th</sup>.

Paraskeva continued to show outstanding form by taking SS9 (Foinokli), with Tingirides 2<sup>nd</sup> and Charalambos Timotheou 3<sup>rd</sup>. Thomas was 5<sup>th</sup>, just behind Al-Shanfari. Georgiou and Al-Mari once again came joint 6<sup>th</sup>.

Paraskeva stamped his seal on a terrific morning by flying through SS10 (Argaka). Thomas again picked up the pace to finish 2<sup>nd</sup> behind Paraskeva, with Timotheou 3<sup>rd</sup>. Demetris "Lillys" Pappasavvas came in 4<sup>th</sup> fastest, followed by Georgiou in 5<sup>th</sup> and Al Shanfari in 6<sup>th</sup>.

Round 6 of the 2008 MERC, the Troodos Rally has moved to the west coast of Cyprus this year and is based in the picturesque town of Geroskipou, near the resort of Pafos. The Ceremonial Finish will be held at Geroskipou's CTO Tourist Beach at 17:00 today.

The Rally Headquarters and Service Park are located at Geroskipou's Aliathon Hotel and the event is organized by the Cyprus Automobile Association (CAA). The main sponsor of the event 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](http://www.caa.com.cy) or telephone the CAA on 22313233. For further information about Geroskipou, visit [www.geroskipou-municipality.com](http://www.geroskipou-municipality.com)*

**- Ends -**

**Note to editors: an end of event round-up of the 2008 Troodos Rally and photos will be sent out later today.**

**Stakis Christodoulou – 2008 Troodos Rally Press Officer  
9 November 2008**