

## **PRESS OFFICE**

### **2008 FIA TROODOS RALLY**

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

#### **NASSER AL-ATTIYAH TAKES FIA MIDDLE EAST CROWN IN CYPRUS**

*Al-Attiyah secures Mid East Championship & record FIA triple; Thomas forces Pirelli Star Driver fight to Dubai*

Qatar's Nasser Al-Attiyah made history in Cyprus today with his 6<sup>th</sup> consecutive Troodos Rally win.

Al-Attiyah and Ulster co-driver Chris Patterson steered their Subaru Impreza to a historic win here that not only crowns Al-Attiyah 2008 Middle East Champion, but also sees him enter the record books as the first driver ever to win 3 FIA Championships in the same year. (Al-Attiyah has already won the FIA Cup for Cross Country Baja, and the FIA World Cup for Cross Country Rallies.)

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 got off to a flying start here yesterday and 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 and briefly took the overall rally lead, seemingly undaunted by a wrist injury picked up early in the day. But Feghali's luck worsened in SS6 when a collision 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.

Along with Al-Attiyah's battle to secure the Championship here, attention also focussed on the ongoing battle 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 Thomas maintained a fast pace throughout the event to draw level with Georgiou. The ongoing fight will now be decided in the last round of the 2008 MERC in Dubai.

Any rally in Cyprus 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.

While everyone's eyes were on the trio of Al-Attiyah, Thomas and Georgiou, it was Cypriot driver Paraskevas Paraskeva who dominated Day 2 in his Mitsubishi Evo VII – setting fastest times on all of the day's stages.

After an early start from the Service Park, the first driver entered SS7 (Anadiou) – the first of the day - at 07:58. Paraskeva set the early pace in his Mitsubishi – 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" Papasavvas came in 4<sup>th</sup> fastest, followed by Georgiou in 5<sup>th</sup> and Al Shanfari in 6<sup>th</sup>.

Crews headed back to Geroskipou Service, where the drivers seemed, for the most part, happy with their progress. Al-Attiyah planned to continue a steady drive, while Thomas was concentrating on the finish line. Georgiou was also enjoying himself and hoping to pick up the pace.

Paraskeva continued his blitz by taking SS11 (Anadiou), with Al-Attiyah 2<sup>nd</sup> fastest and Timotheou 3<sup>rd</sup>. Al-Shanfari, "Lillys" Papasavvas, and Al-Mari completed the top 6. Al-Shanfari upped his pace in SS12 (Stavros), finishing in 2<sup>nd</sup> - one place ahead of Al-Attiyah – but it wasn't enough to match Paraskeva who was on rampant form. Al-Mari managed 4<sup>th</sup> fastest.

SS13 (Foinokli) did nothing to break Paraskeva's good fortune – another fastest time! With Al-Attiyah easing off the throttle to a comfortable 5<sup>th</sup>, Al-Mari came through the stage 2<sup>nd</sup> fastest. Thomas and Al-Shanfari were 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> fastest respectively, with Georgiou 7<sup>th</sup>.

The last stage of the day and the event, SS14 (Argaka), went to Paraskeva. Timotheou came in 2<sup>nd</sup>, with Tingirides 3<sup>rd</sup> and Al-Mari 4<sup>th</sup>. Al-Attiyah will have no complaints with his 6<sup>th</sup> fastest time. Al-Shanfari was behind him in 7<sup>th</sup>. Nick Georgiou came

through 8<sup>th</sup> and Nick Thomas was off the pace with a 14<sup>th</sup> fastest time – but he had already done enough in terms of the Pirelli Star Driver competition.

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

The Rally Headquarters and Service Park were located at Geroskipou's Aliathon Hotel and the event was organized by the Cyprus Automobile Association (CAA). The main sponsor of the event was the Cyprus Tourism Organisation, with Cyta, the Geroskipou Municipality, Golden Telecom, Travelscope and Compusource as supporters.

### **2008 Troodos Rally – final positions after SS14 (Provisional)**

|                            |                     |           |
|----------------------------|---------------------|-----------|
| 1. Nasser Al-Attiyah       | Subaru Impreza 2008 | 4:29:05.3 |
| 2. Charalambos Timotheou   | Mitsubishi Evo IX   | 4:32:09.6 |
| 3. Constantinos Tingirides | Subaru Impreza N12  | 4:32:40.5 |
| 4. Paraskevas Paraskeva    | Mitsubishi Evo VII  | 4:32:51.1 |
| 5. Misfer Al Mari          | Subaru Impreza 2008 | 4:33:53.0 |
| 6. Nicos Thomas            | Mitsubishi Evo IX   | 4:34:00.3 |
| 7. Nizar Al Shanfari       | Subaru Impreza 2008 | 4:34:50.7 |
| 8. "Lillys"                | Subaru Impreza N12  | 4:34:54.6 |
| 9. Nick Georgiou           | Mitsubishi Evo IX   | 4:36:21.8 |
| 10. Savva Savvas           | Mitsubishi Evo VIII | 4:39:27.9 |

*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 –**

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