

***2009 Troodos Rally - Round 5 – 2009 FIA Middle East Rally Championship
9th-11th October 2009***

***BATTLE ROYAL EXPECTED AT 2009 FIA TROODOS RALLY
MERC leaders Al-Rajhi and Al-Marri brace for battle with event champ Al-Attiyah***

The 2009 FIA Middle East Rally Championship moves to Cyprus next weekend for the annual Troodos Rally, with current championship leader Yazeed Al-Rajhi of Saudi Arabia and 2nd-placed Misfer Al-Marri of Qatar set to face off against defending champion Nasser Al-Attiyah of Qatar – who currently sits 3rd in the championship, but has won this Cyprus event a staggering six times in a row.

Round 5 of this year's MERC, with Jordan and Dubai to follow, this year's Troodos Rally promises to be an exciting hit with motorsport fans as the battle for victory is likely to be intense. Al-Rajhi tops the leaderboard with a healthy 28 points, but with three events to go and Al-Marri and Al-Attiyah holding 21 and 20 points respectively, the season is still open.

The organizers have already confirmed a strong field of 35 competitors, with many of the region's top drivers lining up to do battle in the Cyprus sun, and while the temperatures may have cooled, the region's best drivers will be turning up the heat next weekend. Along with the lead 3, other international drivers tackling the challenging Cyprus stages will include Qatar's Khalid Al-Suwaidi, Qatar's Abdulaziz Al-Kuwari and Lebanon's Roger Feghali.

But they are unlikely to have it all their own way as top drivers from across Cyprus will also be gunning for victory on their home event.

Many eyes will be on young star Nicos Thomas, whose victory at last year's Cyprus Rally earned him a place in the history books as the youngest driver to ever win a MERC event. Named a Pirelli Star Driver after his successful season last year, Thomas has also competed a number of World Rally Championship events this season and arrives in Cyprus fresh from Spain's WRC event. On his home ground, in his own car, Thomas is sure to be a potential contender for victory in Cyprus, as is Constantinos Tingirides, who finished 3rd here last year.

Other Cypriot competitors likely to give strong performances here are Paraskevas Paraskeva, 'Lillys', and Savvas Savva – all of whom finished in the top ten here last year.

Adding to the excitement is the fact that any rallying event in Cyprus is a challenge, and the Troodos Rally is known as a tough event, with a high attrition rate. So not only will the drivers be battling the competition, they'll also be battling some of the world's most testing special stages in their bid for victory.

Speaking this week, Troodos Rally Clerk of the Course Nayia Kontopoulou said: "Fans are not only eager to see what effect the event will have on the championship, they're

also keen to see if anyone can break Al-Attiyah's Troodos Rally winning streak. With his exceptional form on this event in recent years, he's sure to be hungry to continue his run of success and to further his chances of retaining his title. But he won't have an easy time of it because we've got some great drivers this year. So we're all very excited and looking forward to an especially memorable event. These are difficult times economically, but we have a strong starting line-up and I'm sure the 2009 Troodos Rally will be a great success with both the fans and the drivers."

Following its successful move to the west coast of the island last year, the Troodos Rally will once again be based around the popular town of Geroskipou, located near the coastal resort of Pafos. The event will get underway with a major Ceremonial Start in Geroskipou's town square on the evening of Friday the 9th, followed by two days of competition. The event Headquarters, Press Office and Service Park will be located in and around Geroskipou's Riu Cypria Bay hotel.

The 2009 Troodos Rally is organised by the Cyprus Automobile Association (CAA) and supported by the Cyprus Tourism Organisation.

For further information about this year's Troodos Rally, visit www.caa.com.cy or telephone the CAA on (00357) 22313233. For further information about Geroskipou, visit www.geroskipou-municipality.com

2009 FIA MERC Drivers Standings Ahead Of 2009 Troodos Rally

Pos	Drivers	QA	KWT	YR	RL	Pts
1	Yazeed AL RAJHI (SA)	8	0	10	10	28
2	Misfer AL MARRI (QA)	5	8	8	0	21
3	Nasser AL ATTIYA (QA)	10	10	0	0	20
4	Mubarak AL HAJRI (QA)	1	0	6	6	13
	= Nick GEORGIOU (RL)	0	0	5	8	13
6	Khaled AL QASSIMI (UAE)	6	6	0	0	12
7	Mufeed MUBARAK (KWT)	0	5	2	1	8
	= Michel SALEH (RL)	0	0	4	4	8
	= Khalid AL SUWAIDI (QA)	0	0	3	5	8
10	Abdullah AL QASSIMI (UAE)	2	0	0	3	5
11	Rashid AL KETBI (UAE)	4	0	0	0	4
	= Meshal AL NEJADI (KWT)	0	4	0	0	4
13	Meshari AL THAFIRI (KWT)	0	3	0	0	3
	= Salah BIN EIDAN (KWT)	3	0	0	0	3
15	Jaber AL MARRI (QA)	0	2	0	0	2
	= Ammar HIJAZI (HKJ)	0	0	0	2	2
17	Faisal AL ATTIYA (QA)	0	1	0	0	1
	= Ahmad AL SABBAN (SA)	0	0	1	0	1

ENDS

2009 Troodos Rally Press Office
4th October 2009