

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

**DEFENDING MERC CHAMPION AL-ATTIYAH HOLDS LUNCHTIME LEAD  
ON DAY 2 OF 2009 FIA TROODOS RALLY**

**Lebanon's Roger Feghali loses overnight lead; current MERC Championship leader  
Al-Rajhi fails to secure any points**

At the half way point on Day 2 of the 2009 Troodos Rally – round 5 of the FIA Middle East Rally Championship, defending champion Nasser Al-Attiyah of Qatar holds a 26.7 seconds overall lead over Lebanon's Roger Feghali and looks set to secure maximum points.

After an assured drive through the challenging Cyprus stages yesterday, Lebanon's Roger Feghali and co-driver Nicola Arena held the overnight lead in their Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX and started Sunday with a 5.3 second lead over Al-Attiyah. But Al-Attiyah, competing in a Subaru Impreza N15 2009 alongside co-driver Giovanni Bernacchini of Italy, was determined from the off – stating at the Service Park this morning that he wasn't just looking for the points here today, he was looking for the win.

Al-Attiyah has made the Troodos Rally his own in recent years by taking six consecutive victories and he's clearly gunning for a 7<sup>th</sup>. And with current championship leader Yazeed Al-Rajhi of Saudi Arabia out of contention for the win after two offs in as many days, Al-Attiyah is looking to secure a healthy 10 points in his fight to retain the title.

With Al-Rajhi out of contention for the win from Day 1, all eyes turned to the battle for 1st place between Feghali and Al-Attiyah. The Qatari set about earning his 7<sup>th</sup> consecutive Troodos Rally win from the off, setting the fastest time through the first stage of the day (SS7 – Anadiou Dam) and taking the overall lead from Feghali, who managed 3<sup>rd</sup> fastest through the stage behind Thomas. Cypriots Constantinos Tingirides and Kyriacos Kyriacou were 4th and 5th fastest through SS7, while Al-Rajhi managed a respectable 6th fastest. Qatar's Misfer Al-Marri could only manage 9th fastest, behind Marinos Patroclou and "Lillys". Lebanon's Nick Georgiou battled problems throughout Day 1 and his weekend worsened early Sunday when he went out on the first stage of the day due to mechanical failure.

Feghali picked up the pace again for SS8 (Foinokli), but it wasn't enough to beat Al-Attiyah who stormed through the stage and extended his overall lead over Feghali to 12.3 seconds. Nicos Thomas came through 3rd fastest, and Al-Rajhi pulled up to an impressive 4th, followed by Tingirides, Pantelis Pamboukas and Petros Panteli. Al-Mari could only manage 8th.

Al-Attiyah maintained his onslaught to take the 16.57km SS9 (Argaka) 2.6 seconds ahead of Feghali, extending his overall lead to 14.9 seconds. Al-Rajhi's plans for a cautious drive to secure 5 points came to a swift end in the stage when he rolled his Peugeot 207

S2000 - opening the way for Al-Attiyah to take the championship lead. Nicos Thomas came through SS9 3rd fastest, followed by Tingirides, Savvas Savva, Lillys, and Al-Mari.

Al-Attiyah charged through the final stage of the morning – SS10 Stavros – in 20:32.7 seconds, extending his overall lead over Feghali to 26.7 seconds and ensuring a clean sweep of the day's stages so far. Thomas, Tingirides, and Savva were next fastest through the stage.

At the half way point in Day 2, Al-Attiyah holds the overall lead, followed by Feghali. Thomas sits 3rd.

Al-Attiyah entered the Troodos Rally 8 points behind Al-Rajhi (who arrived in Cyprus with 28 points) and in the build-up to the event, a tense battle had been expected between the two, but Al-Rajhi's hopes of a strong finish were cut short when he exited in dramatic fashion on the first stage yesterday. His Peugeot landed badly after a jump, left the road and ended up perilously close to a sharp drop. Al-Rajhi restarted the event this morning under Superally, hoping to salvage 5 points from the event, but despite claiming he was planning a steady drive, a roll on SS9 saw him exit the event without points.

Sunday morning saw 30 cars leave the Service Park and while the drivers admitted the stages were tough, there was an upbeat feel typical of the event. This afternoon will see crews head out for the last four stages of the event – SS11 (Anadiou Dam) at 13:15, SS12 (Foinokli) at 14:13, SS13 (Argaka) at 15:06, and finally SS14 (Stavros) at 15:59. Cars will return to the Service Park for final service at 17:04. The Finish ceremony and prizegiving will get underway at 17:30 at Geroskipou town square.

Saturday brought all the drama and excitement associated with an international rallying event in Cyprus. Al-Attiyah started the event on winning form yesterday, taking the first stage on Saturday. He also went on to take the first stage of the afternoon, SS6. Feghali fought hard, taking three of the day's stages to ensure an overnight lead. Young Cypriot star Nicos Thomas took the other stage of the day in his Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX. Saturday saw drivers tackle a total of 316.14km, including 111.84km of special stage action.

Following its successful move to the west coast of the island last year, the Troodos Rally is once again based around the popular town of Geroskipou. The event Headquarters, Press Office and Service Park are located in and around Geroskipou's Riu Cypria Maris 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](http://www.caa.com.cy) or telephone the CAA on (00357) 22313233. For further information about Geroskipou, visit [www.geroskipou-municipality.com](http://www.geroskipou-municipality.com)*

ENDS

**2009 Troodos Rally Press Office**  
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