

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

**AL-ATTIYAH SCORES 7<sup>TH</sup> TROODOS RALLY WIN TO TAKE MERC  
CHAMPIONSHIP LEAD**

***Al-Mari retains 2<sup>nd</sup> place in Championship; Al-Rajhi fails to score***

Defending Middle East Rally Champion Nasser Al-Attiyah of Qatar scored an important victory in Cyprus this weekend, winning the Troodos Rally and taking the Championship lead ahead of the final two rounds of the 2009 MERC in Jordan and Dubai.

Ahead of this year's Troodos Rally, Al-Attiyah sat 3<sup>rd</sup> on the leadership board - 8 points behind Yazeed Al-Rajhi of Saudi Arabia (who arrived in Cyprus with 28 points), and 1 point behind 2<sup>nd</sup>-placed Misfer Al-Marri of Qatar. Given Al-Attiyah's past form in Cyprus (his victory here today marks his 7<sup>th</sup> consecutive Troodos Rally win!), a tense battle had been expected between Al-Rajhi and Al-Attiyah. 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 207 S2000 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 points from the event, but a roll on SS9 saw him exit the event without points.

Al-Attiyah leaves Cyprus as MERC Championship leader with 30 points. Misfer Al-Mari retains 2<sup>nd</sup> place with 29 points, while Al-Rajhi drops to 3<sup>rd</sup> and remains on 28 points.

Saturday brought all the drama and excitement associated with an international rallying event in Cyprus. Al-Attiyah, competing in a Subaru Impreza N15 2009 alongside co-driver Giovanni Bernacchini of Italy, started the event on winning form, taking the first stage of the day, and went on to take the first stage of the afternoon, SS6. Lebanon's Roger Feghali and co-driver Nicola Arena fought hard in their Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX, taking three of the day's stages to ensure an overnight lead. Young Cypriot star Nicos Thomas (fresh from competing Spain's round of the WRC) took the other stage of the day in his Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX. Khalid Al-Suwaidi of Qatar was forced to abandon the day through the recurrence of a virus. Saturday saw drivers tackle a total of 316.14km, including 111.84km of special stage action.

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.

After an assured drive through the challenging Cyprus stages yesterday, Feghali held the overnight lead and started Sunday with a 5.3 second lead over Al-Attiyah. But Al-Attiyah 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.

The Qatari set the fastest time through the first stage of the day (SS7 – Anadiou Dam), immediately snatching 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 of the event on the first stage.

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 achieved 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.

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. As the afternoon got underway, the field had been reduced to 23, with the remaining drivers for the most part happy with their positions. Al-Attiyah was obviously happy with his event so far and left the Service Park hoping to maintain a good pace. He promptly made fast work of SS11 (Anadiou Dam), taking the stage 20.3 seconds faster than Feghali and 44.9 seconds ahead of Thomas. As the strong field of Cypriot drivers jockeyed for the remainder of the top ten slots, Al-Mari was obviously taking no chances and settled for 10<sup>th</sup> fastest.

Al-Attiyah continued to press ahead in SS12 (Foinokli), extending his lead over Feghali to 59.8 seconds. Cypriot driver Heracles Velissariou gained ground and finished the stage 3<sup>rd</sup> fastest, followed by Tingirides, Kyriacos Kyriacou, and Thomas. Al-Mari held 10<sup>th</sup>.

Feghali found renewed pace in SS13 (Argaka), taking the stage 4.3 seconds faster than Al-Attiyah, with Thomas 3rd. Kyriacou and Tingirides came next, with Al-Mari 6th. Feghali also took the final stage of the day - SS14 (Stavros) - with a margin of 14.9 seconds over Al-Attiyah, but it was too late to change the outcome and the Qatari secured his 7th consecutive Troodos Rally victory. Thomas' consistent form was rewarded with a 3rd fastest time in the stage and 3rd place overall. Kyriacou was 4th fastest through SS14, with Al-Mari 5th - enough to secure him 2nd place on the championship leaderboard.

The event was brought to a close with a Finish ceremony and prizegiving at Geroskipou town square.

Following its successful move to the west coast of the island last year, the Troodos Rally was once again based around the popular town of Geroskipou. The event Headquarters, Press Office and Service Park were 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.

**2009 Troodos Rally – final positions after SS14 (Provisional)**

|                            |                          |           |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Nasser Al-Attiyah       | Subaru Impreza 2009      | 4:18:17.2 |
| 2. Roger Feghali           | Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX | 4:18:57.8 |
| 3. Nicos Thomas            | Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX | 4:21:37.6 |
| 4. Constantinos Tingirides | Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX | 4:26:44.9 |
| 5. Misfer Al-Mari          | Subaru Impreza           | 4:30:02.7 |
| 6. Kyriacos Kyriacou       | Subaru Impreza           | 4:34:11.1 |
| 7. Marinos Patroclou       | Mitsubishi Lancer Evo VI | 4:35:07.1 |
| 8. Simos Galatariotis      | Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X  | 4:35:11.2 |
| 9. Petros Panteli          | Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX | 4:35:30.7 |
| 10. Heraclis Velissariou   | Subaru Impreza           | 4:37:43.7 |

*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  
11<sup>th</sup> October 2009**