

Chengdu Preview

Keeping up the pressure

This weekend the second round of the 2008-09 A1GP World Cup of Motorsport Championship is taking place on the Chengdu circuit in China. A1 Team France, the current championship leader, is out to keep up the pressure and remain in front after its excellent start to the season with 1st and 3rd places in the first event.

This weekend, Nicolas Prost will be defending the team's colours. The 27-year-old Frenchman, the current leader of the Euroseries 3000, was the team's rookie driver last year and he will make his race debut on Sunday. He had a couple of days' testing at Silverstone to give him the best possible preparation for this meeting.

It is the 5th time that A1GP has gone to China since the start of the championship and it is the teams' 1st time out on the Chengdu circuit. It measures 3,367 kms and has 13 corners, so it's very twisty and represents an interesting technical challenge. Given that overtaking opportunities are few and far between the car's set-up can make the difference.

Out of the 10 races held in China the same team has never won twice. A1 Team France has never finished on the rostrum, something that the squad is out to remedy this weekend.

Olivier Panis, sporting director: "After our great performances at Zandvoort where we finished on the rostrum on two occasions, we're determined to consolidate our position as favourites for the 2008-09 title. At Chengdu, we want to press home our advantage and fight at the front once again. Nicolas Prost will be our nominated driver for the first time, but that won't be a handicap. He knows the team as he was with us throughout the whole of last season, and he was able to get to grips with the new car during his two days' testing."

Nicolas Prost, driver. "I can't wait to start my weekend. Like most of the drivers I don't know the circuit. I've walked round it and I've already got a pretty fair idea of the rhythm to adopt. At Chengdu, the car's set-up can really make the difference. We've drawn up a precise programme and tomorrow's aim is not to make any mistakes and optimise our preparation. The car, which I drove for the first time ten days ago, is fantastic; it's got exceptional power, bakes and aerodynamics and I'm sure everybody finds it great fun to drive!"