



## Despite flying well, Hall suffers costly technical malfunction in Abu Dhabi

ABU DHABI – Australia's Matt Hall suffered a frustrating setback in the first Red Bull Air Race of 2010 in Abu Dhabi on Saturday when a technical malfunction knocked him out of the competition even though he was flying extraordinarily well in difficult conditions and poised for a spot on the podium.

Hall had posted the second fastest net time in the first round, known as the "Top 12", and had his sights on the second podium of his career despite the adverse weather conditions – scorching heat over 40 degrees and shifting winds filled with desert sand from the south that made the 15-Gate course treacherous.

Defending champion Paul Bonhomme of Britain took the victory with compatriot Nigel Lamb second and Hungary's Peter Besenyei third.

The former RAAF fighter pilot from Merewether NSW was clearly in his element over the turquoise waters of the Arabian Gulf in front of Abu Dhabi's Corniche beaches as many of the pre-race favourites, including 2008 champion Hannes Arch, were knocked out.

But Hall's new MXS-R plane, which had been fitted with obligatory HD camera equipment before the race, failed to start on the gridstand as he prepared to fly in the Super 8 round. He was forced to retire.

"Well, that didn't end the way I had hoped," said Hall, who looked gutted as he trudged back to his hangar after the plane failed to start for the round of 8.

"We're running so much equipment in the aircraft that our battery just couldn't keep up. We just couldn't start the plane. I think I could have easily made the Final Four today with how I was flying and everyone being knocked out. I've lost about 4 or 5 points in the championship. We could have got in the rankings today with the engine we're currently running. But it was down to an electrical issue."

Hall, who last year was the most successful rookie in Red Bull Air Race history with a podium and third place overall, said he was already looking forward to the second race of the season in Perth on April 17-18.

"It was a disappointing finish because I think I was doing well and flying smoothly," said Hall, who had put in a dazzling display of flying in the Top 12 round when many of the others struggled – until he just touched the penultimate gate and sliced it open with his wing. Without that six-second penalty his time would have been a 1:14.77 – only

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eventual winner Bonhomme was faster. In theory, Hall had enough speed to perhaps have taken even second place. Lamb's second place time was 1:14.92.

"All I can do now is be confident in the way I'm flying and get ready for Perth," said Hall. "I'm very excited and focused for Perth."

**Ends**