



Hall fourth in qualifying as second successive podium finish looms

RIO DE JANEIRO – Matt Hall jumped up to a promising fourth place in Qualifying on Saturday ahead of Sunday's third Red Bull Air Race of the 2010 season, putting himself within striking range of a podium in Brazil with a razor-sharp run through the track.

The Australian ace, who dazzled his home fans in Perth with a career-best second place last month, put down two flawless runs through the 5,634-metre race track in front of Rio's iconic Flamengo Beach that was packed with a crowd of 400,000 spectators on Saturday. One million people are expected for Sunday's race.

The strong fourth place under bright blue skies and tropical temperatures helped negate memories of the 12th place Hall got in Friday's final training session — when the former RAAF fighter pilot got a rare pylon hit and spent his track time experimenting with new lines.

"Today was encouraging because it was the first time all week I put an exact line together through the track," said Hall.

"We now have the opportunity to analyse the data and check the difference between my two runs before tomorrow."

Hall, who is in fourth place overall in the championship with 14 points from the first two races, stopped the clock 1:21.98. That was only 1.54 seconds behind Austria's Hannes Arch, who collected the one championship point up for grabs as fastest qualifier. British pilots Nigel Lamb and Paul Bonhomme were second and third, respectively.

"I'm really looking forward to trying to improve again," said Hall, who is only in his second year in the race yet finds himself in the midst of what is quickly turning into a four-way battle for the championship with the three veterans.

"Catching the guys in front will be tough but my approach is just to concentrate on what I can do and that's perform my best," he said. "I can't make them any faster or slower. If I fly the best that I can and improve, get a personal best, then I'm going to be happy no matter what the place. Let's wait and see what happens."

Hall had used the training sessions on Thursday and Friday to experiment with his set-up and then beam the data back to Australia overnight for analysis by motor racing legend Larry Perkins. Hall said he hoped the pioneering high-tech analysis could give him a small advantage to improve his plane and performance.

For more information on Matt Hall Racing go to www.matthallracing.com or contact Team Coordinator David Lyall at david@matthallracing.com



Hall said he was not unduly concerned about his training results because his net times were consistently top-four. He tends to start each race weekend in the lower half of the time sheets before peaking in Qualifying and the race, using each of the four training runs to experiment with different lines through the 20-metre high Air Gate pylons.

Tomorrow's action kicks off at 1am Sydney time (Monday morning).

Ends