



Hall aims to harness Australia's hopes for Perth race

PERTH – With the hopes of Australia riding on his shoulders, Matt Hall said on Wednesday that his game plan for this weekend's Perth Red Bull Air Race is to channel the energy of those expectations into positive energy and not let the pressure of his first home race weigh on him.

Hall said at the opening ceremony of the Red Bull Air Race Airport that he was proud to be the first pilot to represent Australia in the race here. The former RAAF fighter pilot, who finished third overall in last year's 15-pilot championship, said that in retrospect he was glad he had a full year's experience racing overseas before facing the special challenges of flying in front of a crowd of some 100,000 people at home.

"Racing in Perth is something that I've been looking forward since I kicked off my career last year," Hall said at the opening ceremony at the runway set up in Langley Park between Perth's central business district and the Swan River race track.

"People said I must have been disappointed that there wasn't a race in Perth last year. In some ways it was disappointing but in other ways it was a relief because it gave me a chance to get my act together last year. It's a high-pressure race for me. People talk about home 'town advantage' and there are clear advantages. But you can look at it both ways."

Hall, who has impressed the other pilots and Red Bull Air Race fans around the world with the military-style discipline and grand strategic thinking he brings to the sport, said his plan is to turn that home pressure and the expectations of 22 million Australians into an advantage in the race over the Swan River on Saturday and Sunday.

"I'm trying to look at it that everyone here really wants me to do well and I'm trying to harness that energy," Hall said of his compatriots' hopes and expectations. "I'm trying to represent Australia as best as I can."

Hall, who got a podium in Porto last year, has been trying to forget about the disappointing eighth place in the season opener in Abu Dhabi due to mechanical problems despite flying well enough last month to have got another podium. Hall feigned anger when he was asked about that painful setback at the Perth opening ceremony in front of the other 14 pilots, local officials as well as local and international media.

"Yeah, thanks for reminding me, mate," a perturbed-looking Hall said before flashing a wide smile and laughing.

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



“It was looking good. The plane was going well, we were flying quite fast and cleanly in the track. But we couldn’t start the engine for the second round on race day and ended up eighth. But in hindsight, it’s motorsport and people are going to have problems like that. That was my bad day for problems. We didn’t end up where we wanted but in the big picture it was a good result overall for us.”

Hall also said that the competition has grown more intense than expected this year.

“It’s getting extremely tough,” he said. “I came into this year going ‘hey, I’m going to have a faster plane, watch out’. And then you turn up at Abu Dhabi and look around and go ‘Wow, everyone’s got a faster plane and everyone’s putting a lot of effort into it, everyone’s fit and everyone’s brain is very intoned to what they’re doing. It’s all very, very focused for all the pilots and everyone here can get a podium so it’s going to be very challenging.”

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