



Hall ready for crunch time as Air Race shifts to North America

WINDSOR, Canada – Matt Hall is looking forward to the challenging Windsor race track over the Detroit River on June 5/6 as the Red Bull Air Race shifts from South to North America for the fourth stop on the 2010 season in the Canadian city.

The Australian ace, who is in a strong fourth place overall with 22 points after three of eight races this year, also said he feels well-prepared for the busiest two-week period in the championship's history with back-to-back races in Windsor and then New York City on June 19/20.

Hall's confidence has also received a boost thanks to the high-tech data analysis on his plane's performance he's getting from motor racing legend Larry Perkins. Hall believes that could give him a small but crucial advantage in the increasingly competitive field.

"The preparations are on track for Windsor," said Hall, still savouring the career-best second place he got in his home race in Perth – the second stop this year.

"While a lot of the teams have taken the opportunity to get their aircraft early and work on them, I elected to concentrate on myself, my fitness and my mental state because the next two races are going to be quite hectic."

The former RAAF fighter pilot is determined to do well not only on the difficult track in Windsor but also in New York, which will be hosting the fast-growing motorsport for the first time. He is nevertheless staying focussed on Windsor, where he flew well at times in his rookie season and appeared to be headed for his first podium before making costly mistakes in his final run and ending up seventh.

"I remember a lot from each race and in Windsor I remember the track being harder than expected initially," said Hall, 38.

"Then I settled down in it and found I could fly it quite quickly. The mistake I made in Windsor last year was trying too hard in changing conditions. If I had flown the track with that intensity and the conditions were the same as the previous day, I think I'd have done quite well. That was the lesson learned there."

Hall learned many lessons well in 2009 en route to becoming the most successful rookie in the six-year history of the race with a third place overall. The straight-talking Australian is looking to build on that this year even though there is a trio of more seasoned pilots ahead of him: Paul Bonhomme (31 points) and Nigel Lamb (28) of Britain as well as Hannes Arch (27) of Austria.

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Hall's strategy of focussing more on getting consistently good results and less on going all out for a spectacular result has paid off handsomely – it has also been imitated this year by more and more rivals.

"I think people probably always knew consistency was the key but they just weren't focussing on it as much as now. The new format is all I've known and it became apparent to me that consistency would be the key. The more experienced race pilots could get away with things in the old knock-out format. I think the new format caught a few by surprise."

Now Hall is looking to take that drive for greater consistency to a new level.

"Consistency is our biggest challenge," he said. "It relates to the team and the aircraft set-up. I'm reasonably happy about my flying style, though flying style is no good if you always are struggling to set the team up and the aircraft. Consistency being our biggest challenge means that every time you turn up to a race, you're relearning things that take up valuable time and energy."

Hall – who had a new technician, Jack Moshovis, join his team for the last race in Rio de Janeiro – will have a new team coordinator for the two North American stops, Alicia Monasso. She'll be filling in for David Lyall, whose wife is expecting their first child any day now.

Team Hall will also be using the Perkins' data analysis in Windsor that he believes helped him in the rain-truncated Rio race.

"I think any small advantage is an advantage these days," said Hall, referring to the overnight data analysis back in Australia by Perkins.

"It definitely gave me an advantage in Rio. I can now understand a lot better what is happening to the aircraft in the track and that allows for better pre-race preparation, along with race analysis during the week."

He and his team can now measure and monitor all of the engine parameters as they are effected by high Gs, airspeed, altitude, acceleration rates and deceleration rates.

"I basically hook my laptop up to the aircraft with a USB cable and download the flight data into a compact file," he said. "We then use programs to graph the data in a usable format, and are able to see rapidly the general flow and also the detail digitally by expanding the area we're looking at."

But Hall will also be bringing some more conventional modifications to Windsor – changes to the oil system.

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“We’ve been struggling to keep the oil temperatures under control so we are trialling some new coolers and some different induction systems get to better lubrication, and control the cooling drag on the aircraft, which adds up to more power and more speed.”

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