

# SPORTS

## Nur Barkat Ali aims to drive Pakistan to top

**By Syed Khalid Mahmood**

**N**ur Barkat Ali, a part of the South West Formula Mazda Series for the past five seasons, will represent Pakistan in the A1 Grand Prix World Cup of Motorsport in England next month.

The 30-year-old Texas-based Nur Ali is the only Pakistani professional driver on any auto racing circuit. He was born in Karachi, Pakistan, but he had migrated to the United States of America (USA) in his childhood.

Nur Ali has excelled in motor racing and his exploits have been recognized in his native country as well. President General Pervez Musharraf, who had invited Ali to dinner while visiting in Los Angeles a couple of years ago, was present in the ceremony where it was officially announced about his participation in the A1 Grand Prix.

Nur Ali, still a new name in the sports circles, has already created history of sorts by becoming the first Pakistani to be selected to represent his country at a major international motor sports competition.

And what an opportunity he has got now, representing his native country in a most prestigious event. The legendary Brands Hatch Grand Prix circuit will notch up another famous first this year when it hosts the global debut of the A1 Grand Prix Championship.

The last Formula 1 Grand Prix at Brands Hatch was run back in 1986 and the A1 GP event will be the fastest race on the Kent circuit since those halcyon days.

A1GP is the brainchild of Sheikh Maktoum Hasher Maktoum Al Maktoum and has been titled the World Cup of

Motorsport thanks to its unique format, which will see one-car teams each representing a different country. What's more, all sponsors and drivers must be native to that country too, giving the series a real sense that national pride is at stake - much like the World Cup.

Sheikh Maktoum, a member of the Dubai ruling family, is confident that at least 23 cars (and countries) will line up on the grid at Brands Hatch in September, which should be a real spectacle given that these cars are expected to be quicker than International Formula 3000 machines.

AIGP will use identical Lola single-seater cars powered by 3.4-litre Zytex engines producing 550bhp, and the sight of over 20 such powerful single-seaters streaming into Paddock Hill Bend for the first time is sure to be an awesome sight. The mix of nationalities - Lebanon, Pakistan and Malaysia are among the countries to be represented along with Holland, Australia and Mexico - and talent levels involved should make for very exciting racing. Indeed history would be made there.

Nur Ali was in Pakistan lately for a mix of professional and promotional activities. He was accompanied by his father, Mr Barkat Ali, who owns a business of real estate in Texas.

It was a real pleasure meeting father and son on a pleasant afternoon in Karachi. While Nur Ali is full of energy, desiring to drive Pakistan to the top in the sport of motor racing, his father, Mr Barkat Ali, takes pride in having groomed both his sons to the threshold of exciting career. His other son is a lawyer, practicing in Texas.

"Unlike a traditional father, I had made it very clear to both my children that they were independent in choosing their career. Because I always



believed that one stands a greater chance of succeeding in his field of interest. I am delighted that both my sons have taken to field which they enjoy," Mr Barkat Ali, born and bred in the Garden East area of Karachi, said.

Nur Ali may be a man of few words but he is quite smart at work. Like a true professional, he keeps track of all the happenings in his field. He is quick in responding to the emails and the queries. He is modest and unassuming, who believes in making his way to the top by fair play.

He had graduated in Arts from the American University, Washington, DC, in 1998. He majored in International Relations with a focus in U.S. Foreign Policy.

The same year he successfully completed racing school at Skip Barber to star

professional career thus becoming the first Pakistani race car driver to start competing professionally. He competed in the Skip Barber Formula Dodge Southern Race Series in 1998.

He continued to compete in the Skip Barber Formula Dodge Southern Race Series in 1999 the year when he also took part in Invitational Formula Renault Race in London. In 2000 he finished 5th overall in the first season of Southwest Formula Mazda Series

while he signed on with Budweiser as major sponsor for the U.S. Southwest Region.

He became the Southwest Formula Mazda Regional Series Champion in 2001, earning one 1st place, one 2nd place and three 3rd place finishes in SWFM Regional Series. He ended runner-up overall in Legends Oval Race Series at

Texas Motor Speedway Summer Stampede and he earned two 1st place finishes and one 3rd place finish in Legends Oval Race Series.

He emerged the Southwest Formula Mazda Regional Series Champion in 2002 as well,

claiming three 1st place finishes and two 2nd place finishes in SWFM Regional Series. In 2003 he completed Infiniti Pro Series Testing in Las Vegas Motor Speedway. The year was made memorable when he was invited by the Pakistani Ambassador to the United States Ashraf Jehangir Qazi to meet President General Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan in Los Angeles, California.

Nur Ali's passion and reputation continue to grow. He has the ambition to succeed. There seems no reason why he should not accomplish his cherished goals.