



OFFSEASON POSTCARD: NUR ALI

February 29, 2016 by [Chris Leone](#)

Throughout the Red Bull GRC offseason, we'll be checking in with some of our biggest names to see how they've been spending their winter months. Be sure to visit [RedBullGRC.com](#) regularly to catch up with your favorite drivers!

Nur Ali was one of many talented drivers to make his rallycross debut in GRC Lites last year, finishing seventh in points with a consistent effort that saw him make the first 11 finals of the season. As the Dallas native prepares for his sophomore season (with a new home race, to boot), he discusses key lessons learned from last year, keeping his skills sharp in simulators, and how close he is to revealing his full program for the 2016 season:

After Las Vegas, we're sure you must have gone into vacation mode a little bit. Did you go anywhere to celebrate the end of the year? If not, what have you been up to since November?

The season finished, but I didn't go anywhere—basically, I got back to Dallas, and my group and I started working diligently on our 2016 campaign immediately. We've been at it the whole time since Vegas, technically even prior to Vegas, working on the 2016 program. The good news is that Valvoline is coming back as a partner, as a primary sponsor, and Rally Ready Driving School is coming back as well. We're also working on a handful of other partner sponsors that we're sorting out now, hoping that we can announce in a few weeks.

So we've been at it the whole time from a sponsorship standpoint—but of course, I've been down to Rally Ready a couple of times. I went down to Indianapolis as well to do some simulator testing with Darren Manning in his iAdvance Motorsports program.



Where did you spend the holidays? Any fun stories to tell us about?

Yeah—the holidays were great! We've had a mild winter, so we got to spend a lot of time outside, not worrying about the cold here in Dallas. Everyone in the family was in town, so we just kind of took it easy.

Right after the holidays, my son turned two years old, and he actually, I think, has spent more time watching Red Bull TV and YouTube of the GRC Lites races than I have! You give him an iPad, if it's got Red Bull TV on there as an app, he literally clicks on it, clicks on the menu, he knows to go to the Motorsports section and down to the third folder—he clicks on the GRC Lites folder and he starts watching the races!

What can you tell us about the simulator training that you've been doing?

I sat in a simulator that was actually an IndyCar, but I was able to drive all types of cars. We spent a few days out there, and I was able to drive open-wheel cars and sports cars. Unfortunately Darren didn't have any rally programs on there, but he's working on those. It was just to get acclimated again and get my juices going.

I've never been in a simulator like that before! The technology, the visual effects, what's behind it—the program that he uses is part of iRacing. It was great, because number one, I had private coaching for a couple of days from morning until evening. I really enjoyed it, and it was something that I would recommend to anybody who wants to give it a shot. With Darren being on board, a former IndyCar and Formula 1 driver, he's got a lot of experience. I gained a lot of knowledge out of it, and we tried to get rid of some bad habits. The good thing was, going off course and breaking a car didn't cost anything!



How about off track—any workout regimens that you’ve been sticking to?

Yeah! I've basically picked my regime up of going to my local gym and working with my trainer. We've been at that for a while. There may be a couple of new things that I try that he's been telling me about, but we haven't gotten around to that yet—I've really been focused on trying to get sponsorship money. But from a physical standpoint, I've been trying to keep up with it as much as I can. Maybe I should be going a little more to the gym, but I'm not totally out of it! I think as the year goes along, when we know where we're going to be going along for the next eight months of the season, I'll probably get back into it a little more. But it's been going well for the past few months.

We're sure you've been reflecting plenty on how the 2015 season went during the offseason. Are there any lessons learned from last year that you've focused on taking into 2016?

The dirt section was difficult for me. Prior to jumping into a GRC Lites program last year, I had no experience at all when it came to driving on the dirt. So watching as much video as I can, I've been focusing on the techniques on dirt, as well as trying to spend a little bit of time down there at Rally Ready.

The good thing is, the video is out there. It gives me time to reflect, because now I know what it feels like and what it drives like on dirt. I can close my eyes, and knowing the corners, knowing the video, knowing the races that we did last year—I know the mistakes I made, and I know where I improved. I know exactly where I could have gotten myself better, and from the coaching I got over the season, I know where I did improve.



Of course, with the season ending in November, I wished I could have had a couple more races because I had a couple more things to perfect my skills on. But I enjoyed the season, and I enjoyed the series—it was a lot of fun. Like I've said before, 18 years into my motorsports career, this may be the most fun I've ever had in driving and racing! So I'm looking forward to another productive year, and hopefully this time we'll get some better finishes, some wins, and of course the goal is to go after the championship. We finished seventh last year in the driver standings, and it was a decent finish, but the goal is to keep moving up.

Finally, even though there may not be anything to announce yet, how are your plans coming along for the 2016 season?

We are, I think, about 60% done. There are a lot of different moving parts. There have been multiple times that we thought we had a deal done, and then something else came along in a better sense. So we had to step back and say "OK, let's go on and evaluate this program or this team," prior to signing up with the team that we've been talking to. So we've actually left our options open. We're in the thick of things on finalizing our team.

As I've mentioned, two of our partners are on board, Valvoline being the big one. Then we're working on a couple of other ones we're looking to solidify. But from a team standpoint, we're working at it. Timeframe wise, I don't want to say that we're around the corner of announcing it, but I don't want to say we're far away. I think we're right in the middle. In the next couple of weeks something could happen, or maybe in the next month. But I think it'll all come down to once we solidify our other partners—I think that'll help us close the deal on which team we want to go with.

Photo credit: Larry Chen