

Press Release:

Monaco mystery – 22nd May 2005

Alex took part in his first race since October 2004, thanks to a last-minute deal with the French DAMS team in the new Renault World Series Championship. The race was the main support race to the Formula One Grand Prix in Monaco.

“It is fantastic to get into a car again” Alex enthused “and first and foremost I have to thank Clerical Medical for agreeing to become my first ever Corporate Sponsor, and for making this weekend possible – I wouldn’t be here without them. I’m really looking forward to cementing a great partnership with them. I would also like to thank Nagor and Jetpacks who have also helped me compete this weekend”.

There wasn’t much time for testing – only 10 laps, in fact – and then it was straight into qualifying, where Alex qualified 18th of the 30 runners – 2 seconds away from pole time.

Alex hadn’t driven the Renault World Series car before, and reported it as being a really nice machine – more downforce and slightly faster than the F3000 car in which he was a race winner last year.

“It feels very strange not being at the front of a grid” he said after the session “but I’m under no illusions here in Monaco. One of the special features about Monaco is that you can’t make any mistakes, as the circuit is so narrow and unforgiving, so I have been learning about the car as I’ve been learning the circuit, as I’ve been learning with the team!” I improved in qualifying by 5 seconds over my best practice time, but I can’t really



begin to explore what the car is capable of doing, because in order to find the limit, you have to exceed it and then pull back, and you can’t exceed the limit here in Monaco. My realistic aim would be to complete the full race distance and end up with a top 15 finish – maybe even a top ten”



The race itself took place on Sunday morning, immediately before the F1 race, and Monaco was alive with spectators. Alex had concerns over the start, as he had not been able to practice the start procedure in this car, but he had no need for such concern, as he made a flying getaway, taking two places immediately.

Overtaking is all but impossible around the narrow streets of the principality, but retirements are frequent, and Alex steadily rose up the order from 18th until he was up to 13th place. However, on the last lap of the 45 minute race, with barely 300 metres until the chequered flag, the car broke away on the high-speed entry to the swimming pool complex, spinning backwards and crashing heavily into the barriers.

Unhurt but bitterly disappointed not to have taken the flag, Alex said "We're not at all certain what happened, but it wasn't a brake problem - there is no braking into this corner - and this is really not a place where you would expect to have a problem. The data shows I was further off the throttle and entered the corner slower than I had before, as you would expect on an unpressured last lap. I took the same line as always, just a little more prudently, so it is a complete mystery why the car broke away the moment I moved the steering wheel. It felt strange just as I turned in, and the back of the car swung round in a wide arc, dragging the front with it, and didn't respond at all when I tried to correct it. Together with the team, we will be looking at possible causes, both with the car and whether it could have been my fault, but it will be difficult to see what went wrong as the back of the car and gearbox and differential are so badly damaged. Looking at the video replay, the car behaved like it hit an oil slick, or as if I entered the corner too quickly, but in fact it was quite the opposite".

Nonetheless, the weekend was a fantastic experience, and it will stand him in good stead for the future to have completed a race distance again, and to have gained some experience of this new powerful Renault World Series car, not to mention his first street race.

Clerical Medical have confirmed that they will provide personal sponsorship to Alex to help further his career. In addition Clerical Medical have also intimated that they may be prepared to look at providing further corporate sponsorship to help Alex compete in further races this year, possibly with the same Le Mans-based DAMS team, who have a seat available for the next few races, so Alex will be looking hard at all the options open to him.

John Hiew, Managing Director, Clerical Medical Financial Services commented, 'I was really impressed with Alex and his performance at Monaco and the coverage we received for Clerical Medical. Alex has the potential to go far in motor racing and for that reason we would like to continue the links between Alex and Clerical Medical operations in the Isle of Man and UK.'



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