

Qatar International Rally 2012 FIA Middle East Rally Championship, round 1

**TURKISH FEMALE RALLYING DUO HOPING TO DELIGHT
FANS IN THIS WEEKEND'S QATAR INTERNATIONAL RALLY**



The all-female Turkish rallying crew of Burcu Cetinkaya and Cicek Guney will be taking part in this weekend's Qatar International Rally, round one of the 2012 FIA Middle East Rally Championship, for the first time at the wheel of a

Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution X, prepared by Tok Sport.

The duo took part in the Dubai International Rally last December and Cetinkaya, a five-time Turkish ladies champion, was one of the

revelations of the event, finishing a superb fifth overall. Güney also has competitive blood running through her veins – the youngster is a nine-time Turkish snowboarding champion.

Tok Sport, the Istanbul-based car preparation company, is also running Abdulaziz Al-Kuwari's Prodrive-built Mini S2000 in the two-day rally that gets underway with a ceremonial start at the headquarters of the Qatar Motor & Motorcycle Federation (QMMF) at 09.30hrs on Friday morning and finishes at the same venue the

following afternoon from 15.35hrs.

All-female crews have been few and far between on rounds of the Middle East's premier rally series in recent years, but a second lady crew will be hoping for success in Qatar on this occasion. Rounding off the provisional 16-car start list is German driver Edith Weiss and her Greek navigator Vicky Psarali.

Weiss has competed all over the Middle East since the 1990s and is passionate about her rallying. She finished third in class in the 1992 Qatar International Rally and



Cicek Guney
(left) and Burcu
Cetinkaya (right)



a fine 10th overall in 1997. Psarali and Weiss competed together in last year's Rally of Portugal and are looking for a top 10 finish on this occasion.

On Wednesday, 16 of the original 20 crews completed their reconnaissance of the six special stages that will be repeated twice on Friday and Saturday. Even though he has won the last nine Qatar rallies, defending champion Nasser Saleh Al-Attiyah had not

seen parts of some of these special stages before.

"They are completely new, quite nice, but definitely not easy," said Nasser, who drives a Kronos-run Peugeot 207 WRC on this occasion. "There is always a risk of punctures and the surfaces are quite hard in places."

A Peugeot 207 S2000 has only won one round of the MERC to

date, with Saudi Arabia's Yazeed Al-Rajhi winning the Syrian International Rally in 2009. Although the Riyadh-based driver also won the Sharqia event in Saudi's Eastern Province when it ran as a candidate event in 2010.

The Al-Wakra based Qatar event also marks the return to the series of Lebanon's Nick Georgiou in a Motortune-run Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution IX. Georgiou now resides in Beirut and has hired a car from tarmac legend Roger Feghali for the Qatar Rally.

"The stages are difficult to judge and it is not easy to find where to

brake and where you could get a puncture," said the Lebanese, who lost a front-running position in 2009 when he sustained two flat front tyres on the final stage of the event. "It's a case of fingers crossed for a good result here and then we will see for the rest of the year. Punctures are always key to a good run here on the rocky terrain."

Tomorrow (Thursday) crews will attend pre-rally eligibility checks and administration and several front-runners will join QMMF president Nasser Khalifa Al-Attiyah at the official pre-event press conference at the QMMF on Salwa Road, Doha, at 15.00hrs.

