

Stage set for 4th round of national racing c'ship

Chennai (PTI): A lot is at stake for the drivers in the fourth and penultimate round of the MRF MMSC FMSCI National Car Racing Championship at the MMRT at Sriperumbudur near here over the weekend.

International racer Aditya Patel is set to make his saloon car debut in the championship and will be racing at this track after a gap of 11 years, a press release said. With the front-runners in the championship race tightly bunched in all the categories the premier MRF Formula 1600, Indian Touring Cars, Super Stock and Volkswagen Ameo close contests are on the cards. The MRF F1600, with four races scheduled over two days, and a maximum of 100 points on offer, has four drivers Nayan Chatterjee (Mumbai, 63 points), Chennai's Vishnu Prasad (58), Bengaluru teenager Sohil Shah (56) with two wins from four starts and A Bala Prasath from Coimbatore (43) heading the leaderboard. The popular Indian Touring Cars category, a triple-header for this round, has seen a close fight involving veteran racer from Coimbatore Arjun Balu (80 points), driving a Race Concepts-prepared Honda Vtec car, and championship leader Chennai's Karthik Tharani (86) in a factory-supported Volkswagen Vento.

However, Tharani, winner in two of the five outings and serving a one-race suspension, is sitting out this round.

Tharani is replaced by Aditya Patel, the 2007 Formula Rolon champion, who has been a participant in various international touring cars series abroad (VW, Audi, GT Asia) in the past decade.

The Super Stock category, to be run on a combined grid with the ITC class, presents a similar picture with Bengaluru's Rithvik Thomas (Race Concepts) leading RP Raja Rajan (Performance Racing) from Chennai by eight points.

The pair has won three races apiece and with three more to be run this weekend, a thrilling battle between the two is on the cards.

The VW Ameo Class, which was upgraded to National Championship status, and boasting of 18-car grid, has three drivers, Pratik Sonawane (Pune), Jeet Jhabakh (Hyderabad) and Saurav Bandyopadhyay (Mumbai) separated by eight points with Delhi's Anmol Singh Sahil in fourth, a further nine points behind.