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America One outsail Young America for title

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AFTER four days of upsets, America One deservingly lifted the Malaysia Challenge 1997 International Sailing Grand Prix trophy after beating Young America in the finals at Langkawi yesterday.

America One, with John Kostecki at the helm, outsailed the Ed Baird-led Young America three matches to one to emerge winners.

Kostecki's team, comprising Morgan Larson, Don Cowie and Alan Smith, were only ranked 10th of the 12 teams taking part.

Despite that, they pulled off several convincing victories over their more illustrious rivals enroute to the title.

They won all but one of the elimination rounds to pocket a total of US\$8,000 and added another US\$21,978 to their kitty for winning the overall title.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad presented the trophy to the winners in a ceremony on board the Star Pisces cruise ship.

In his speech, Kostecki made a tongue-in-cheek remark by saying Dr Mahathir had played a big part in their victory.

"He gave us several pointers and that made a big difference to our performance," he said, referring to the celebrity race on Saturday when Dr Mahathir teamed up with the America One crew.

On a more serious note, Kostecki said his team managed to get their act right when it mattered most and this eventually won them the race.

Beau Geste of Hong Kong edged World No 1 Peter Gilmour for third place.

Final standings: 1 John Kostecki (US), 2 Ed Baird (US), 3 Gavin Brady (HK), 4 Peter Gilmour (Jpn), 5 Thierry Peponnet (Fr), 6 Bertrand Pace (Fr), 7 Jesper Bank (Den), 8 Andy Beadsworth (Bri), 9 Magnus Holmberg (Swe), 10 Jochen Schuemann (Ger), 11 James Wilmot (Phi), 12 Hamdan Yahya (Mas).

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