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An expensive sport needs sponsors

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IT took the prize of a Proton Putra to lure some 100 or more competitors to what has become the best turnout in a single Malaysian racing event.

The Proton Merdeka 300Km Endurance Race this afternoon has attracted the young, the inexperienced, the gung-ho, the veteran and even the retired, all who are coming with the intention of driving home a new car.

While some have spent quite a considerable amount into preparing their cars - despite regulations that a car must be stock standard - there others who will just drive in the Proton they use everyday without bothering to make any modifications, except for making it lighter maybe.

From the stickers on the car bonnet and doors, some drivers have the backing of a long list of sponsors, while others forked out their own money.

For sport which today is synonymous with money, it is surprising to see so many entries. Even the monthly Proton 12-lap race does not get this kind of response.

In the opinion of veteran racing drivers, motorsports was never about money.

Undeniably, motorsports today is equivalent to money. Fair enough, but cheaper avenues - and there are events which cost practically nothing to organise - should be made available to the masses.

Today's event will highlight the difference from those in the 80s. Friends used to chip in a few ringgit to build a racing car, but today, most everyone is relying on sponsors. And sponsors are never easy to come by - so some say.

If indeed everyone had to rely on hard-to-come-by sponsors, half the participants would not have made it to the starting grid.

What the local motorsport scene needs is more events - events which are affordable to the everyday enthusiast, like today's Proton Endurance Race which is not only affordable but also one where any Proton owner is able to participate.

Not something that will burn a big hole in their pocket.

Which brings us to the subject of regular events. For instance, club events which are now dormant need to be re-activated.

In this case, the Malaysian motorcross fraternity deserves to be commended.

At a time when motorcross was considered a dying sport, several enthusiasts took it upon themselves to organise small events to sustain the interest.

This year, those hard-fought efforts were rewarded when Hi-Rev Malaysia, an engine lubricant company, believed in the sport enough to invest in a full calendar championship.

But events should be made available for everyone in all categories.

The most basic event should be for everyone, one which would allow you to drive your work-vehicle to a Sunday event and participate without damaging it.

And this is where motoring-related corporations can play their part.

Tyre, lubricant and other relevant companies could supply, at subsidised prices at least, to participants. At the end of the day, this works out to cheaper advertising rates for the companies.

Today's programme - 10-10.10am: Proton drivers 1 warm up. 10.15-10.25: Proton drivers 2 warm up. 10.45: Modenas Kriss Sprint Race (10 laps).

11.45am-12.30pm: Pit walkabout. 12.45: Opening ceremony by Prime Minister
Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. 1.0: Proton 300km Merdeka Endurance Race
(86 laps). 5.0: Proton Putra celebrity demonstration (8 laps).
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