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Tanya still the fastest on wheels

THEY waited four years for a rematch but it was Canadian Tanya Dubnicoff, the reigning Commonwealth champion, who powered her way to remain the fastest woman on a bicycle.

The 29-year-old beat Olympic silver medallist Michelle Ferris in the best of three sprints to once again claim the title she won at the 1994 Victoria Games.

Tanya had broken her own Games record enroute to the final, setting a new time of 11.490, 0.324 seconds faster than the previous record which stood at 11.814.

The title was very much decided in a tactical play with both women riding cautiously and picking up the pace very early.

In heat one, Tanya reached the finish line by half a wheel faster with a time of 12.061.

She was determined not to carry the fight into a third heat when she beat Michelle in heat two, finishing with a time of 12.053.

The 22-year-old Michelle who has accumulated 13 titles in the Australian National Championship, just could not match Tanya's finishing pace.

Tanya was clearly the more superior rider and was hardly challenged by Australian Lyndelle Higginson for a place in the final, winning in two straight heats.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was present to watch the men's and women's 200m sprint semifinals.

Lori Ann Muenzer who was fighting to make it an all-Canadian final lost two straight heats to Michelle, who was clearly the more powerful sprinter.

Lori Ann, however, was the better rider against Lyndelle when she won in straight heats for the bronze.

Halimah Mohamed Janis, who became Malaysia's first woman to make the quarterfinals of the event in the history of the Games, bowed out of the competition after putting up a brave fight, going down to Tanya in the best of three sprints.

"I gave it my best shot but Tanya was a more experienced sprinter," said the 22-year-old who eventually finished sixth, and in the process breaking the Sea Games record which stood at 12.6.

Halimah had clocked 12.4 in the first round.

The men's 200m sprint was visibly dominated by Australian Darryn Hill, the 1995 and 1996 world champion.

Going up against countryman Sean Eddie, the 24-year-old took the first sprint with a time of 10.533, just short of renewing his Games record set in the preliminaries which stood at 10.258.

He made it a straight win in heat two when he clocked 10.618, finishing a wheel's length ahead of Eddie.

Hill's ticket to the final was obtained in a commanding manner when he overcame a strong show from Barbados rider Barry Forde in the best of three sprints.

Forde finished with a bronze after a heatedly contested three-sprint match which saw English rider Peter Jacques crashing in heat two to carry the fight into the third and last round.

Rosman Alwi, who was controversially eliminated from the quarterfinals on Friday for a rule infringement, finished a commendable 11th in a close photofinish with Scotland's Chris Hoy and Canadian Douglas Baron.

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