

14/08/2000

Malaysian quartet victorious

THE Malaysian quartet calling themselves GP3 won the Indy 40 Enduro kart prix at the Morac circuit in Langkawi yesterday after a Japanese team who took the chequered flag were disqualified on technical grounds.

The GP3 team of Nafee Kassim, Nurmad Jusat, Firhad Mokhzani and Keifli Othman won the Prime Minister's Challenge Trophy and RM40,000 prize money.

FCS of Japan, defending their title, were disqualified when the ballast (weights) which were supposed to be attached to the kart was instead found in the gloves of their star driver, Akari Iwai, a 17-year-old college lass.

According to international karting rules, both the vehicle and driver must weigh a minimum of 140kg and the weights, if any, must be attached to the vehicle even during the changeover of drivers.

When Akari, who has been beating the men at home and ranked ninth overall, weighed in with the kart, she met the requirements.

But after the race, scrutineers found the weight strapped within her gloves. During the changeover, she got off with the weights in the gloves.

Akari drove a total of 120 minutes (each driver is only allowed 40 minutes at one go).

GP3, who finished 9.8 seconds behind FCS after 257 laps, were elated when the disqualification was announced.

"A win is a win despite the circumstances," said Firhan.

The team dedicated the win to Akmal Akil, who was killed in a car accident shortly after the last Enduro when they finished fifth.

Keifli Othman, who took over from the late Akmal, was the powerhouse of the team who started last in the grid when flagged off by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

After a few laps, Kefli moved the team to fourth spot, laying the foundation for the victory over the 20 teams who took part.

Japanese team KikiKart Shop were second (RM30,000 prize money) followed by Hong KongI (RM20,000) and Malaysia's Saji Bumi Young Guns (RM10,000).

In the Rotax Max Challenge, Rodney F. Magness upset favourite Raja Razman while Ferhan Fauzy was third.

The top three Malaysians in this Challenge series qualify for the world kart championship in Puerto Rico at the end of the year.

Raja Razman won at the Sepang circuit earlier this year. There are two more races to go before the final selection.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir had flagged off the championships and then spent about an hour watching the races.

The event, introduced in 1997, is promoted by Mofaz Motorports, Langkawi Motorsports Club and the Langkawi Development Authority.

The inaugural race attracted only a handful of foreign karters but last year's race saw an increased number of foreign participants.

Indy 40 Enduro has been recognised as one of the most popular go-kart endurance events, with this year's event listed in the World Karting Federation calendar.

In his message in the souvenir book, Dr Mahathir, who is patron of the event, invited participants to take some time off to enjoy the beauty of Langkawi.

He also invited the karters to return for the World Finals of the Rotax Max Challenge 2001 to be held at the same venue.

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