

29/01/2002

Rare breed of men need to be nurtured

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ONE has to be crazy to complete the Ironman Langkawi Malaysia in a time of eight hours, but that possibility is now being explored by triathletes from all over the world.

And thanks to New Zealander Bryan Rhodes, who clocked a blistering 8:10:35 on Sunday in the 3.8km swim, 180km cycling event and 42km marathon, Langkawi is now a must-compete leg on the road to the World Championships in Kona, Hawaii.

But there is a sad part to the furious past set by the Kiwi, because now the possibility of seeing a Malaysian at the top of the podium has become a hazy dream.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who presented medals to the top three finishers, said: "It would be nice if a Malaysian could win the triathlon in the near future."

But judging from the results of the Malaysian entries, the near future might be about 10 years down the line.

The best Malaysian finisher was Razani Husain and even his time of 9:55:11s was a good two hours behind Kiwi Rhodes. And all the top ten triathletes completed their race inside of nine hours.

But Razani and fellow Malaysians who finished the race are a rare breed of men, because not many Malaysians would want to punish their body to such a level only to be called Ironman, and return home with a certificate of completing the race.

The large number of Malaysians who finished this time also showed a marked improvement because about 80 foreign triathletes did not even manage to finish the race in the stipulated 17 hours.

The last to touch the finishing tape was Japanese Takatoshi Yamagata, who clocked 16:57:44s.

Malaysian Ironman Dr Fiona Lim, who clocked 12:31:59, even beat a large number of male entries from Malaysia and abroad. The dentist by profession trains three hours a day after work to keep fit, but not many of her counterparts have the luxury and time like her.

Most of the Malaysian triathletes met in Langkawi cited the same reason for their poor finish - the lack of funds and training venues to sharpen their will.

That is why the organisers, Langkawi Ironman Endurance Marathon Sdn Bhd (Liem) are contemplating setting up an Ironman association to look after this special breed of people.

But until then, the Malaysian triathletes will have to look after themselves, and don't blame any of them for clocking poor times.

Organisational wise, the Ironman Langkawi was a huge success for the Legendary Island of Mahsuri because most of the big hotels in town did roaring business during the event and flights out were as difficult to book as finishing the Ironman Langkawi in eight hours.

Malaysian Results: Razani Husain 9:55:11s, Kohing Antak 11:23:56, Abdul Khalib Zakaria 11:24:15, Marcus Teoh 11:45:04, Zulkifli Samsudin 12:09:03, Rozani Iamail 12:14:39, Dr Fiona Lim 12:31:59, Ariffin Noparimi 12:43:36, Ramuyan Talit 12:44:02, Mat Ali Ismail 13:07:49, Ashar Zakaria 13:11:36, Baharuddin Ismail 13:20:56, Anthony John Lopez 13:25:01, Jeffry Mujah 13:30:30, Chang Min Chew 13:32:07, Che Mansor Khamis 13:37:41, Abdul Rashid Daud 13:51:55, Alan Tiang Promsuwan 14:31:41, Teck Beng Chow 14:39:24, Ramli Nayan 14:45:36, Nadia Johan Lim 15:12:19, See Keong Moh

15:14:07, Sze Man Yee 15:15:39, Alan Scott 15:29:40, Hong Chai Lee  
15:37:44, Hin Toong long 15:44:34, Tah Ming Tan 15:52:26, Abdul Halim  
Jantan 15:53:28, Patsy Kim Neo Yap 16:30:45, Francis Chai 16:31:04, Sofian  
Ismail 16:34:52, David Lee 16:40:36.  
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