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Musso takes chequered flag

Zakri Baharudin; Albakry Salehuddin

SOUTH Africa won the Rotax World Finals for the second consecutive time after Claudio Piazza-Musso took the chequered flag at the end of the events second edition at the Morac International Karting Circuit in Langkawi yesterday.

His biggest victory in karting, Musso completed the 25-lap race in 25 minutes and 57.88 seconds average about 71kph around the 1.3km track.

He beat Scott Auld from Australia to the line by 1.21 seconds, while front-row starter Matthew Pierce from Britain ended a close third.

Darren Smith from Australia emerged as the best-placed karter in the over-35-year-old category when he checked in fourth overall, followed by Mark Cronje of South Africa and Australian Matthew Wall in fifth and sixth places respectively.

After qualifying third in the pre-finals for a seat in the second row behind pole-sitter Matthew Hamilton from New Zealand and Pierce, Musso kept up with the leading pack of five karts right from the beginning.

"I couldn't believe it when I saw the flag. I never expected to win here," said Musso, who is South Africa's third qualifier from the South African Max Challenge championship last year.

"It was very hot and humid so I took it easy at the beginning of the race as there was nobody behind to push me. The setting of my kart also allowed me to attack in the last few laps. After the leaders dropped out, I made my move on the leader, but it was scary when I nearly lost control when passing him."

However, 31-year-old Mussos best lap time of 1:01.776 minutes was not good enough to beat Aulds 1:01.765s. Both their times were set on the 13th lap.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the patron of the event, presented trophies to the winners. Also present was Sports Minister Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein.

Meanwhile, three Malaysian karters ended in the top-30 bracket of the Finals, led by Ferhan Fauzy in 25th position overall.

Rodney Magness, despite having secured the best lap time among the four Malaysians with 1:12.918s, ended 27th, just one notch ahead of Mahathir Bob Ngaau.

Raja Razman Idris, Malaysia's best qualifier in the pre-finals to start 21st on the grid, ended his campaign after just five laps after being involved in a crash.

RESULTS: 1 Claudio Piazza Musson (RSA) 25:57.88s, 2 Scott Auld (Aus) 25:58.96, 3 Matthew Pierce (UK) 25:59.66, 4 Darren Smith (Aus) 28:02.33, 5 Mark Cronje (RSA) 26:02.12, 6 Matthew Wall (Aus) 26:02.74, 7 Pierre Lalmand (Bel) 26:07.10, 8 Steve Bernard (Can) 26:10.13, 9 Clint Cathcart (Aus) 26:10.25, 10 Bjorn Georg Gravidahl (Nor) 26:10.40 ... 25 Ferhan Fauzy (Mas) +55.56s, 27 Rodney Magness (Mas) two laps, 28 Mahathir Bob Ngaau (Mas) 5 laps, 33 Raja Razman Idris (Mas) DNF.
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