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`Give saloon car racing a chance'

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FOR the local motorsports industry to grow, Malaysians should look into other areas besides Formula One, such as saloon car racing.

Jaseri Racing Team chairman Datuk Mokhzani Mahathir, who also chairs the Sports Ministry Motorsports Department racing schools development committee, said this was another area in which Malaysian drivers must prove themselves.

"If you look at the karting championships, there are Malaysian talents at grassroots level. Eventually, not all of them will be going into single-seater racing but they would have acquired the necessary skills," said Mokhzani.

"These are the roots for saloon car racing because young talent can grow and be groomed into top saloon car racers as well."

The tricky part of developing saloon car racing is that it needs support from the private sector.

In Jaseri Racing Team's case, they have experienced driver Tommy Lee on board a 390-horse powered Porsche in the Porsche Carrera Asian Championship, a big step forward for future drivers who are expected to be groomed from the Proton Satria GTi and Proton Production Car championships.

This leaves a huge gap as drivers would move up from a front-wheel drive car that churns out between 120 and 140 horse power, to a 390-horse powered rear-wheel drive machine, a big change by any standard.

"The Satrias are good saloon cars and are very competitive. There is quite a difference in power, but I am sure the drivers, with proper training, will be able to handle it.

"But at the same time, we are hoping that some organisers will adopt a series to cater for the levels leading up to the Porsche series. We're hoping that with the Government's support, there will be such series and then it is a matter of support for the series," said Mokhzani.