

28/02/2003

Lee begins quest to be Porsche champion

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IT will be a different ball game for Tommy Lee when he begins his quest for the Porsche Carrera Asian Championship, held as a support race for the Petronas Formula One Malaysian Grand Prix at the Sepang Circuit on March 21-23.

The 35-year-old, who has had an impressive track record over the past three years, has been given his biggest assignment to date as the sole Jaseri Racing Team driver. Nevertheless, he remains confident of his chances this year, that despite the setbacks of having limited time for testing.

"They've set some new regulations similar to F1 where we aren't allowed to test the race car at the circuit prior to the practice sessions for the race. So I've been testing with an older car which we used in the Merdeka Millenium Endurance (MME) race last year," said Lee.

Lee, partnering Tengku Hammam and Nigel Albon, won the 12-hour MME on board Naza Jaseri Racing Team's Porsche last year. The team has since split, with Naza deciding on running their own team.

Lee also won last year's Proton Satria Gti Championship and holds the distinction of being the only man to have been part of the winning combination in three MMEs, having won with Petronas Eon Racing Team (Pert) in 2000 and TVR Sports in 2001.

"This race car is different from the car we used in the MME. There is a horse power increase from 370 to 390bhp, the brakes are bigger, the suspension uses a different setup and the gearing is very different," said Lee.

The Jaseri Racing Team is owned by Datuk Mokhzani Mahathir, son of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Lee is running a full season of races as part of the Asian Festival of Speed (Afos) which, apart from Sepang, takes him to Macao, the Bira Circuit in Thailand, South Korea and the Zhuhai Circuit in China.

"It will be a tough championship but I should be among the top contenders," said Lee when asked of his chances, adding that the main bids for the title will be coming from Hong Kong drivers Charles Kwan, who Lee beat in the MME last year and former teammate Albon.

The Jaseri Racing team will be officially launched today.