

Success of Terengganu riders in LTdL 2020 prove they are world-class

16 Feb 2020

By Mazani Mohd Yusoff



LANGKAWI, Feb 16 -- The remarkable achievements by some Malaysian riders who made the podium and won jerseys in this year's Le Tour de Langkawi (LTdL), which ended yesterday, proved that locals are capable of competing against both World Tour and professional teams (pro-teams) in Asia's premier cycling event.

Team Sapura Cycling (TSC) rider Muhamad Nur Aiman Mohd Zariff broke the dominance of riders from the American and European continents when he won the Red jersey (King of the Mountain) in this 25th edition of the race, thus creating his own history as the first Malaysian to win the jersey since the first edition in 1996.

The rider from Setiu, Terengganu was crowned KoM in Kuah, here, yesterday, and won RM1,000 cash.

Muhamad Nur Aiman's victory saw him repeat the achievements of two national riders from Terengganu, Anuar Manan who won the Green Jersey (King of the Sprint) in 2010 and Mohd Adiq Husainie Othman who won the White jersey as the Best Asian Rider in 2016.

TSC also became the first local team to win the overall champions title, breaking the dominance of the World Tour and Continental Professional teams who had won the category since 1996.

Experienced national rider, Mohd Harrif Saleh of Terengganu Inc.TSG Cycling Team also put on his best performance by winning two stages, Stage 5 from Kuala Kubu Bharu to Ipoh and Stage 7 from Bagan to Alor Setar.

The extraordinary achievement saw Mohd Harrif, fondly known as Mamat, create history with three stage victories. Mohd Harrif claimed his first ever win in the 2019 edition in Stage 2 from Dataran Senawang to Melaka.

Mohd Harrif, when met by reporters after the LTdL ended yesterday, revealed that the success of the local riders proved that they were not merely "jaguh kampung" (village champions).

He said, although Asian riders are smaller built compared to those from Europe and Oceania, the perseverance and determination of the local riders in winning in this edition proved that nothing was impossible.

"We are on par with the World Tour and Continental Professionals teams.

"Anuar Manan had won (the green jersey) in 2010, so I think it's possible for others to follow in his footsteps," said Mamat, who hails from Kuala Terengganu.

Shahaizereen A. Hamid, chief operating officer of Human Voyage (M) Sdn Bhd, the organiser of the LTdL, shared Mohd Harrif's sentiments after seeing the sudden rise of local riders in this year's edition, coinciding with the LTdL silver jubilee celebration.

"Alhamdulillah (thanks to Allah), this edition saw local riders show vast improvement and as Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad recently noted, our riders are able to lift Malaysia to a higher level," said Shahaizereen, who was pleased with how the 2020 LTdL had unfolded.

He is also considering some new locations next year following the request of several state governments who want to host some of the stages.

Looking back at the LTdL 2020, Human Voyage had a bumpy ride when there were not enough participants from World Tour teams initially, change of race dates and the spread of COVID-19 virus, but thanks to the cooperation of all parties, especially the 21 competing and logistics teams who worked hard at each race location to ensure the success of the tournament.

By bringing LTdL to several locations in Sabah and Sarawak as well as the peninsula, it also provided opportunities for rural folks to showcase their products, not only to the entire LTdL crew, but also to foreign tourists.

The addition of several World Tour teams from Europe next year is hoped will boost LTdL's growing popularity among leading riders from Europe and South America, while putting LTdL on par with some of the world's leading cycling races such as Vuelta a Espana, Giro d'Italia and the Tour de France.

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