

MOTORSPORTS

The Track to Success

Ron Hogg of Two Wheels Motor Racing is developing the local motorcycle race scene via the Petronas Cub Prix Championship among others *By Aaron Pereira*



Despite reading law, Ron Hogg, the promotions director of Two Wheels Motor Racing, picked up his father, Sam Hogg's passion for motorsports and immersed himself in the world of motorbike racing.

"My dad was a rally driver and had been involved in motorsports since the late 1960s. I used to follow him around for events since I was a child, so I pretty much witnessed all the great races in the Shah Alam circuit among others. These experiences developed my interest in racing and motorsports," says Hogg, who decided not to continue with law.

In fact, it was Sam Hogg who started the Cub Prix races, with its first event taking place at Melaka in 1994. The company behind it just recently celebrated the 30-year anniversary of its Petronas Malaysian Cub Prix Championship, which saw Hannah Yeoh, the youth and sports minister, commend the organisation for having not only survived the pandemic but nurtured and developed local talent and the motorsports industry through the years with minimal support from

other parties.

"We're proud that every single Malaysian rider we have in the World Championship have had their roots in the Cub Prix," says Hogg about their astounding achievement. "Among the popular ones are Khairul Idham Pawi and Hafizh Syahrin, to name a few. It's a platform that provides riders access to international stardom. If you can succeed here, then you deserve to go on to the next level."

The whole idea of Cub Prix, which involves the use of smaller motorcycles (ranging from 80cc to 150cc), has always been to establish a solid foundation from which promising and talented Malaysian riders are hand-picked for further development and achievements. It

provides a cost-effective pathway into motorsports.

Prior to the pandemic, races were held throughout the Peninsula and Sabah and Sarawak, making it convenient for Malaysians from any state to enter the race or attend the events. "In terms of age, we've become even more inclusive. Previously, riders would start at around 25, but now we have some as young as 13 years old. It's beneficial to discover these talents at a young age, so they can flourish and have an extended commercial value," adds Hogg, who collaborates with motorcycle brands to provide scholarships to support the riders' racing careers.

However, questions were raised on whether the industry contributes

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From top: Ron Hogg; Syed Saddiq poses with the young riders



From top: Trophies awarded to finishers at the podium; riders graced by the royal presence of Sultan Ibrahim in Muar; Ron Hogg is also devoted to the to the development of the FIM Asia Road Racing Championship since 1996

to the *mat rempit* culture. Hogg offers his perspective: “To an extent, that culture can’t be changed; it took a lot of time to be what it is. If you look back 30-40 years ago, some of them were riding BMX bicycles, performing wheelies and stunts, which later translated into illegal street racing and such. However, that represents only a small fraction of motorcycle riders today. Our company has been very clear from the start that we don’t support any form of illegal activities. Engaging in such activities results in penalties, including being banned from races. I believe that those who join us and those involved in illegal racing are different types of individuals.”

Could it simply be a matter of access and infrastructure that distinguishes the two? If more resources were channelled into the sport, could there be safer venues and a surge in motorbike champions? Is Malaysia capable of producing the next Valentino Rossi? We hope to find out.

