

## ELECTRIC SPORTS

Va-Va-Vroom

### Singapore team is top in Malaysia

JOYCE LIM speaks with the victorious Type R Garage R Racing Team, which triumphed in the Merdeka Millennium Endurance race at Sepang

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STANDING on the podium with trophy aloft, Lawrence Lee had his birthday present for Singapore, just minutes before the nation's 44th birthday last Sunday.

Lee, who fronts the Type R Garage R Racing Team, led his team to finish in first position in the Class A2 category of the Merdeka Millennium Endurance (MME) race.

The team completed 279 laps in 12 gruelling hours and emerged the top Honda car in the race, claiming seventh in the overall placings.

The MME race, which was held at the Sepang International Circuit from 6 to 8 Aug, was introduced to mark the turn of the millennium and as part of Malaysia's National Day celebrations.

Yet two of Singapore's teams raced to the podium in the year when the MME marked its 10th anniversary.

Defending champion Team Porsche Club Singapore managed to finish third in the open category, despite a sudden glitch at the start of the race.

Said Lee, 30, the team director of Type R Garage R Racing Team: 'Winning this race is very important to us. We had the chance to pit our skills against the more experienced Japanese race teams like Team 5Zigen, Team Spoon, Tracy Sports and defending champion J's Racing.

'By emerging top in the race, we have proven that we are better than them.'

Last weekend was the third time that Type R Garage R Racing Team has taken part in the MME.

During its debut in 2006, the team came in second, and finished third last year.

This year it competed in the same Honda Integra DC5, in the Class A2 category (production cars above 1,900cc), which was brought in for the 2006 race.

With a car ready, Lee put together a team of Malaysian drivers - Lai Wee Sing, 30, Wong Yew Choong, 32 and Soh Keen Koon, 32 - for this year's race.

He said: 'These guys have at least seven years of racing experience and they are able to handle the car well in different situations.'



**VICTORY: (Above) Team director Lawrence Lee (centre) with drivers, Lai Wee Sing (left) and Wong Yew Choong (right) are top of the competition. (Below) The technical team's impeccable pit-stops contributed to the win. PICTURES: COURTESY OF GARAGE R AND THUNDER ASIA RACING**



### Flawless

'The MME race is about endurance and strategy. We have built a flawless and reliable car and we need experienced drivers who know just when to pit in.'

'Of course, we have a good technical team which knows exactly what to do during pitstops.'

For this year's race, Type R Garage R Racing Team spent three months and \$180,000 preparing the car for the race.

For coming in first, the team won RM30,000 (\$12,400) in prize money.

'The car is six years old, but we maintained it very well before the race,' said Lee, who was not going to let history repeat itself.

Last year, his team's car survived a crash just before race day and in the final hour of the race, a jammed gearbox caused it to slip from second to fourth position.

Fortunately, the team managed to move up one place and eventually finished in third position.

Said Lee: 'We ran a very good race this year. Everything was carried out as we had planned.'

'On race day, we qualified in fifth position and 24th overall. By the second hour, we were already in second position.'

'We kept our pace, closely behind five-time champion Honda Malaysia Racing Team.'

'About 90 minutes before the end of the race, we managed to overtake Honda Malaysia Racing Team. And we maintained our position till the end of the race.'

### Porsche recover from bad start to finish third

LAST year, Team Porsche Club Singapore was the first Singapore race team to claim overall top position in the open category of the Merdeka Millennium Endurance (MME) race.

The team clocked a new record of 308 laps in their Porsche 997 GT3 RSR.

This year, the defending champion raced in a Porsche 911 GT3 and managed to qualify to start the race in pole position.

Unfortunately, the team's car stalled at the start of the race and failed to go for the formation lap.

The team lost its pole position and was downgraded to start the race from the pit lane as the last car.

But it managed to fight back and finished the race in third.

### Joyce Lim