



Carrera Cup drivers finish on the podium in Malaysia

Carrera Cup Australia competitors have performed admirably at the 12-hour Merdeka Millennium Endurance Race in Sepang, Malaysia, over the weekend, with only bad luck preventing top place finishes.

The team of Shaun Juniper, reigning Carrera Cup Champion Craig Baird and Kiwi racer Paul Kelly finished sixth overall and second in their class driving Juniper's Porsche 911 (Type 997) GT3 RSR, while Marc Cini, current Carrera Cup Championship leader David Reynolds and Ian Geekie took third in their class and 15th overall in a Porsche 911 (Type 996) GT3 Cup car.

But it was a case of what could have been for both teams after racing incidents and mechanical problems denied them a shot at glory.

Juniper's team is perhaps the unluckier of the two. After qualifying second they were outstanding during the race and led for over 56 laps when they had a coming together with another car on turn nine.

The collision, which was deemed a "racing incident" by officials and not the fault of either driver, pierced a radiator hose on the Porsche RSR, which forced the team into the pits for just over an hour.

They rejoined the race in 58th position, but undeterred by the set back the trio fought back to finish an amazing sixth overall in one of the worlds most prestigious endurance races.

"There's no doubt we could have won it, but that's motorsport," Juniper said after the race.

"The car went like a dream all weekend and the entire team was fantastic. It was a great result considering we got the car only 10 days before the race."

Juniper said driving the Porsche RSR - one of only 35 in the world - wasn't like anything he had experienced before.

"Driving the car was better than I imagined," he said.

"It was quick, handled brilliantly, and the brakes were unbelievably better. It's the best car Porsche has ever made."

North Balwyn's Cini and his Victorian team mates had a similar hard-luck story to tell.

After qualifying eighth they spent most of the race around second and third positions, before the ninth hour where they developed clutch problems.

They too were forced into the pits for just over an hour before they were able to rejoin the race.

It was a weekend of highs and lows for the Cini, but a rewarding one.

“We had a lot of problems with the car right through the whole weekend,” he said.

“In practice and qualifying we couldn’t do more than a few laps in it without the electronics shutting down and the first time it actually ran properly was in the race.

“We didn’t expect to actually run in the race given all the problems we had in the lead up.

“So it was a good result and we’re extremely happy with it considering the problems over the weekend.”

While Cini, Juniper, Reynolds and Baird are back in Carrera Cup mode in the lead up to the Sandown 500 in just over a fortnight, further enduros and in particular the Dubai 24-hour, remain on their minds.

“I’d love to do more endurance races because the weekend was really terrific fun,” Cini said.

Pic caption: Juniper’s Porsche RSR takes to the track during a practice session on Friday.



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