ISA-MKC 2022 Round 6 Race Report

A return to the spiritual home of karting in Malaysia is always a special occasion. Shah Alam International Circuit has played host to many major races in the past while numerous champion drivers of yesteryear, and up the days of greats such as Jazeman Jaafar, have all raced and won in Shah Alam at some point in time. Most of the Malaysian karting team owners and founders all honed their skills in Shah Alam when they were champions of their day. And there we were, Round 6 of the ISA-MKC 2022 championship, back to where it all began.

The field was looking strong, with almost 40 drivers spread across the Cadet, Junior, Senior, and Master classes. However, Shah Alam was proving to be quite technical for some. Its bumps and wide lines made it more exciting for drivers of all standards. Lap times were dropping constantly throughout the practice sessions but come Sunday, everyone was in prime condition to perform at their best.

Going into Round 6, a few drivers were on the cusp of winning the ISA-MKC 2022 title. And all it took was another round of solid driving and consistent performance to seal the deal. The pressure must've been intense. To secure a championship with one race to go is always a strong statement of talent and skill.

In the Cadet class, it was yet another dominant display by Travis Teoh (MYS). He drove a clean-sweep and bagged first place in qualifying, heats, and both finals. However, the real battle in the final was for second place between Conrad Garrow (SG) and Zarief Rayqal (MYS). All Conrad had to do was get in-between Travis and Rayqal, who are teammates, and hopefully block off one of them, ideally Rayqal, and fight it out for the remaining spot, assuming Travis pulls away. And he did! Both in the pre-final and final. The final battle was the most heated with Conrad and Rayqal switching places numerous times and filled with plenty of dives on the inside. In the end, the pair crossed the finish line roughly 0.150s apart! Further down the field, Esteban Freihuber (PHI) drove spectacularly to make up for his unusual pre-final spin and finished fourth while Max Willoughby (SG) and Jayden Pang (MYS) had their duel also finishing within a tenth of each other at the finish line. There were a few attempts by Jayden but in the end, Max held it to the finish. In seventh place was Nick Joon Yick (MYS) followed by Iman Ziqri (SIN) and Leeloo Freihuber (PHI) who suffered engine trouble in the final.

In the Junior class, Jacob Lauter (MYS) also enjoyed a clean-sweep weekend by winning everything from qualifying to the final. His pace was unmatchable as he pulled away and won each race by at least 2.5s. However, championship contender Katrina Ee (MYS) had a much tougher time fending off Luigi Saw (MYS), Mohamad Anaqi (MYS), and Hendra Putra (MYS). Her battle to stay ahead of the pack was tough yet straightforward - just stay ahead and let the rest slow each other down from all the overtaking attempts. And she did, as she drove home to second place while leaving Saw and Anaqi to fight it out for the final podium spot after Hendra bowed out in lap 10 along with his championship hopes. Anaqi and Saw

had a classic kart battle on track. Anaqi defended most of the time while Saw launched a series of attacks and lunges but none of them stuck. The battle was so intense that it took a 'last lap, last turn' lunge by Saw to squeeze past Anaqi only to end with a drag race to the finish line. Saw won that drag battle and Anaqi was crushed. However, a decision by the stewards to penalize Saw for his somewhat 'off-track' attempt at the pass was made and Anaqi got third place in the end. Oscar Lee (PHI) and Aldrin Cabiles (MYS) had their battle for a few laps at the start but Aldrin struggled to get his kart going and Oscar eventually pulled away.

In the Senior class, it was Feroz Fezril (MYS) who drove home with the win after a very intense battle in the final. All weekend, the race could've gone to any of the top six drivers which included Raja Ariff (MYS), Sergio Noor (INA), Nooris Gaafor (SIN), Nik Iruwan (MYS), and Akshat Misra (IND). All six racers were in the sub-54s during qualifying and were constantly battling it out between themselves in the heats and pre-final. But it was in the final that all gloves were off and they went for it. After five race starts (yes, five!) the field of Seniors finally got going and they went straight into battle mode. The opening three or four laps were some of the wildest racing Shah Alam has seen in a while. On the first lap, Ariff took the lead after making the most of his second-place start grid but Sergio was right behind. On the second lap, Sergio went in front but at the same time, Ariff dropped back to fifth. Within a few laps Feroz was back in front and this time he drove his heart out to open up a gap. And the rest continued to behave in the same do-or-die manner. They fought for position at every turn and even on the straights when they were two-wide. In the end, Feroz managed to hold onto first place but the battle for second was epic, to say the least. Ariff, Sergio, and Nooris exited the last turn three-wide and had the drag battle of the century to the finish line. In the end, they were split by a difference of 0.078s! Ariff won that one followed by Sergio and then Nooris. But they might as well have shared the second spot on the podium because the crowd loved it.

All this action was not just for the front runners as further down the grid Morghan Loganathan (SIN), Matias Araneta (PHI), and Aymaan Erba (MYS) were also having the battle of their lives in the final. However, it was Morghan's wondrous move to take both of them in one turn that sealed his promotion up the grid. Yes, you read that right, two karts in one move – worthy of the prize for Overtake Of The Day. In the Senior Rookies class, Erba managed to bag the win followed by Azriel Azhar (MYS) and Alif Shawqi (MYS).

In the Masters class, it was Luke Armstrong (SIN) who drove a solid race for the win in the final. After a calamitous start by Mohd Jasa (MYS), he spun on the first lap and effectively ruled himself out of the race, and after an unusual spin by the pre-final winner Marcelo Cosas (SIN) around lap seven, Luke Armstrong had the easiest of Sundays a karter could ask for. Coming in second place was Lim Chong Han (MYS) followed by Ahmad Hadri (MYS) the current head of KRD, a Malaysian grassroots karting series held in Shah Alam. Thiru Kumaran (MYS), a resident speedster in Shah Alam could not find the pace all weekend and settled in fourth place followed by Marcelo and Lee Lung Nien (SIN). Tengku Ridzman (MYS) had another fun, casual outing to finish off the field.

The amazing thing about Round 6 was that the organizers managed to get all the races in before the inevitable evening rains, which didn't arrive in the end. Unfortunately, all that time saved was spent on long steward deliberations after a few protests that came up. Prize giving was somewhat delayed and the organizers would like to sincerely apologize for any inconvenience caused to drivers and teams.

But of course, Round 6 did not end on such a sour note. Champions were decided and a big congratulations go out to Travis Teoh (Cadet), Katrina Ee (Junior), and Mohd Jasa (Masters) for winning the ISA 2022 Championship and the Malaysian Karting Championship 2022! Your skill and determination have led you to this and for that, we salute you and your deserving title. Senior is still undecided so stay tuned.

See you at Round 7, Shah Alam, September 18 – THE FINAL ROUND!