

RACR-SHARP

Rajini's team give manufacturers run for money

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Defying the odds and daring to challenge the might of manufacturers, Rajini Academy of Competitive Racing (RACR) have carved out a niche for themselves. RACR's prowess is unmistakable with their riders dominating the premium pro-stock 301-400cc category of the national bike racing championship for the last three seasons. Team owner Rajini Krishnan himself won back-to-back titles in 2021 and 2022, while Rajiv Sethu clinched the top prize the following year to stamp their authority.

The brainchild of 11-time national bike racing champion, Chennai-based RACR was established in 2016 and has quickly become a formidable force in the national circuit. Despite the lack of support from manufacturers and the high costs associated with racing, they have managed to clinch three consecutive championships in the premier class.

RACR began as a racing academy in 2015, with the mission to nurture young talent and provide a platform for aspiring racers, including women, to pursue their dreams. "Now, we have become a household name in the championship for our consistent performances," said Rajini. "Our goal is to show youngsters the path to move up in their career and ride internationally," he added.

Competing against giants

Competing against well-funded manufacturer teams like TVS Racing is no small feat. These factory-run teams have a wealth of resources at their disposal, from state-of-the-art technology to extensive financial backing. In contrast, RACR rely on the support of a single sponsor, Castrol Power1, and the relentless passion of their team members. "It's not easy to fight against manufactur-



RACR owner Rajini Krishnan (right) and technical head Sarath Kumar.

ers. But we have consistently showcased our technical capabilities. The skill of our riders has also proved critical," Rajini said. RACR currently have nine bikes running across various classes in the national championship, including the highly competitive pro-stock 165cc

and 400cc categories. Despite their impressive track record, RACR have struggled to secure support from manufacturers, who could at least provide spare parts at a concessional rate. "Our performance in the last three years would have definitely given them great mileage. The irony is that

our bike's manufacturers received a trophy because of our performance, and that too without even providing any support to us," Rajini pointed out.

High cost of passion

Running a racing team is an expensive endeavour. According to Sarath Kumar, RACR's technical

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head, converting a commercial vehicle into a race-spec bike for 400cc class costs around 14 lakh, with an additional running cost of 2 lakh per weekend. "To make it race-spec, we have to change the suspension, ECU, radiator, and exhaust. We also have to work on the engine and clutch. Since some of these parts will experience wear and tear, we have to keep changing them once every two rounds. We complete about 400km for a weekend of racing and rebuild the engine after 1500km. Altogether, we spend about 25 lakh per bike for a season," Sarath explained.

Despite these staggering costs, RACR remained committed to the sport. "It's impossible to break even without sponsorship. It takes 25 lakh to run one bike for an entire season. Despite knowing that it's not possible to gain commercially in this sport, we are continuing because of passion," said Sarath.

Giving back to the sport For Rajini, the motivation to keep RACR running goes beyond financial gain. "So many youngsters are passionate about racing. As a former champion, I want to show them the path and give something back to the sport. Even if I move on, my heart will always be in racing. My son, a 14-year-old, is also into racing now. This commitment to nurturing the next generation of racers is at the core of our philosophy. I remain hopeful that our continued success on the track will eventually attract the support we need to sustain and grow," he said.