

The search continues for top 3YO in Malaysia

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He might have played second fiddle to Aragorn in the Malaysia 3YO Championship Final two years ago, but Panda Bomb (Phenomenons - Riverside Lass by Noalcoholic) has progressed into a star since. The Australian gelding is without doubt the top “graduate” from the Malaysia 3YO Championship series held in the last two years.

Panda Bomb won three races before the Championship Final in 2017 and has added three more wins to his name since. But in recent months he has been grabbing the headlines like no other.

Last November 25, Panda Bomb equalled the 1400m track record over the short course at Sungei Besi when he won a Class 3 event in the time of 1min. 21.4secs, matching the time first set by Good Sight in 2011. Good Sight is no ordinary galloper. He won the 2013 Piala Emas Sultan Selangor besides numerous other placings in the big races.

A little more than two weeks ago, Panda Bomb broke the long course record over the same distance which had stood for 22 years. The gelding clocked 1min. 21.1secs which shaved 0.6 second off the previous record set by Yallah’s Success in 1997. Panda Bomb’s record, however, stood for just 25 hours as the following day, Browcow bettered the time by just 0.1 seconds.

Panda Bomb is yet another success story — there have been many — of the Malaysia 3YO Championship series which was first staged from 2012 to 2014 and brought back in 2017 to encourage the importation of quality young horses into the country.

The aim of staging the Malaysian Three-Year-Old Championship, staged jointly by the three Malaysian clubs, is to boost the horse population, making racing more competitive across the board and in feature races. This will in turn generate greater interest and increase the turnover.

Aragorn (Manhattan Rain - Class Apart by French Deputy) was without doubt the top of his class in 2017, winning five races that year but he struggled to find his form last year with seven unplaced runs.

Last year’s Final winner Step By Step (Captain Gerrard - American Morsecode by All Chatter) was placed in his subsequent start but unplaced in five outings after that. But the runner-up Relau Star (Captain Sonador - Shovella by Shovhog) has been ever consistent since with seven wins to his credit thus far.

Ra Force (Mossman - Hearts Will by Show A Heart), who finished third last year, has gone on to win three races since.

In the months ahead, perhaps more “graduates” from the last two Championship series will stamp their mark in the local circuit, much like previous Championship Final winners Colin The Firth (2012), Ghost Street (2013) and Black And White (2014).

Further proof that the Championship series do unearth talents is demonstrated by Balotelli, second to Black And White in 2014, who went on to win the Perak Gold Vase the following season and retired last year with seven wins to his credit.

Feisty Leo won a heat in 2012 before going to Singapore where he scored a hatrick the same year. After his return to Malaysia, the gelding has continued to win his share of the races and even finished fourth to Fortunique in the Perak Derby in 2017. He is still active at 10 years with 11 wins to his name.

The 2019 Malaysia 3YO Championship series will begin with the first heat in Ipoh on April 21. Selangor will stage the second heat on May 19, followed by the third heat in Penang on June 9. Each heat offers RM100,000 in prizemoney.

Perak Turf Club will host the Final with stakes of RM200,000 on June 30. Nominations for this year's series close on April 2.

For more information, please visit the respective club's websites:

<http://www.penangturfclub.com>

<http://www.selangorturfclub.com>

<http://www.perakturfclub.my>