

# DATTA THE

Chennai  
youngster  
sets the  
track ablaze

# DAZZLER

## DC CORRESPONDENT

Chennai young gun Ashwin Datta spearheaded a momentous podium sweep for his team Momentum Motorsports in the highly competitive Formula LGB 1300 category, holding off two Bengaluru school-boys. Nayan Chatterjee (Mumbai) and local challenger Vishnu Prasad won a race apiece in the premium MRF F1600 class on Day Two of the MRF MMSC fmsci Indian National Car Racing Championship at the MMRT.

Also in the limelight was Coimbatore veteran Arjun Balu (Race Concepts) who shrugged off a poor qualifying session where he finished fifth, and won the popular Indian Touring Cars race with a measure of comfort, while Chennai's RP Rajarajan took the honours in the Super Stock category after a tough fight and Pune lad Pratik Sonawane topped in the Volkswagen Ameo Class race.

Datta, 20, who was runner-up to Sohil Shah in the LGB 1300 championship last season, overcame a sluggish start when he dropped from second to third before recovering to grab the lead and chalk up his second win of the season. Finishing second and third behind him, respectively, were two Bengaluru schoolboys, Tijil Rao (16), who had started from pole position and Chirag Ghorpade, only 14.

In the first MRF F1600 race, Chatterjee benefitted from a drive-through penalty for pole-sitter Sohil Shah from Bengaluru for jump start and once in front, he opened up a comfortable lead to win from Chennai's Nirmal Umashankar and Coimbatore's Bala Prasath. Sohil Shah, who posted the fastest lap of the race, eventually was placed ninth. In the next race, Vishnu Prasad, starting fourth on the grid, rocketed off the blocks to take the lead in the first

lap itself and then hung on to win ahead of two other Chennai drivers, Sandeep Kumar and Raghul Rangasamy.

Earlier, Balu, who had a poor qualifying session due to a technical hitch with his car, was not to be denied when the eight-lap race got underway. Some four corners before the end of the first lap, the Coimbatore star jumped four positions to take the lead and never looked back.

Behind him, after the initial jostling for track positions, Karthik Tharani (VW Motorsport) seemed content to hold his second spot behind Balu while further back, Nikanth Ram (ARKA Motorsports) won a tight battle with another VW factory driver Ishaan Dodhiwala, to complete the podium.

Meanwhile, Oman's Shihab Al Habsi and Finn Elias Seppanen shared the top honours in the two Formula 4 SEA races.

**Results: MRF F1600 (Race-1):** 1. Nayan Chatterjee (Mumbai) (13mins, 31.977secs); 2. Nirmal Umashankar (Chennai) (13:34.309); 3. A Bala Prasath (Coimbatore) (13:34.805). **Race-2:** 1. Vishnu Prasad (Chennai) (13:34.363); 2. Sandeep Kumar (Chennai) (13:35.140); 3. Raghul Rangasamy

(Mamallapuram) (13:35.732). **Indian Touring Cars (Race-1):** 1. Arjun Balu (Race Concepts) (15:22.141); 2. Karthik Tharani (VW Motorsports) (15:31.209); 3.

Nikanth Ram (Arka Motorsports) (15:38.667).

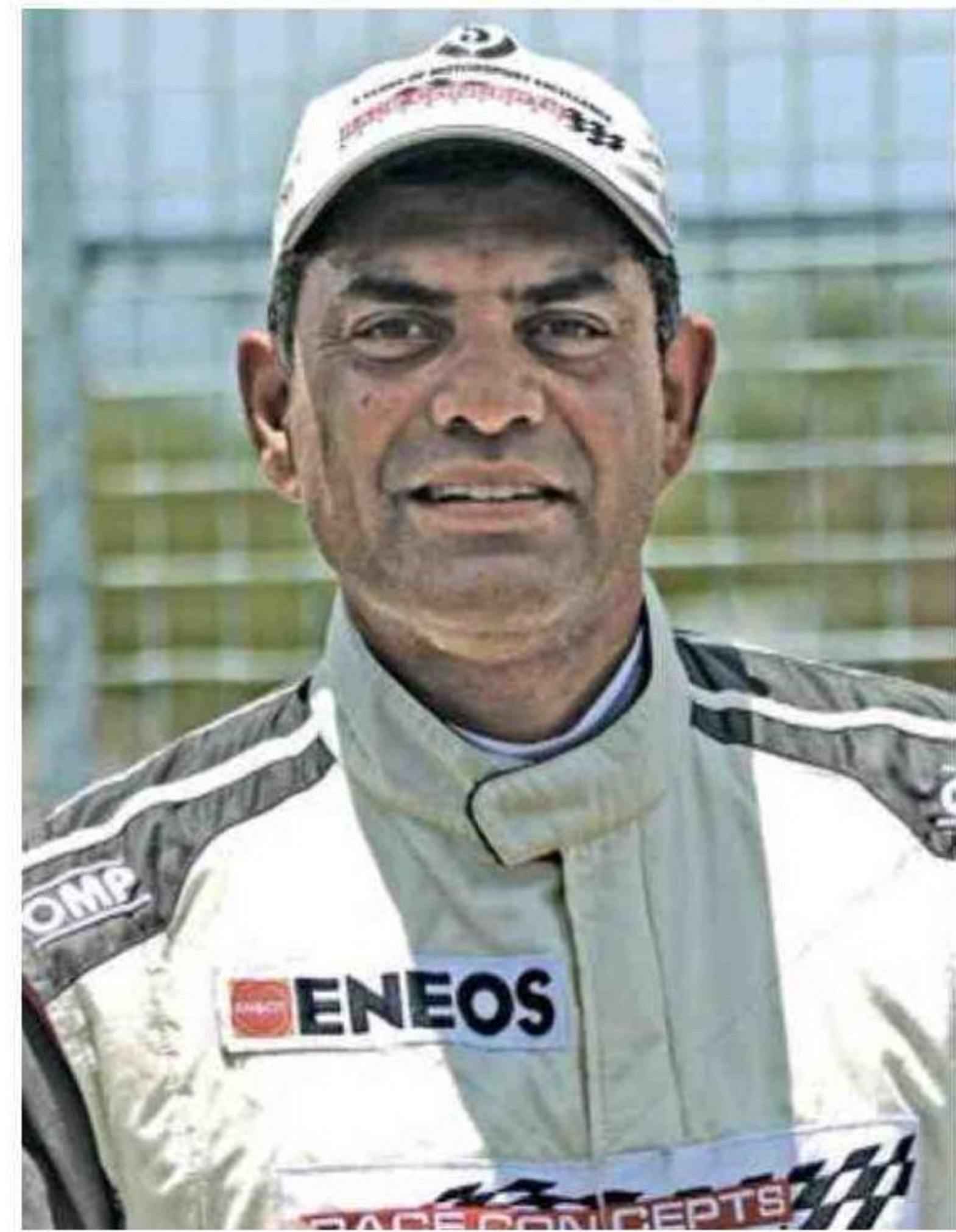
**Super Stock (Race-1):** 1. RP Rajarajan (Performance Racing) (16:23.257); 2. Rithvik Thomas (Race Concepts) (16:25.808); 3. Sudanand Daniel (Race Concepts) (16:27.363).

**Formula LGB 1300 (Race-1):** 1. Ashwin Datta (Momentum Motorsports) (15:23.678); 2. Tijil Rao (Momentum Motorsports) (15:25.447); 3. Chirag Ghorpade (Momentum Motorsports) (15:33.840).

**Volkswagen Ameo Class (Race-1):** 1. Pratik Sonawane (Pune) (15:36.937); 2. Saurav Bandyopadhyay (Mumbai) (15:41.501); 3. Jeet Jhabakh (15:45.786).

**Formula 4 SEA (Race-1, 11 laps):** 1. Shihab Al Habsi (Oman) (20:40.847); 2. Elias Seppanen (Finland) (20:43.526);

Ashwin Datta is flanked by Tijil Rao and Chirag Ghorpade.



Arjun Balu

3. Alister Yoong (Malaysia) (20:44.174). **Race-2 (12 laps):** 1. Seppanen (19:57.398); 2. Young (19:57.948); 3. Al Habsi (19:58.826).

