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Steering ahead

PRINCE FREDERICK



Geared to win The Formula Jeppiaar team with its car

After success at the all-India open-wheeled race car design contest, Formula Jeppiaar has set its sights on FORMULA SAE design challenge

Twenty-five students of Jeppiaar Engineering College gave their chairman Jeppiaar an unforgettable Christmas gift in 2010: an 800cc Maruti engine. Having entered the protracted and challenging Maruti Suzuki SUPRA SAEINDIA 2011 contest in July last year, they got this engine after clearing the first in a series of tests.

An all-India open-wheeled race car design contest for students that concluded early this month at the Irungatukottai race track, this had checks at various stages to filter out teams. Only 45 of the 70 colleges in the fray survived the 'virtual design' test, conducted at Ansys India's facility at Pune in the latter part of 2010. Formula Jeppiaar, as the team is called, was among the successful ones that received 800 cc engines to build their racing cars.

This team eventually went on to win the second prize in 'acceleration' as well as in 'engineering design' category. B. Pradeep Raj, vice-captain of the 25-member team consisting of students from mechanical, aeronautical, electronics and instrumentation departments of the college, says the car was designed with a 3D modelling software sponsored by US-based SolidWorks.

The team's early success encouraged college authorities to release around Rs. 4.5 lakh for purchase and fabrication of parts. V. Manikandan, who as treasurer kept track of the expenses, says, "Cost was one of the parameters by which the race cars were judged." A driver kit from Viper Hobbies, which cost around Rs. 45,000, was the only luxury Formula Jeppiaar allowed itself.

The next major hurdle came on May 28 this year, when automobile design experts were sent to the campuses of contesting teams to analyse the cars for technical soundness. "After this round, the number of teams in the reckoning dwindled to 35," says Pradeep. "Another ten fell by the wayside when the cars were being assessed for safety features and only 25 made it to the finals."

Bearing in mind that teams consisted of students, the authorities allowed only three cars — with a time difference of 15 seconds — to be put on the Irungatukottai track at a time. "We missed the first place in acceleration by 0.03 seconds," says Pradeep. "We learnt that the second prize in the 'engineering design' category came our way for the original wheel assembly of our car." (Resonance Racing, the team from AISSMS Pune finished first in the 'overall' category, followed by Team Pegasus from PSG College of Technology, Coimbatore).

Encouraged by this success, Formula Jeppiaar has set its sights on FORMULA SAE design challenge and plans to spend the prize money — Rs. 25,000 for acceleration and another Rs. 25,000 for engineering design — towards meeting the entry fee for this international contest.

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