

Controversy overshadowed Mangat's third NRC triumph

Motorcross. Jas Mangat and Hassan Alwi were the most in form drivers. However, others such as Ronald Ssebuguzi, Arthur Blick Jr, Duncan Kikankane, Desh Kananura, Ambrose Byona, Christakis Fitidis and Ranjit Kuku are glad to see the back of 2016.

BY FREDERICK MUSISI KIYINGI
fmusisi@ug.nationmedia.com

KAMPALA. In 2015, motorsport calendar was all about one man—Arthur Blick Jr—who took the sport by storm winning his maiden National Rally Championship (NRC) title with two events to spare. He also earned the 'Ssalongo' (father of twins) tag after adding the Enduro title.

In contrast, 2016 will go down as the year of unusual events, from onset. Early on, Dusman Okee upset incumbent Jack Wavamunno in polls (33-32) to become FMU president.

Okee rode into office preaching transparency and by the year end his administration had cleared a debt of Sh80m inherited from the old office bearers. But the same administration failed to reveal how much they have collected from the events.

More shocks occurred when the Gorilla in the Mist Rally, slated for Kabale, was postponed following the outbreak of rift valley fever. Then enter the Kabalega Rally which was decided in the boardroom and left several sections of the rallying fraternity dissatisfied.

Speaking in different tongues

The drama off the field took the gloss off what would otherwise have been a thrilling and competitive NRC season with two drivers going into the final event with a realistic chance of winning the title.

Eventually, seasoned Jas Mangat and Joseph Kanya, (Mitsubishi Evo X 'Kisodde'), beat youthful Hassan Alwi Jnr and Enock

PAST NRC CHAMPIONS

2016	Jas Mangat
2015	Arthur Blick Junior
2014	Ronald Ssebuguzi
2013	Jas Mangat
2012	Jas Mangat
2011	Susan Muwonge
2010	Nasser Mutebi
2009	Ronald Ssebuguzi
2008	Dr Ashraf Ahmed
2007	Ponsiano Lwakataka
2006	Ronald Ssebuguzi
2005	Ponsiano Lwakataka



Jas Mangat (top) and Hassan Alwi dazzled in 2016. PHOTO BY JB SSENKUBUGE

Olinga (Subaru N14) to the title by just six points. It was Mangat's third NRC title after back-to-back victories in 2012-13.

Mangat was delighted having won four events—Kabale, Masaka, Fort Portal and Jinja—en route to the title. "I came in with a settled mind knowing exactly what to do. The destiny was in my own hands and attacked from day one," he said after winning in Jinja. Defiantly though, Mangat maintains he won five events.

Actually, his Pili Pili crew won the Kabale, Masaka, Fort Portal, Jinja. But the Kabalega rally, which would have been their fifth victory, was annulled and Mangat and Co. were declared non-finishers. Conversely, after an appeal, the Senate (the highest appellate committee) declared Godfrey Lubega and Justin Mungoma (Subaru N12) the winners.

The Kabalega controversy still haunts the sport going into the new year with drivers, administrators and the whole rally fraternity still divided on the out-

come. A section of the drivers have since gone to court challenging the Senate's decision. 2017 awaits another episode of this boardroom melodrama.

Drama aside, Alwi Hassan was the most consistent driver scoring in each and every round but that did not guarantee him the title. The highlight of his run was when he caught the top drivers napping on his way to winning the Shell Pearl Rally.

Meanwhile, top drivers like three times national champion Ronald Ssebuguzi, Blick Jr, Duncan 'Kikankane' Mubiru, Desh Kananura, Ambrose Byona, Christakis Fitidis and Ranjit Kuku will forever see 2016 as one forgettable year. It was none the better for female drivers.

However, 2016 will be remembered for the emergence of Evo X 'Bisodde' machines, with over five coming in on the rally scene. And finally, the FMU awards for 2015 motorsport and MX champions were put in the cupboard.

