

X-TREME SPORTS

Perfect landing for 35 BASE jumpers

THIRTY FIVE of the 55 invited BASE jumpers survived the first round of the inaugural Malaysian International Championship of X-treme Sky Dive 2001 (XSD) yesterday.

The event, which is the first ever international meet of its sort in Malaysia, tests the abilities of the jumpers who will jump off from the top of the Petronas Twin Towers before landing on a targetted area.

BASE jumping, which is an acronym for building, antennae, span (bridges) and earth (cliff), evolved from skydiving competitions about 20 years ago.

But due to restrictive nature of skydiving which has too many rules, individuals with a devilish streak in them, have instead turned their attention to BASE jumping.

Two of the competitors in the XSD, Austrians Dr Michael Wolff and Jurgen Mennel, who are sponsored by Lauda Air and Renaissance chain of hotels, safely made the

By GRAIG NUNIS
gnunis@nstp.com.my

first round cut yesterday.

Wolff, who is a lawyer by profession and Mennel, who owns a computer company, are accomplished sky divers with nearly 5,000 jumps between them.

They also have more than 300 BASE jump under their belt but this is the first time they are actually competing in an organised BASE jumping competition..

They first met about a year ago in Melbourne, Australia, where they now live.

"We knew each other by reputation but only met about a year ago. Since then, we have been BASE jumping together as a team," said Wolff.

"In fact, when we were invited to compete in this event, we decided to come as a team as well.

"In the past four months, we have spent more time getting ready for this event than at our

actual work."

Wolff, who is the more vocal of the two, said the duo had a tough time looking for sponsors until Lauda Air who provided them with flight tickets and Renaissance who give them board and lodging here stepped in.

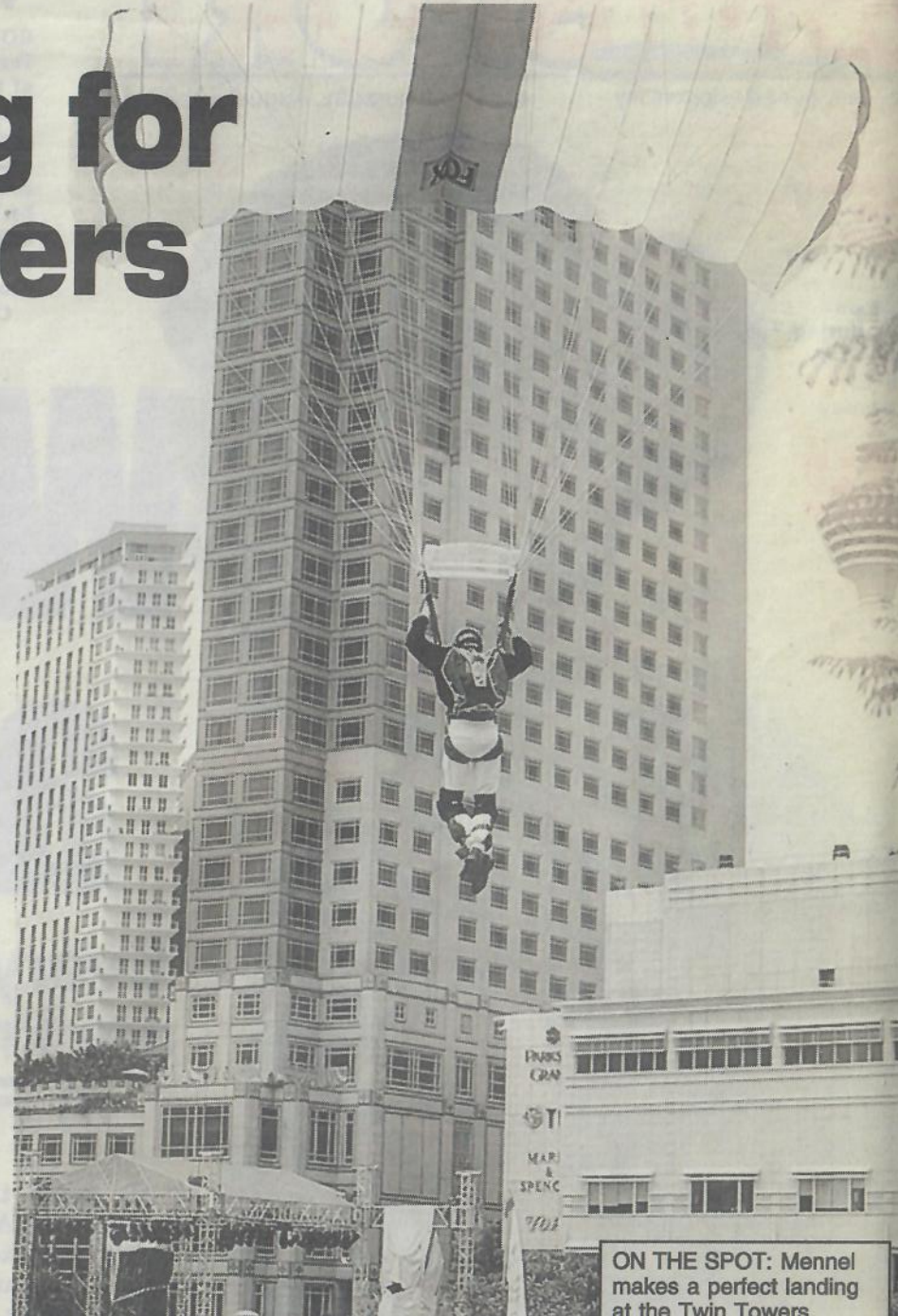
"We are indeed grateful to our sponsors as we may not be here if it not for them.

"We did not want to miss this event which has generated lots of publicity around the world," said Wolff, who used skydiving and BASE jumping to conquer his fear of heights.

Mennel said: "BASE jumping is a relatively new sport and I'm certain that there are fewer than 300 active jumpers in the whole world.

"This is what makes the Malaysian competition unique as more than 55 jumpers have come here.

"Since this is not an easy jump, only the best have been selected and we both hope to be here until the final day, which is on Sunday."



ON THE SPOT: Mennel makes a perfect landing at the Twin Towers