

Hitotsuyama Racing

Press release - 2012. 0411 - 003

Race Report

Super GT 2012 Series

Round-1 / Okayama International Circuit

Both Cars Finish the Race at the Super GT Opening Round at Okayama

Hitotsuyama Racing had both two cars finish the race for the Super GT Round 1 held at Okayama International Circuit on March 31st – April 1st.



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March 31st, Official Qualifying Sessions

#20 Racerbook Audi R8 LMS - Michael Kim / Hideki Noda

The official qualifying sessions for the Round 1 were held in the "knock-out" format. Hideki Noda, in charge of Q1, first checked the machine condition right after he entered the track due to the fact that #20 Racerbook Audi R8 LMS had the trouble with the power steering oil leak during the official practice session held in the morning. After that, Noda went for the time attack but the trouble with the power steering came back during the first timed lap. Noda tried to continue the time attack, but with the uncontrollable steering wheel, he couldn't help but coming back to the pit. Q1 lasts only 15 minutes. We couldn't repair the trouble in time, which made us to lose Q1 and became a tail ender reluctantly.

#21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS - Akihiro Tsuzuki / Cyndie Alleman

During the morning official practice session, the matching with the rain tires didn't go well and that made #21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS to be ranked lower. Akihiro Tsuzuki, our ace driver, was in charge of Q1. Tsuzuki participated in various series with Audi R8 LMS from Hitotsuyama Racing last year as well. The team entrusted Tsuzuki with passing Q1 as he is well acquainted with Audi R8 LMS. The regulation "makes us to use the tires used for the qualifying practices also in the race", so Tsuzuki avoided making unnecessary time attack and came back to the pit as soon as he secured the position to go on to Q2 in order to retain the tires. He made it to Q2.

The regulation says "the same driver is not allowed to drive in the subsequent session", so Cyndie Alleman, the hopeful female Swiss driver, took in charge of Q2 instead of Tsuzuki. The rain right before Q2 made the track in the difficult condition with half wet. Cyndie entered the track with the intermediate tires first, but she confirmed right after she entered the track that she could go for the time attack with the slick tires. She came back to the pit for the quick change to the slick tires and went back for the time attack. However, many of the rivals had already had the slick tires on from the start of Q2, on the other hand, Cyndie didn't have enough time for the time attack compared to them, and she finished Q2 with 12th position. For her, it was just a step to the top 10, which can go on to the next Q3, but couldn't make it and finished the qualifying session.

P1 #911 ENDLESS TAISAN 911 - Kyosuke Mineo / Naoki Yokomizo

P2 #33 HANKOOK PORSCHE - Masami Kageyama / Tomonobu Fujii

P3 #11 GAINER DIXCEL R8 LMS - Tetsuya Tanaka / Katsuyuki Hiranaka

P12 #21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS - Akihiro Tsuzuki / Cyndie Alleman

P25 #20 Racerbook Audi R8 LMS - Michael Kim / Hideki Noda





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April 1st, Race Day

#20 Racerbook Audi R8 LMS – Michael Kim / Hideki Noda

With about 16,000 spectators at the circuit, the race started at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. Hideki Noda was the start driver for #20 Racerbook Audi R8 LMS. The regulation says that "we must use the tires used in the qualifying sessions for the start of the race", but it was clear that the tires used in the qualifying do not match the track condition in the race. Therefore, Noda came back to the pit in the first lap to change the tires even though he knew that it would be a waste of time. We change them to the new tires with a different compound. The circumstances were severe as he had been already lapped at the time of re-entering the track, but Noda continues making laps at his own pace. While the rivals drop out of the race that were filled with contacts and crashes, Noda went up the position gradually from the tail end. At the half way through the race, he made the pit-in for the refuel and the tire change, and left the last half of the race on the hands of Michael Kim.

Michael also participated in the Super Taikyu and Le Mans series with Audi R8 LMS from Hitotsuyama Racing last year, so this is his second year to drive the Audi R8 LMS. When Noda made the pit-in, the position was in the 20th, but Michael made the laps at the pace higher than Noda, which renewed Noda's best lap time. As the race nears the end, while the top runners drop the lap time with the tires worn out, Michael managed the tires well and continued driving at the higher pace than the top runners. He recovered the position and finished 18th in the end.

We had a lot of trouble from the first day and had a severe circumstances as we could not drive for enough time during the practice sessions, Michael gave the team a good result of being completed the first race.

#21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS – Akihiro Tsuzuki / Cyndie Alleman

As for #21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS, Cyndie was the start driver. While her drive gathered the people's attention as she was the first female driver in the history of Super GT, Cyndie kept the 12th position without taking any risks. As this is her first time to drive in Super GT, she needs improving "how to be overtaken and how to let them overtake" by the upper class GT 500 machines. However, Cyndie records the time which can stand comparison with the rivals around her and continues making laps. In the midway during the race, she went up one position to the 11th from the starting position and came back to the pit. She left the last half of the race in the hands of the ace driver Tsuzuki.

Tsuzuki showed the offensive drive after entering the track. When he entered the track, the position was down to 18th, but he overtook the rivals one after another and went up to the 11th position. Then he overtook Iguchi of #27 PACIFIC NAC Ikamusume Ferrari and now he was within the range of getting points. With one top runner retired from the race, he went up one more position to 9th.

However, while he was having a close competition with the car #27, the 11th positioned Yoshimoto of the car #66 triple a Vantage GT2 made a catch-up and joined the battle for 9th position.

The tough battle for the position with 3 cars of Audi, Ferrari, and Aston Martin was being developed for about 10 laps with the time difference of within 1 second. With a few laps left in the race, Tsuzuki told the pit through the radio that he had already used up the tires and was under severe condition. However, he kept the position until the final lap and finished the first race with the new team structure in the 9th position.

P1 #11 GAINER DIXCEL R8 LMS – Tetsuya Tanaka / Katsuyuki Hiranaka

P2 #911 ENDLESS TAISAN 911 – Kyosuke Mineo / Naoki Yokomizo

P3 #0 GSR Hatsune Miku BMW - Nobuteru Taniguchi / Tatsuya Kataoka

P9 #21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS – Akihiro Tsuzuki / Cyndie Alleman

P18 #20 Racerbook Audi R8 LMS – Michael Kim / Hideki Noda

The second round Fuji will be held at Fuji Speedway on May 3rd – 4th.

Hitotsuyama Racing will compete with the race with the aim for getting points for both 2 cars.

Your continued support and cheers would be much appreciated.