Audi Sport
R8 LMS Partner

Hitotsuyama Racing

Press release - 2012.0906 - 013

Race Report

Super GT 2012 Series

Round-5 / Suzuka Circuit

Regrettable Stop on the Verge of Podium Finish

Hitotsuyama Racing participated in the Pokka 1000km, the 5th round of Super GT, held at Suzuka Circuit on August 18th –19th. #21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS was thought to be sure to clinch the podium finish because it was running third toward the end of the race but stopped regrettably due to out of gas just a little more to go.

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Free Practice / Qualifying, August 18th

#21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS Akihiro Tsuzuki / Cyndie Alleman / Richard Lyons

Midsummer Pokka1000km, the most severe round in the season. The team was aiming to advance higher with a new driver Richard Lyons from this time. Richard has the experience of winning the series championships in both GT500 and the Formula Nippon. What the team asked Richard for this Pokka1000km is nothing but the podium finish. The team, not having been able to have the satisfactory results in this season so far due to the BOP (Balance of Performance) of FIA and the unexpected troubles, had a great hope for Richard, one of the drivers who know Super GT better than anyone else. The official practice session started under strong sunshine. Having 3 drivers this time, time allocated to one driver in the practice session is reduced, but the team gave equal time to each of 3 drivers with the knowledge of it. At the beginning of the session, Richard complained the oversteering, but by adjusting the ride height and changing the tires completed the machine that was close to the ideal condition with a slight understeering, and the team changed the driver to Akihiro Tsuzuki. Tsuzuki also confirmed there was no problem in the feeing of the machine, and handed over the steering to Cyndie, who has the least experience of the three here at Suzuka. By the time Cyndie got to drive it, the machine feeling had changed a little, but she recorded the reasonable lap times. We finished this session with the lap time of 13th position in the GT 300 class in the end, but recorded the top lap time among the 4 Audis. This was just the official practice with an emphasis on the race, so this was a fully satisfactory result. In the subsequent qualifying session, Tsuzuki was in charge of Q1. 16 cars out of all 25 cars could proceed to Q2. Tsuzuki tried the 3-lap time attack considering the timing, but he was defeated in Q1 just 0.4 seconds short of lap time in order to remain in the top 16.

99 Racerbook Audi R8 LMS Michael Kim / Hideto Yasuoka / Yoshio Tsuzuki

99 Racerbook Audi R8 LMS was to compete the 1000km with Yoshio Tsuzuki, the elder brother of Akihiro Tsuzuki, as the third driver. Yoshio Tsuzuki has been engaged in the racing activities mainly with Porsche, having the experience of victory in the Porsche Carrera Cup Japan and driving ZENT Porsche as the third driver at Pokka GT in 2010. Tsuzuki drove an Audi at the official testing in July for the first time and showed the fine drive without giving the feeling of the 2-year blank, which made the team's expectation higher. In the official practice session, first Yasuoka was in charge of setting. We went on the setting mainly making adjustments of the suspension and the tire choice. However, we could not determine the direction of the machine, and the team had to give priority to let Michael Kim and Tsuzuki check the machine feeling considering the time remaining then. In the long-running race, the most important thing is to make a steady pace on average of three drivers. In the official practice, the lap time of 2' 06" 991 that Yasuoka recorded in the beginning was the best lap time of the team and sank to the lower position of 23rd in the class. Yasuoka was also responsible for the subsequent qualifying session. Yasuoka, who was certain to advance to Q2, recorded the best lap time on the 5th timed lap, but he was defeated by 0.9 seconds in Q1 to be placed on 21st and could not advance to Q2.

P1 #16 MUGEN CR-Z GT Hideki Mutoh / Daisuke Nakajima

P2 #3 S Road NDDP GT-R Yuhi Sekiguchi / Katsumasa Chiyo / Daiki Sasaki

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

P18 #21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS Akihiro Tsuzuki / Cyndie Alleman / Richard Lyons

P21 #99 Racerbook Audi R8 LMS Michael Kim / Hideto Yasuoka / Yoshio Tsuzuki

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Race Day, August 19th

#21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS Akihiro Tsuzuki / Cyndie Alleman / Richard Lyons

The thunder storm hit Suzuka from the midnight on qualifying day to the dawn on the race day, but the strong sunshine from the day before came back by the time the start procedure for Super GT started, and everyone expected the harsh 1000km race. At 12:30, after one formation lap, the race with 173 laps / 1000km started. Richard knew everything about Super GT. It seemed he tried not to put unnecessary burden on the machine in the beginning and finished the opening lap keeping its position in GT 300. However, he started the chase from this point. He caught #14 Team SGC IS350 on Lap 3, and then overtook #43 ARTA Garaiya on Lap 5. On the 6th lap, because #48 DIJON Neon CALLAWAY Wakos ED went into the pit in order to conduct the penalty, his position went up to 15th. As Richard's momentum accelerated further, he caught #2 Evangelion RT Shogoki Apple Shiden on Lap 11, then went up to 9th position on Lap 15 due to the trouble happened to our rivals. After that, we were hunting down the 7th-positioned #11 GAINER DIXCEL R8 LMS in front of us. On the 24th lap, we captured #11 finally and stole the top position of Audis. Richard rushed ahead and went up to the temporary 4th position and went into the pits on Lap 31, and passed the baton to Tsuzuki. When all the rivals had the pit stop, Tsuzuki was driving 6th position. Tsuzuki, “whose motivation has reached the top for the first time in a long time to see the driving of Richard”, continued to make more gaps from the cars behind him by recording the lap time that was close to Richard’s. He had 29 laps of driving, went up the position to 5th, and came back to the pit on the 60th lap. He passed the baton to Richard again. Richard kept his momentum going on in this stint and chased hectically the third-positioned #2 and the fourth-positioned #61 SUBARU BRZ R&D SPORT. In the latter half of this stint, he showed his wonderful drive by renewing his best lap time, and then Tsuzuki came in for the fourth stint. #2 pitted on Lap 91, and #61 retired from the race due to out of gas on Lap 93. # 21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS Tsuzuki went up to the third position in the class finally. In the pit, cheering voices arose as we saw the car now in the top 3 for the first time in this season. However, there was a more-than-40-second gap between us and the second-positioned #3 S Road NDDP GT-R, and it seemed indeed difficult to catch up with it further. The team considered the strategy to ensure the third-position podium finish, but it seemed that Tsuzuki and Richard had no intention whatsoever on their minds. Tsuzuki continued to shorten the gap between him and Chiyo of #3 more than 1 second per lap. At the exact same timing as #3, we came into the pit for the 5th stint on Lap 122. While #3 took 1’ 02” for the pit work, #21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS finished the pit work in 56 seconds. After both cars rejoined the race, Richard was just 15 seconds behind Sekiguchi of #3 and kept putting the pressure on him. Developing the psychological tactics, Richard shortened the gap to 5 seconds, where #3 Sekiguchi now could check the appearance of Richard himself with the mirror. At that time, only 20 laps were remaining in the race and now we had to consider the timing of the final refueling. On the live-feed monitor, two cars were focused on and the spectators got excited, but right after that, we heard Richard screaming through the radio. At the same time, the monitor showed the figure of #21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS slowing down at the exit of the hairpin curve, and the groans as well as the confusion spread out in the team. Engineers desperately tried to check the situation of the machine with Richard through the team radio but received no response from Richard. The car regrettably stopped on Lap 145.Later we found out that the machine stopped due to out of gas. After that, #3 Sekiguchi entered the pit because of the penalty, which would make us the second position on the podium for sure, so the results were as regrettable as they could be.

99 Racerbook Audi R8 LMS Michael Kim / Hideto Yasuoka / Yoshio Tsuzuki

For # 99 Racerbook Audi R8 LMS, Hideto Yasuoka was the start driver. On the first lap, he went up the position from 21st to 19th, and then developed the battle with #14 Team SGC IS350. However, on the 5th lap at the cross section, the driver Tamanaka of #5 Mach GoGoGo Shaken Ferrari458 came side by side. Yasuoka had a slight contact with #5 as #5 passed us and went off the track. Becoming impossible to control the car on the green, he jumped into the entry of Hairpin curve at high speed this time. Unfortunately, he crashed into #5 Tamanaka, who was entering the corner then. The two had to retire from the race only on the 5th lap of the 1000km race.

P1 #66 triple a vantage GT3 Hiroki Yoshimoto / Kazuki Hoshino / Hiroki Yoshida

P2 #3 S Road NDDP GT-R Yuhi Sekiguchi / Katsumasa Chiyo / Daiki Sasaki

P3 #88 Manepa Lamborghini GT3 Manabu Orido / Takayuki Aoki / Keita Sawa

P14 #21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS Akihiro Tsuzuki / Cyndie Alleman / Richard Lyons

DNF #99 Racerbook Audi R8 LMS Michael Kim / Hideto Yasuoka / Yoshio Tsuzuki

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Mikio Hitotsuyama, Team Principal

“I could never regret it more than this. We were just about to reach the second position on the podium. The speed of Aston Martin is exceptional, more like in another dimension, so the second position would be the same as the victory…Richard did a great job as we expected and Tsuzuki responded firmly to his great job done. But this proved that our Audi has enough potential to fight for the race. We have not been able to show the good points so far in this season, and people have been saying that one of the reasons was the difference for the ultra. However, it proved that drivers could cover the difference enough even if it was not the ultra, right? Our machine overtook the Ultra from the side-by-side position from the exit of the corner. I would like to show some good things during this season.As for #99, I have nothing I can say about it. I cannot but apologize to Mr. Tamanaka, the owner of #5 Mach, as well as the team, staff, fans of Mach and our two drivers who could not drive our team’s car, all the team staff and fans. It was so regrettable that this happened on the 5th lap of the 1000km race. I just feel sorry for everyone who was disappointed with this.”

Official Facebook page of Hitotsuyama Racing.
http://www.facebook.com/pages/Hitotsuyama-Racing/202417599846736