

Hitotsuyama Racing

Press release - 2012.0821- 011

2012年8月21日

Race Report

Super GT 2012 Series

Round-4 / Sportsland Sugo

Season's Worst Race for both #21 and #99

Hitotsuyama Racing participated in the fourth round of Super GT held at Sports Land Sugo on July 28th – 29th, but it became a distressing race which we could call the worst race of the season so far.



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July 28th, Official Practice / Official Qualifying

#21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS Akihiro Tsuzuki / Cyndie Alleman

Round 4 Sugo was held with about one and a half month interval from the previous race in Malaysia. Although we have had a lot of wet conditions so far since the official pre-season test, we had strong sunlight from the day of bringing-in at Sugo, and we assumed the tough race for both machine and the drivers. In the official practice session in the morning, Akihiro Tsuzuki drove first. He drove for the tire choice and the machine setting, but he suffered from the oversteering from the beginning. Machine showed little reaction to the change of the setting by the engineers, and we were classified in 17th in the class and recorded the time of 1' 25" 446. Since this GT3 machine has a small setting range, we concluded that it would be difficult to make the drastic change of the machine feeling, so we changed drivers to Cyndie Alleman. The major issue for Cyndie is how she can familiarize herself to the circuits in Japan where she drives for the first time within the limited time frame. Sugo was also the first circuit for Cyndie to drive, but this time she had a test drive for about 20 laps with a road car that the team prepared for her a few days ago. She also had a special training of Sugo with the racing simulator "Race Fight Club" (<http://www.racefightclub.com/>) managed by Hideto Yasuoka of #99 Racerbook Audi R8 LMS. Thanks to this training, she marked good lap times with the used tires from the beginning. However, Cyndie complained the oversteering as well as Tsuzuki, and she could not record the faster time until the end of the session. Still no solutions to oversteering, we finished the official practice in 21st position in the class. Then in the qualifying, 2 cars in the lowest positions (24th and 25th in the class) would be eliminated from the race at this event, so each team was more spirited for the qualifying attack, which led the session to be red flagged from the beginning. #21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS first set its aim to advancing to the Super Lap before the official practice, but it went down to the low position also in the qualifying with the problem of oversteering mentioned before. Tsuzuki, who was responsible for the qualifying attack, recorded the time of 1' 24" 776 in the first timed lap, but he could not improve the lap time due to the red-flag situations twice. We finished the qualifying in the 20th position in the class.

#99 Racerbook Audi R8 LMS Michael Kim / Hideto Yasuoka

For #99 Racerbook Audi R8 LMS, Hideto Yasuoka paired up with Michael Kim, who drove it at the first round in Okayama. In the official practice, Yasuoka went out to the track first at the right timing for him. He drove for the tire choice and the a little change in the setting. Yasuoka also complained the same tendency of oversteering as Tsuzuki of #21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS. Yasuoka continued to mainly change the setting around the drive-related areas, but he had trouble that engine did not start when pitting out in the mid-session. We found by the data analysis that the problem was the failure of the cell motor. Team started the exchange work immediately. It became a large-scale work where we had to remove the rear-section of the machine, but it took only about 40 minutes to exchange the parts thanks to the hard work of our mechanics. With a little time to remain, he could pass the baton to Michael Kim. Then came the official qualifying session. Yasuoka, who was responsible for the qualifying attack, "loves Sugo the best in Japan", so he aimed to advance to the top 10. In order to avoid being eliminated in the qualifying, while each team entered the track soon after the start of the session, Yasuoka waited in the pit in order to avoid the traffic. He entered the track when 5 minutes had passed from the beginning of the qualifying and recorded the lap time of 1' 25" 063 on the first timed lap. However, on the second timed lap, #30 IWASAKI MODA Croco apr R8 made a spin and this caused the session to be suspended with red flag. Yasuoka had only one timed lap at this point because he delayed the timing of entering the track, which made him to sink in the lower position of 23rd in the class, so he set his mind to improve the lap time after the restart of the qualifying. On the contrary, after the qualifying resumed, the unbelievable trouble hit Yasuoka himself on his out lap. The circuit monitor showed the figure of #99 Racerbook Audi R8 LMS slowing down. Yasuoka kept communicating with the team in the pit by the radio while running the machine with the inertia, but he stopped the car at the last corner helplessly. This caused the second red flag situation. There is an article in the Super GT regulations that the lap time of the car which caused the red flag during the qualifying will be canceled, and with this regulation #99 Racerbook Audi R8 LMS was practically eliminated from the qualifying. After this, Team did the repair work to the machine again with a slight hope of taking part in the race. Team found that the trouble during the qualifying was the damage to the bolt of the flywheel. Team completed the repair work by the morning on Race Day and was allowed to participate in the free practice, but the hope to race was lost and we finished the event at this point.

P1 #33 HANKOOK PORSCHE Masami Kageyama / Tomonobu Fujii

P2 #88 Manepa Lamborghini GT3 Manabu Orido / Takayuki Aoki

P3 #31 apr HASEPRO PRIUS GT Morio Nitta / Koki Saga

P19 #21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS Akihiro Tsuzuki / Cyndie Alleman

P-- #99 Racerbok Audi R8 LMS Michael Kim / Hideto Yasuoka

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July 29th, Race Day

#21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS Akihiro Tsuzuki / Cyndie Alleman

It became a hot day from early morning on this day at Sports Land Sugo. Squall-like rain started on the circuit just before the start procedure, and this caused abuzz in the pit for a moment, but the condition returned to the nearly dry condition by the start. After the 1 lap of formation lap, the 81-lap race started. At the last corner right after the start, three machines fighting for the top in GT500 made contacts and went off the track. This caused the race with the yellow flag, where the cars were not allowed to overtake at the first corner for a few laps from the beginning of the race. Tsuzuki, started from 19th position, passed the car #66 triple a vantage GT3 that stopped with the trouble on the second lap and went up the position to 18th, and then passed #27 PACIFIC NAC Ikamusume Ferrari that spun on the fourth lap and went up to 17th. Maintaining the gap at regular intervals with #0 GSR Hatsune Miku BMW and #4 GSR Project Mirai BMW in front, we made up the position to 13th by the lap 16. Showing the catch-up with the lap time that matched up with the top 10 machines, Tsuzuki informed the pit the warning was displayed on the onboard monitor from around the 20th lap. Pit instructed him to keep driving unless the trouble occurred to the machine, and Tsuzuki responded to that. However, on the lap 30, Tsuzuki reported via the radio that the engine stopped suddenly. While attempting to restart several times, the machine never started again, and it became the first frustrating retirement of the season for #21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS.

P1 #3 S Road NDDP GT-R Yuhi Sekiguchi / Katsumasa Chiyo

P2 #52 GREEN TEC & LEON SLS Hironori Takeuchi / Haruki Kurosawa

P3 #88 Manepa Lamborghini GT3 Manabu Orido / Takayuki Aoki

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

DNS #99 Racerbook Audi R8 LMS Michael Kim / Hideto Yasuoka

Mikio Hitotsuyama, Team Representative

"It has been a long time since we had the race with out of luck so much. It was so disappointing. Sugo is the circuit where R8 is good, so I was expecting a good one. #21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS was headed to a good direction in the free practice in the morning on Race Day. Cyndie recorded very good lap times during that free practice session, and actually it was fun to watch the pace of Mr. Tsuzuki from the start of the race. We could have scored the points for sure if we could go on like that... The cause of the trouble was that the inside the machine was heated up by parking the machine on the grid under the scorching sun for a long period of time. I think it was the cause. For #99 Racerbook Audi R8 LMS, all the things happened at the worst possible timing imaginable. We were aiming for the top 10 in the qualifying, so we never thought we would be eliminated from the qualifying. However, this is the racing. We had a positive aspect at Sugo this time, though. The air restrictor was made a little bigger for R8s with the BOP that was applied from this time, and the straight speed has been somewhat improved as a result. There was a big difference in straight speed between us and other GT3 machine at Fuji and Sepang which made other GT3 machines look as the higher-class machines, but this time the difference seemed to become smaller. Having said that, the situation is still severe compared with Porsche and Aston Martin. For Round 5 Suzuka 1000km, Richard Lyons will join #21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS and Yoshio Tsuzuki will join #99 Racerbook Audi R8 LMS. Thank you for your continued support for the team in advance."

