



Hitotsuyama Racing

Press release - 2012.1030 - 017

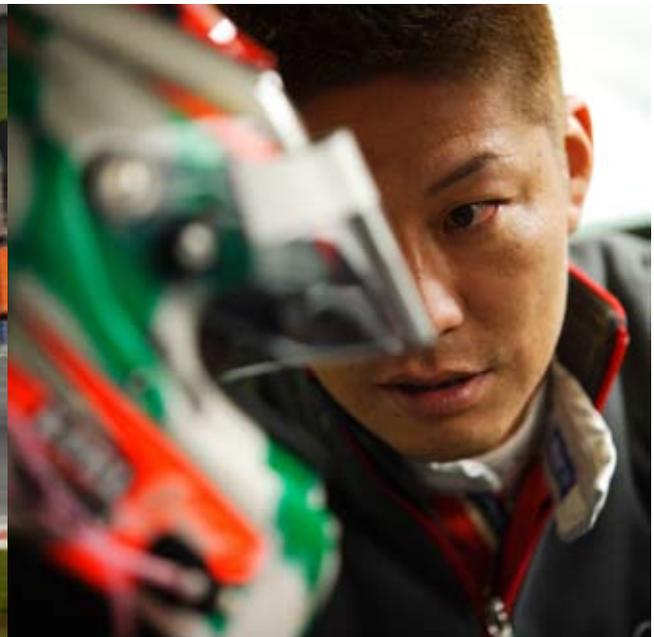
Race Report

Super GT 2012 Series

Round-7 / Autopolis

ZENT Audi R8 LMS Finishes its Current Best Result of 6th Position

Hitotsuyama Racing participated in the Super GT Round 7 "Super GT in KYUSHU 300km" which was held at Autopolis in September 29th – 30th. #21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS finished in its season's best of 6th position and brought the points to the team since the season opener. On the other hand, #99 investors Audi R8 LMS retired due to the contact with the GT500 machine, and the tough races have been continuing without results since the 4th round at Sugo.



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September 29th, Official Practice / Qualifying sessions

#21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS Akihiro Tsuzuki / Richard Lyons

#21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS has not been able to have any results as expected due to the continuous troubles it has had since the 4th round at Sugo. It has failed at the races where it was sure to get points if it completed each race, so this race became an important race where it can regain its honor. A big typhoon was approaching Autopolis over the weekend, and the race was affected by the weather all the time from the official practice session. As in the previous round, at first Richard Lyons was in charge of the setup in the official practice. Because of the ever-changing weather, though it was difficult to compare the lap times with the rivals directly, As soon as Richard checked that the tires and the machine match the circuit well, he handed the steering to Tsuzuki. Showing his anxiety of driving unfamiliar Autopolis before the session, Tsuzuki showed his natural driving sense once he entered the track. He recorded the times that were similar to the rivals and reassured his partner Richard. The time 1' 57" 451 that Richard recorded in the mid-session was the best time for the team in the official practice session and sunk to the 17th position in the GT300 class, but we could find the setup that would give us hope in the afternoon qualifying session and completed the session. Qualifying was conducted in the knockdown system again this time. Q1 was in the hands of Tsuzuki, who is good at driving in the rain. We were sure to pass the Q1 in the top 10, but Tsuzuki fell into a difficult situation where he could not drive the machine straight, far from improving the time. While the top runners in the class were recording a time of around 2 minutes 00 seconds, all Tsuzuki could do was to record the time of 2 minutes 10 seconds. We ended in the disappointing results of the 21st position in the class and being eliminated in Q1. #30 IWASAKI MODA Croco apr R8 that wear the tires of the same manufacturer suffered from the similar symptoms, and the examination after the qualifying found that the slight change of the surface temperature and the amount of rainfall before the official qualifying derailed the matching of the tires and that the tires had not heated at all.

#99 investors Audi R8 LMS Frank Yu / Hideto Yasuoka

The crash that occurred at the 5th round at Suzuka had not repaired yet and # 99 investors Audi R8 LMS missed the 6th round at Fuji. The harsh conditions without completing the races have been continuing since the 3rd round at Sepang, we needed to finish the race at this round as #21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS. Frank Yu, making his appearance since the 3rd round, served as the first driver. Frank has participated in the support event GT Asia with his own Ford GT GT3, and it became a double entry again. Yasuoka was in charge of the setup in the first half of the official practice session. He checked the change of the machine balance by the rainfall at the same time, and handed the steering wheel to Frank in the mid-session. Even though it's been a long time since the last time Frank was behind the wheel of the Audi R8 LMS, maybe because he has driven a number of GT3 machines, he regained the feeling of the Audi R8 LMS soon and continued making laps steadily. Having had the first race of GT Asia immediately after this official qualifying session, Frank kept to only 10 laps for the driving in the official practice, and he gave the remaining time to Yasuoka. After this, Yasuoka did not achieve improving the time and ended the official practice in the 21st position in the class with the time 1' 59" 284. Yasuoka took charge of the Q1 in the official qualifying. While #21 sank to the lower position due to the problem of matching with the tires, Yasuoka of # 99 had a strong drive in this Q1. The team was delighted to see the car number coming up and down in the top figures on the timing monitor. He recorded the time of 2' 3" 419 with the 6th position in the class, and made it to Q2 for the first time in this season. Top 10 out of 16 cars can survive in Q2. Frank, who was responsible for Q2, was a little nervous before the start of the session, but he showed the careful driving once he entered the track. With the ever-changing rainfall and the red flag, the session became eventful, but he recorded his best time in the last lap after the restart of Q2 and finished 15th in the official qualifying. The driver and the staff were excited with the inflated expectations to the race by the achievement to Q2 for the first time in this season and wonderful machine feeling.

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

P2 #66 triple a vantage GT3 Hiroki Yoshimoto / Kazuki Hoshino

P3 #88Manepa Lamborghini GT3 Manabu Orido / Takayuki Aoki

P15 #99 investors Audi R8 LMS Frank Yu / Hideto Yasuoka

P21 #21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS Akihiro Tsuzuki / Richard Lyons



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September 30th, Race Day

#21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS Akihiro Tsuzuki / Richard Lyons

Unstable weather by the typhoon continued in the race day, and the dense fog occurred on top of that. Not only the free practice had been cancelled at the 8-minute point due to the poor visibility, the race for the support event GT Asia had been cancelled as well, and the situation became severe that the race in the afternoon might have been cancelled. However, both the weather and the visibility recovered gradually shortly after noon. It had been decided that the start procedure would proceed as scheduled. A light rain was continuing also, the pace-car start was introduced where two laps after the start would be led by the pace car. Tsuzuki was responsible for the start of #21. Tsuzuki, who wanted to clear the disappointing result in the qualifying, overtook #14 Team SGC IS350 and #22 R'Qs Vemac 350R right after the start and went up to the 19th position. On Lap 5, he passed #85 JLOC Verity Lamborghini as well. Gained back the original pace, Tsuzuki aimed to be in the position where it should be and rushed further. After that, with 10th-positioned #5 Mach GoGoGo Shaken Ferrari 458 leading, 6 cars up to Tsuzuki lined up and developed the psychological battle. Tsuzuki developed a battle of tail-to-nose with the driver Taku Bamba of #4 GSR ProjectMirai BMW in front, but struggled against the BMW which excels Audi in the machine power. Even though he was able to catch up in the corner, the difference would gradually become wider on the straight. The engineer told the driver on the radio that the current pace was not bad in any way, and encouraged the driver to keep the current condition and keep driving steadily even under the stressful situation. Although not enough to capture #4 during his stint, he kept driving without any mistakes and entered the pit on Lap 33. He handed the last half of the stint to Richard. Having had the bitter experience that the car retired without having restarted at the time of pit-in at the previous round at Fuji, at the moment of restarting the engine of # 21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS, team staff showed the expression of relief. Here, Richard recreated his wonderful drive that he showed in Suzuka. At the point when all the rivals finished their pit-in, he went up the position to the 10th position, where we could get the points. On Lap 51 he passed #31 apr HASEPRO PRIUS GT to be in the 9th position, then on Lap 52 he passed #88 Manepa Lamborghini GT3 without any difficulties. On Lap 55, #3 S Road NDDP GT-R stopped due to the trouble and it made us go up to the 7th position. On the following 56th lap, he passed #27 PACIFIC NAC Ikamusume Ferrari and went up to the 6th position. From here, there was a time difference of about 20 seconds between the front-going #0 GSR Hatsune Miku BMW, so the engineer explained that it would be impossible to catch up with the fore-going car with the remaining 6-7 laps on their own. The engineer told Richard to defend the 6th position, but Richard's momentum remained. He showed the drive by updating his personal best lap time continuously in the remaining three laps, and he made an appeal of his own performance. The race was finished as it was, and #21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS achieved to finish its season best 6th position.

#99 investors Audi R8 LMS Frank Yu / Hideto Yasuoka

Hideto Yasuoka was responsible for the start of #99 investors Audi R8 LMS. Having shown the fine drive in the qualifying, the team started the race wrapped in a bright atmosphere ever. Yasuoka, having started carefully, passed #43 ARTA Garaiya that could not make its pace faster on the 5th lap. The cars lined up with the #5 Mach GoGoGo Shaken Ferrari 458 leading developed a tail-to-nose battle after that. Yasuoka maintained a high pace, closing in behind the # 5. He captured #5 in a moment on Lap 28. At this point, some rivals dropped out of the race, and he went up to the 9th position. As Yasuoka continued to drive faster-paced than expected, the engineer changed their strategy to wait for the timing of pit-in at the last minute and aim to advance to the top position. Yasuoka's pace did not slow down even when we approached around the middle of the race, and he continued to drive at the pace of 1 minute 55 seconds, which surpasses the upper-positioned cars. His partner Frank, watching the monitor in the pits, put a smile on his face and the first points in the Super GT were expected. On Lap 41 it was instructed to enter the pit in the next lap where the car became the provisional top, and the tension was running on in the pit. However, just after that, #99 that spun on the track and without a right rear part of the machine being ripped off was displayed on the circuit monitor. It was like the car made a spin alone and stopped on the track, and a GT500 machine that could not avoid it came into contact with. Although Yasuoka managed to get the machine back to the pits, the car suffered significant damage to the underbody of the right rear, the bumper and the wing, and it seemed that the situation didn't afford us to continue racing. Unfortunately, #99 investors Audi R8 LMS had to end the race without being able to send Frank out to the track again.

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

P2 #911 Endless TAISAN 911 Kyosuke Mineo / Naoki Yokomizo

P3 #33 HANKOOK PORSHCE Masami Kageyama / Tomonobu Fujii

P6 #21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS Akihiro Tsuzuki / Richard Lyons

DNF #99 investors Audi R8 LMS Frank Yu / Hideto Yasuoka

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Mikio Hitotsuyama, Team Representative

About #21 ZENT Audi R8 LMS

"Finally we could have the satisfactory results. Of course we want to aim for higher to be honest, but I think this is nearly our best considering the race distance at this event and the current BOP. We sank to the lower position in the qualifying with the problem of tires, so we may have been able to go on the podium without that problem. However, we finished in 6th position in the race from the 21st position in qualifying, so this is much better than expected. This is thanks to both Tsuzuki and Richard, who finished driving without any mistake. From now on, I want to make the team that can finish within top 6 at every race. All in all, I'm really grateful to everyone who has supported so far."

About #99 investors Audi R8 LMS

"I was very satisfied with the result up to the qualifying. I enjoyed watching Yasuoka's driving in Q1, and Frank is worth being highly evaluated with a good time in the one-shot attack in Q2. The race was also good at the beginning... It does not mean anything if you don't finish the race even if you are quick temporarily. At Suzuka, Mike (Michael Kim) and Tsuzuki (Yoshio Tsuzuki) retired without driving. Here, the race retired and Frank could not drive. He says that a GT500 hit him, but if he did not spin in the first place, he would not have been hit, right? What's going on anyway? I cannot make an even slightest excuse to Frank who could not drive as well as the sponsors and fans who have supported us."



Official Facebook page of Hitotsuyama Racing.

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