

23 March 2009

NISSAN GT-R WINS WET SUPER GT OPENING ROUND

- SUPER GT 2009 Round 1 Race Report -

While the Nissan GT-R Safety Car graced Australian television screens for the first time, courtesy V8 Supercars in Adelaide, a race prepared GT-R blitzed the opener to the 2009 SUPER GT series in Japan on Sunday at the 3.703km Okayama Circuit.

The No. 24 HIS ADVAN KONDO Nissan GT-R driven by Joao Paolo de Oliveira and Seiji Ara started in third place on the grid but easily overpowered rivals to build a commanding 21-second lead and take the chequered flag in a powerful display.

The No.12 IMPUL CALSONIC Nissan GT-R driven by Tsugio Matsuda and Sebastien Philippe also started tenth after qualifying and finished in a commendable fourth place. Despite the threat of poor weather, 23,000 people attended the final day of this year's first round of the SUPER GT series.

With all teams on wets, the race promoters decided to put safety first, and the start was made with cars following the Safety Car. The 15 GT500 machines sent up a wall of spray as they lined up in starting order, and after two laps trailing the Safety Car picked up speed as the racing began. Starting in 3rd place Oliveira had the chance to move up to take the lead after nailing a great start and quickly grabbing that chance, moving to the head of the field on the third lap. With every lap Oliveira continued to steadily draw away from the cars chasing him, building a 10-second margin by lap 20 and growing that to 20 seconds by lap 30.

Of the 82-lap event, Oliveira raced for 52, handing off to Ara with a 50-second lead over the car in second position. In the final section of the race conditions on track settled down somewhat, and a composed Ara concentrated on driving steadily to finish the last laps. The result was not a single threat from rivals, and the win.

Tsugio Matsuda in the IMPUL CALSONIC Nissan GT-R managed to avoid the confusion at the start of the race and on every lap clawed his way up through the ranks until lap nine when he was running fourth. On lap 34 he handed the car over to Sebastien Philippe, who managed to avoid danger and hold onto his position to finish fourth.

The No.3 HASEMI TOMICA EBBRO Nissan GT-R driven by Ronnie Quintarelli and Hironobu Yasuda started the race from 12th place on the grid. With Quintarelli at the wheel, the car battled in ninth and tenth position throughout the first part of the race, and with hopes of gaining position in the second half, came in to the pits on lap 30 to hand the driving to Yasuda, giving the rookie a very long turn at the wheel in his debut GT500 race. He pulled out some relatively fast lap times during the middle of the race, but on lap 46 spun off track, suffering a roughly 3-lap deficit that put him into 12th position by the finish.

The No.1 "MOTUL AUTECH Nissan GT-R" driven by Satoshi Motoyama and Benoit Treluyer started ninth on the grid with Treluyer at the wheel. Fortune was not favoring him as spray from cars ahead cut his visibility inducing a collision with another car on lap three that caused major damage to the left front nose of the car. Receiving a drive-through penalty for the accident just rubbed salt in the wound. After returning to the race, the damaged nose was judged to be too dangerous, forcing him into the pits again. He returned to the track once again but came into the pits to have major repair work done in the garage. Motoyama took the car back on track and finished the race in 13th.

[Race Results] 82Laps				
Pos	No	Machine	Driver	Time / Behind
1	24	HIS ADVAN KONDO GT-R	Joao Paulo De Oliveira / Seiji Ara	2:20'54.071
2	18	ROCKSTAR DOME NSX	Ryo Michigami / Takashi Kogure	+21.645
3	8	ARTA NSX	Ralph Firman / Takuya Izawa	+1'06.979
4	12	IMPUL CALSONIC GT-R	Tsugio Matsuda / Sebastien Philippe	+1'32.431
5	17	KEIHIN NSX	Toshihiro Kaneish / Koudai Tsukakoshi	1Lap
6	38	ZENT CERUMO SC430	Yuji Tachikawa / Richard Lyons	1Lap
7	32	EPSON NSX	Loic Duval / Yuki Nakayama	1Lap
8	100	RAYBRIG NSX	Yuji Ide / Shinya Hosokawa	1Lap
9	35	KRAFT SC430	Hiroaki Ishiura / Kazuya Oshima	1Lap
10	6	ENEOS SC430	Daisuke Ito / Bjorn Wirdheim	2Laps
12	3	HASEMI TOMICA EBBRO GT-R	Ronnie Quintarelli / Hironobu Yasuda	3Laps
13	1	MOTUL AUTECH GT-R	Satoshi Motoyama / Benoit Treluyer	7Laps

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