



PlayStation® announce Nissan GT Academy – the ultimate racing prize

- **Following successful “virtual-to-real” racer experience, GT Academy 2010 is bigger and better**
 - **Online time trial version of Gran Turismo®5 available from 17 December**
 - **Australia and New Zealand announce inaugural involvement**

SYDNEY, 4th December 2010 - Nissan and Sony Computer Entertainment Europe (SCEE) have joined forces again to bring gaming and motor sport fans the ultimate racing competition. **GT Academy 2010** will go live on 17 December, 2009 and will use the virtual world of the new PlayStation® Gran Turismo®5 game to find a real-world racing driver. The stakes are high, with an intensive race training programme and a season-long drive in a full race-spec Nissan 370Z in the European GT4 Cup as the ultimate prize. Also announced today is the first time involvement of Australia and New Zealand.

GT Academy 2010 is the second instalment of this incredible competition. In 2008/09, Lucas Ordoñez, a 23-year-old Spanish student, graduated from his PlayStation®3 (PS3™) console to become a full-on racing driver via the GT Academy. Lucas is living proof that the answer to the question posed by PlayStation and Nissan - “can the world of virtual racing unearth a real racing talent?” - was a resounding “yes”.

After a debut in the Dubai International 24 Hour race alongside former F1 driver Johnny Herbert, Lucas teamed-up with British driver Alex Buncombe to campaign a Nissan 350Z. Driving for the RJN Motorsport GT Academy team, the pair took part in the full European GT4 Cup season, mostly run alongside the prestigious FIA GT series. Their stunning performances included two race wins and two second-place finishes that left them an agonisingly close second in the drivers’ classification, but winners of the Teams’ Championship.

The success of Nissan and PlayStations’ ‘experiment’ spurred them on to make GT Academy 2010 even bigger and better. The competition falls into four main stages:

Stage One - will offer Gran Turismo fans a sneak preview of the hotly-anticipated Gran Turismo 5 game, due for release during 2010. Competitors will record flying laps on a time trial-based track available via PlayStation®Network, accessed through PS3. Unlike the first GT Academy, participants will not have to enter the competition using the GT5 Prologue™ game itself, and so even more hopeful racing drivers are expected to take part.

Stage Two – the holders of the twenty fastest online lap times from each participating country will qualify for their national final event. Tensions will run high as they battle each other on another exclusive Gran Turismo 5 level for the chance to move to the next phase of the competition.

Stage Three – twenty finalists, chosen from each of the national finals events, will head to the world famous Silverstone circuit for the GT Academy itself - a five-day, comprehensive race driver 'boot camp'. They will have a chance to develop new driving skills in an array of Nissan, and other, hardware, while also being judged on fitness and mental attitude.

Stage Four - For the two competitors that display the talent, fitness, aptitude, drive and determination to succeed in motor sport, the action will hot-up even further. A UK-based intensive driving and racing programme will prepare them to qualify for an international racing license.

Stage Five – There is only one place available for the driver with the most potential to compete on an international stage. The overall GT Academy 2010 champion will race a full season in the European GT4 Cup in a Nissan 370Z prepared by RJN Motorsport. The opening race is currently scheduled for May, 2010.

The GT Academy competition is open to participants from the following territories: Austria; Belgium; France; Germany; Ireland; Italy; Netherlands; Portugal; Spain; Switzerland; UK; and Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. Also joining in will be Australia and New Zealand to make it a truly international promotion. This year's rules stipulate that anyone who holds, or has held, a national or international race license will not qualify for GT Academy. This rule is aimed at maintaining the purity of the "virtual to real" concept.

Nissan International's Vice-President of Marketing, **Vincent Wijnen**, is excited to be embarking on the GT Academy 2010 journey. "Following the success of last year's GT Academy programme, we had no hesitation in working with PlayStation on GT Academy 2010," he explains. "The idea behind GT Academy is a natural extension of our approach to sports cars – we're determined to challenge the traditional way of doing things. Both the GT-R and 370Z are authentic sports cars combining performance with accessibility for drivers who are serious about driving enjoyment. Similarly, GT Academy makes the dream of becoming an authentic racing driver more accessible than ever thanks to Nissan, PlayStation and the stunning Gran Turismo's online capability. Nobody else could deliver this programme.

"The original GT Academy exceeded expectations. We did not expect to find a driver of Lucas's calibre and it was a real bonus for the programme that we were able to help him demonstrate his potential over a full season with the European GT4 Cup drive. We are even more excited about GT Academy 2010, and I would encourage anyone who has ever wondered if they might have what it takes to be a racing driver to give it a go."

Kazunori Yamauchi, president of Polyphony Digital and creator of the Gran Turismo series, shares Wijnen's enthusiasm. "This has been a very rewarding partnership. The whole GT Academy concept is very close to my heart. Our target with the Gran Turismo series has always been to come as close as possible to a real driving experience. To witness the level of driving achieved by GT players after a relatively short space of time at the GT Academy was very satisfying for me and I look forward to seeing the 2010 finalists in action. I am also very happy to have the opportunity for our GT community to have a preview of the Gran Turismo 5 game."

The online section of the game will run from 17 December until 24 January with national finals following soon afterwards. The GT Academy itself takes place from 26 February until 3 March. The two winners will have to quickly clear their diaries, as their intensive training programme will start immediately and culminate in one driver racing in the opening European GT4 Cup race that could be at Silverstone on 2 May.

For people who want to find out more about GT Academy, lots of news and views will be shared on a variety of platforms including:

www.facebook.com/GTAcademy | www.eu.gran-turismo.com |