



true visions



ARTO PANTHER Team Thailand 2018 SUPER GT RACE REPORT

2nd Round Fuji Speedway

Arto – Panther Team Thailand participated in the second round of 2018 SUPER GT series held at Fuji Speedway (Shizuoka pref.) from 3 to 4 May. The second race at LEXUS RC F GT 3 which we introduced this season. The drivers are Nataavud Charoensukhawatana and Nattapong Hortongkum.

Since the team was absent from the previous GTA joint test held at Suzuka Circuit from April 16th to 17th in order to participate in the Nürburgring 24 Hour's Qualifying Race; the LEXUS RC F GT3 was on track for the first time since the Okayama. It is also the first time to drive in Fuji Speedway after the joint test of March 24th – 25th.

Two drivers who ran RC F in the joint test at the Fuji Speedway were satisfied with the car's maneuverability and decided to select and choose the tyres that focused more on the performance during the race, with final set-up to be determined on the race weekend.

However, the start of the race week suffered bad weather and the free practice session scheduled in the morning was canceled, so the team was forced to change the plan drastically. In the afternoon, as the weather recovered, a 30-minute practice session was held before the qualifying session, and Charoensukhawatana was in charge of the set-up. But with so much time restraint, Hortongkum was not able to make a lap out on the track.

The qualifying time attack was in the hand of Hortongkum as he became much skilled driver over this season, and he hit the track for 20 minute qualifying without any practice time. Hortongkum made 10 laps, recorded 1 minute 39 seconds 318 and became 27th place in qualifying.

■ RACE

Finally, the race day was sunny. For the long 500 km race, the team prepared to compete more in the race than the qualifying; keeping the steady pace as possible. Hortongkum started the race, wearing the medium-soft tyre on the starting grid, with a strategy to make as many laps as possible on the first stint.

At the start Hortongkum already improved 3 positions at the start, He continued to keep the pace of 1 minute 40 seconds, and gradually climbed up the positions. Even after when the other cars started to change their drivers, Hortongkum stayed out and further improved his position.

Hortongkum returned to the pit after finishing 41 laps, and changed over to Charoensukhawatana. At this point # 35 arto RC F GT 3 was up to 8th place in GT300 .

However, during the pitstop, the fuel leaked back from the fueling rig, and the marshals ordered the team to not let the car return to the track until the leaking had stopped. The team pushed th car back to the garage and after long 15 minutes of repair work, the car was finally ready to return but lost positions greatly. Charoensukhawatana took the car back into the track..

Charoensukhawatana ran for 30 laps and returned to pit. Hortongkum once again took over the wheels and finished to receive checkered flag after 16 laps.

■ Official Result

Qualifying: Class 28th (29 cars) 1 min 39 sec 318

Race: class 24th (29 cars) 87 laps (15 laps behind)

Quotes:

A Driver: Nataavud Charoensukhawatana

Although it was a good feeling at Fuji since the joint test, I felt it was necessary to advance the setting a little more. So I was going to make fine adjustments to improve the balance using practice running time to qualifying. I regret that I could not do enough setting due to bad weather, but the race was not bad feeling. If it was not for the trouble at the pit refueling, we would have had good race.

B driver: Nattapon Hortongkum

RC F is really easy to ride. Moreover, the medium-hard tyre we chose was responding well. In Okayama, the tyres didn't last more than 10 laps, but it was so much better this time. It made me confident to fight among higher ranks next time.

Team Manager: Stepon Samitasha

Once again, the weather was not in our favour. But I think we had good pace during the race. We are very optimistic towards upcoming races, but I regret that if it had not been for the refueling problem, we could've finished in much higher position. Since we skipped the joint test for Suzuka, we don't know what to expect, but Buriram is our home ground, we are looking forward to returning home. I hope we can keep momentum and get good results.