



true visions



Arto-Panther Team Thailand
2018 SUPER GT RACE REPORT

Rd. 5. Fuji Speedway (Shizuoka Prefecture)

Arto - Panther Team Thailand participated in the Round 5 of 2018 SUPER GT series held at Fuji Speedway in Shizuoka prefecture from August 4 to 5th. This time, the race is 500 miles, almost 800 km and it is the longest race of the season.

There was an addition to the drivers' line-up of Nattavude Charoensukhawatana and Nattapong Hortongkum; Koji Yamanishi joined the team as their 3rd driver.

Since the team was concerned with the heat and long distance in Fuji, they called Yamanishi who has long experience racing in Japan.

■ QUALIFYING

Race week was at midst of crazy hot weather. It was Yamanishi's first attempt on the LEXUS RC F GT3, but with many experiences in both GT500 and GT300, he instantly scored 1"39.819 on the 14th lap; which was the best lap ever scored by the team.

Hortongkum drove the Q1 and Charoensukhawatana was to drive Q2 for the Saturday afternoon Qualifying. It was literally a dead-heat at the end of the session, but Hortongkum was only 0.6 seconds behind in 1"39.972 and was not able to advance to Q2.

■ RACE

Another steamy hot day for the race with the ambient temperature at 32C and the track temperature at 47C at the time of Start. Considering the harsh conditions, the team took 4 stop / 5 stint strategy with Hortongkum starting the race, passing on to Yamanishi, then back to Hortongkum, back again to Yamanishi before finally passing the wheel to Charoensukhawatana to receive the checkered flag.

Starting from the 25th position Hortongkum delayed the pit stop to earn extra laps, and tactically went up the ranks gradually. He advanced to the 7th on lap 32, then stayed out until lap 34 before he completed his first stint. Although the car went down to 22nd, but Yamanishi successfully regained positions and put the car back to 9th on lap 70, and gave the car back to Hortongkum.

The team completed the pitwork without any mistakes, kept minimum time loss before sending the car back to the track. The effort of the team to support the drivers paid off, as they stayed behind after hours on Saturday to practice pitstop many times for perfection.

Hortongkum drove to lap 100 and switched over to Yamanishi again. Yamanishi returned to the track in 20th and pushed the car to speed and on lap 125, scored 1"41.147 which was the fastest lap for the car during race. With further pursuit, he put the car up to 15th place and finally passed it over to Charoensukhawatana on lap 131. Charoensukhawatana drove 29 laps before receiving he checkered flag at 16th place, the highest rank ever under full-grid for the team since they took Season entry in Super GT.

■ Official Result

Qualifying: 25th in GT300 (28 cars) 1" 39.972
Race: 16h in GT300 (30 cars) 160 laps (4 lap behind)

■ Quotes:

A Driver: Nattavude Charoensukhawatana

I was not in perfect condition after the injury from the accident in last month's race and the temperature was very high, so it was a very tough weekend. My body has recovered considerably, but it seems to take about 2 more months to reach the 100% state. It's about 80% now, so we asked Yamanishi-san to help us and I only drove the last stint. I'm very happy to get good results.

B driver: Nattapong Hortongkum

We had a new set-up and it was a long race and it was hot. So it was a difficult weekend for me. I was nervous at the Start because I had to drive 40 laps in extremely hot weather. But I think I was able to do a good run. The second stint was much more difficult with tyre debris around the track and it was slippery. But I think it was a good learning experience for us. I was very surprised at Yamanishi-san, he was very fast on our car the first time he went out, and he was such good driver. I also learned a lot just watching him.

C driver: Koji Yamanishi

I was bit concerned in the beginning when the team called me, but they were very welcoming and I was able to get along instantly. I am honored to be able to help them achieve best result so far. Personally, I wanted to bring out the best lap ever possible out of the car, but I didn't have time to get familiarized and it makes me feel like my job is only half done. If I would give scores to my weekend performance, I would say it would be 70 /100. With further set up to give more efficiency to the front, and drive accordingly, I think the car can be even faster.

Team Manager: Stepon Samitasha

We were happy to be able to complete a long race without mistakes, and it was magnificent to start from 25th and finish at 16th. The team made further improvements by making no mistakes at the pitstop, and it made us feel very proud and strong. The gap time between other cars has also become smaller, and we are catching up. Obviously the level of the GT 300 is very high and we cannot make big changes, but I am seeing bright future. Yamanishi-san helped us a lot during the weekend and I am glad we asked for his help. We look forward to work harder to achieve good results.