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NISSAN: TAKING ON THE BEST IN THE WORLD

In 2015 Nissan will enter the Nissan GT-R LM NISMO into the full FIA World Endurance Championship, marking a return to the premier class at the Le Mans 24 Hours for the Japanese manufacturer. Nissan will challenge for victory with an innovative approach and with a truly exciting product that represents the next generation of the Nissan GT-R.

“We are excited to be going head-to-head with the best sports car racing manufacturers in the world,” commented Roel de Vries, Global Head of Marketing and Brand Strategy at Nissan. “LM P1 is a proving ground for technological innovation, especially when it comes to the power sources of the future. In 2014 three different manufacturers using three different powertrain combinations won races. If you ever needed proof that LM P1 is the sharp end, this is it.”

Nissan might have been absent from the top class at Le Mans for 16 years but the company has been very active in other categories, building an envied sports car ladder that runs from the new LM P3 category, through a world-beating engine supply programme in LM P2, and onto the top step to LM P1 via the ACO’s clever ‘Garage 56’ programme, a unique class at Le Mans reserved for innovative technology that falls outside of the normal regulations

“Our LM P3 engine supply programme is a new venture for us but if it is nearly as successful as our LM P2 programme we will be very proud of our achievements, said Shoichi Miyatani, President of NISMO. “Our LM P2 engine has powered teams to championship victories and class wins at Le Mans. Our Garage 56 projects have led us to LM P1 and the innovations that we have employed. Enormous lessons were learned from the very heavy hybridisation of the Nissan ZEOD RC and we’ve carried those lessons over into this project.”

LM P1 cars are the most extreme sports cars in racing today so, for Nissan and NISMO, the opportunity to innovate at the highest level could not be missed.

“These cars represent the pinnacle of current racing technology: huge energy recovery systems, super fuel-efficient engines and wild aerodynamics, creating extremely fast cars for their weight and endurance, said Nissan’s LM P1 Team Principal, Ben Bowlby. “These are 24-hour racing cars that cover practically a whole Formula One season in one Le Mans race. It’s a very different challenge to F1 and much more relevant to what’s going on in road cars. If you drive from say London to Edinburgh you expect the car to get through the miles and be fast, stable, comfortable and safe and provide the handling and grip you might need if you have to come off the motorway and take some back roads – that’s the sort of challenge that Le Mans represents. It’s all about having a fast, efficient and safe car.”

The FIA World Endurance Championship provides manufacturers with the opportunity to develop new technologies for its road car range. With energy-efficiency being the key, there is no greater test for technology than a 24-hour endurance race where the gap between first and second place can be a matter of seconds after 24 hours of racing.

“It is firmly our intention that technology developed on the LM P1 car will transfer to Nissan road cars,” said de Vries. “We are developing ultra-efficient V6 twin turbo of the configuration and lineage of the Nissan GT-R. This is a more efficient but equally powerful direct injection solution so it’s a potential forerunner to future GT-R engines. Also the kinetic energy recovery technology that we’re developing through racing could indeed have potential for future road car applications.”

Nissan is a global car manufacturer so it makes sense that the LM P1 programme is a truly global project.

“The car was built in the US and will complete its initial test programme there before moving to Europe for the start of the FIA World Endurance Championship season,” explained Miyatani. “Engineers and mechanics from Japan has been fully integrated into the programme and, just like any race team nowadays, we have selected our personnel from all over the world.”

Taking on the best in the world and competing to win is a daunting task for Nissan. The competition is well-established and the racing in the FIA World Endurance Championship is ultra-close but this is a challenge that Nissan has accepted and the Nissan NISMO team will fight to get onto the top step of the podium like it has never fought before.

“All I want is to be sure that the team did its best,” said Darren Cox, Global Head of Brand, Marketing & Sales, NISMO. “What we’re aiming for is to have executed to the best of our ability and that’s what we’re focusing on. There’s a lot we can’t control, for example, we don’t know where our rivals are going to be when we get to the first race. If we’ve all done our best I’ll be delighted and good results will come if we continue to do our best. So our goals and targets are simply to do our best. I think that, as a group, our best will lead to some great results.”

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