



Super GT Championship
Motegi GT 250Km Race

NISMO and Michelin claim Super GT/GT500 crown with Ronnie Quintarelli and Tsugio Matsuda on Nissan GT-R

Michelin and Nissan secure fourth GT500 title in five years

The N°1 NISMO-run Motul Nissan GT-R were forced to start the Motegi GT 250Km Race, final round of Japan's 2015 Super GT Championship, from 12th on the grid after an extremely wet qualifying session. Even so, drivers Ronnie Quintarelli and Tsugio Matsuda were determined to finish at least fifth and, above all, ahead of the N°12 car (Yasuda/De Oliveira) which began the weekend with a three-point advantage over the Nissan squad in the Teams' standings and two points clear in the Drivers' classification.

Prior to the start, the staff at NISMO and its partner Michelin Motorsport were tense and extremely focused on their mission since success in Super GT is as much a question of prestige as it is an indication of technical supremacy. It is this that drives the Japanese makes and the four world class tyre brands which are active in the championship to dedicate such significant technological resources to the series.

Despite facing competition from three local tyre makers, Michelin has risen to the challenge in style in recent years to claim three of the past four titles, including the 2014 crown with NISMO and Quintarelli/Matsuda.

The track was wet and the weather overcast for the start of this year's Motegi GT 250Km Race but brighter sky was visible on the horizon and the local forecasters predicted sunshine before the chequered flag. As a result, the crews faced a mixed bag of conditions, making tyre versatility a potentially crucial factor which boosted Michelin's hopes of a strong result.

Ronnie Quintarelli was nominated to line up on the grid in the N°1 GT-R and a good getaway saw him gain a place immediately. His speed then saw him carve his way up the order to figure in sixth spot – just 13 seconds behind the N°12 car – by the end of Lap 13.

His Michelin tyres were clearly at ease on the drying track and the Italian put in a sequence of quick laps to close the gap to his team's championship rival to nine seconds.

As the GT500 runners started to pit, Quintarelli stayed out two additional laps, posting further fast times before stopping to hand over to Japan's Tsugio Matsuda who re-joined with the N°1 GT-R on slicks... and in second place.

Meanwhile, the Yasuda/De Oliveira machine appeared to be having trouble getting its rubber up to temperature and was losing ground back in fourth.



After a short Safety Car period to remove debris from the track, Twin Ring Motegi served as backdrop to a particularly thrilling battle in the Super GT class as Matsuda eased into the lead with 14 laps remaining, chased by the N°37 car which hadn't said its last word.

Matsuda provided a breath-taking display as he passed numerous GT300s before falling back to second spot when he had to take action to avoid a collision that could have compromised NISMO's title chances.

The N°1 NISSAN GT-R finally crossed the line in second spot – two places clear of the N°12 car – to claim the 2015 Super GT title for NISSAN NISMO, Quintarelli/Matsuda and Michelin. It was the French group's fourth in five years.

Pascal Couasnon, Director, Michelin Motorsport: "We are very pleased to have won another title in what is such a fiercely competitive series. The technologies Michelin develops for Super GT keep pushing back the envelope in areas like performance, warm-up and consistency.

"That said, our rivals make progress every year and have taken some big steps forward. As a result, our development team is forced to innovate and that's what makes Super GT such an extraordinary laboratory for us.

"Last but not least, I would like to underline the fervour of the huge crowds that attend all the rounds of the Super GT championship. It is consequently an excellent means of communicating for Michelin which is delighted to showcase the quality of its tyres in a nation of real motor racing fans and where the firm is seeking to gain market share."

Ronnie Quintarelli: "This was the hardest championship to win. We had no margin for error. In certain situations, we were even perhaps a little behind, as we saw in qualifying. In the race, however, we succeeded in making the very most of our Michelin tyres. Pascal Couasnon was at the race, too, so it's really nice to have won, especially given the tragedy that struck France two days ago.

"I was the first driver to test for Michelin when it returned to the championship in 2009. To begin with, we were a little lost. However, at the pre-season test in the heat of Malaysia, I felt there was real potential. Indeed, we won our fourth race... at Sepang. Despite that, we tended to suffer in damp conditions and whenever the weather was cold. A great deal of effort went into development work and that allowed us to win back-to-back crowns with Mola in 2011 and 2012. Then, last year, for my second season as part of the NISMO works team, we succeeded in recovering the title which we finally managed to defend this season.

"What I like about Michelin is the way it works. It take things one step at a time and doesn't fire off in all directions. That's how I like to work and it's one of the reasons why we work so well together. It's one of the secrets of our success.

"For Michelin to have won four titles in five years here in Japan, the home of its rivals, is quite simply exceptional and I would like to pay a big tribute to the brand this evening."