

-Students' Challenge to Realize Dream Supported-

Ichikoh to Sponsor "Le Mans Challenge Project" of University Students

Ichikoh Industries, Ltd., a leading automotive parts supplier, will participate in "Le Mans Challenge Project" of Tokai University by providing technical sponsorship, where students of Tokai University's engineering school will make a debut in the "Le Mans 24 Hours," a legendary and well-known sports car endurance race, with a machine designed and developed by the students.

Through the technical sponsorship, Ichikoh expects to collect data on parts it supplies and evaluate their durability and performance, which will be reflected on the future product development.



Tokai University's Le Mans Challenge Project

Students of Professor Yoshimasa Hayashi's seminar in the dynamic engineering department of the engineering school at Tokai University have been working in the field of motor sports for a long time. Some of them have picked F1 or GT cars as their themes of graduation theses. The results of students' studies have been presented at meetings where motor journalists, racing drivers and other people from motor sports industries were invited. With the intention of giving a challenging opportunity to students and having them experience difficulties and enjoyments of manufacturing as well as letting them have an opportunity to accomplish a landmark work based on what they have studied. Professor Hayashi newly decided to have their students give a challenge against the Le Mans race by themselves. The plan to participate in the race was officially announced by Mr. Taturou Matsumae, President of Tokai University, in October 2000.

As one of academic study activities, this project was launched in April 2001, where Professor Hayashi and his seminar's students design and develop an engine, a transmission and a body. They are targeting to make their machine debut in the 2003 Le Mans race if everything goes smoothly. The project team of 34 members includes Professor Hayashi, his seminar's students postgraduate students and other researchers.

Details of Ichikoh Sponsorship

Ichikoh Industries will support the project by supplying HID head lamps, rear combination lamps, signal lamps, rearview mirrors and car number lamps. The HID head lamp is crucial for night driving which makes up important part of the race, and the development work for its optical design is under way now. Ichikoh intends to supply a system having high functionality and durability with less weight so that the machine and its driver can demonstrate their performance to their highest levels even under severe driving conditions.

Background of Ichikoh Sponsorship

Ichikoh Racing Project (IRP) was launched at Ichikoh back in 1990 for the purpose of development of lamps and mirrors for the "Le Mans 24 Hours" endurance race. So far, Ichikoh has supplied head lamps to Nissan machines that participated in the race. Currently, Ichikoh is developing products for the race and supplying them to NISMO (Nissan Motor Sports).

Professor Hayashi was with Nissan when Nissan won the "Daytona 24 Hours" endurance race in 1992 and he was interested in the Ichikoh HID lamp on the victory machine. Therefore he has expressed his desire to use Ichikoh HID lamps for the Le Mans Challenge Project as well.

We, at Ichikoh, has decided to participate in the project as a technical sponsor to encourage and support this first-ever challenge by students against the Le Mans race based on our experiences and know-how acquired and cultivated in various endurance races up to now.

Future Schedule

Currently, the students are working on R&D activities in following five groups, using an engine built under supervision of Professor Hayashi: body, suspension, intake/exhaust, transmission and schedule management. As soon as design work is completed, component parts are ordered, and the race car will be completed to the extent that it can stand on wheels by the end of this year. Practice pit work is also under way in parallel to the development work in preparation for the race.

Mr. Atsushi Yokyo, a graduate of Tokai University, will be a chief driver, and Mr. Shogo Mitsuyama, also a graduate of Tokai University, has been informally designated as a development driver. Mr. Hisazane Sato, who is a racing driver, a car critic and a part-time lecturer on "industrial design" at Tokai University, is being asked to participate in the project, too.

Personal Profile of Professor Hayashi:

He joined Nissan Motor Co., Ltd. in 1962. After being involved in the research of high performance engine and exhaust cleaning technology, he served as Chief of Sports Engine Development Office and Head of Sports Vehicle Development Center. He was involved in motor sports since 1988 as chief engineer for development of sports engine. In 1992, he led the Nissan team to the first victory by Japanese at the Daytona 24 Hours endurance race in the US, one of the three major endurance races of the world. He is famous as a race engineer all over the world.

He has been a professor in the school of engineering at Tokai University since April 1994.

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