

"Sorry for the drivers in the sports driving session"

We carried S102 test run for the first time in almost two years. I reconfirmed that this was the best situation to see a racing car driving on a circuit. I had deja vu, like cheering my son running in short sprint race in his school sports festival.

I have been involved in trivial troubles concerning the Le Mans and S102 recently, but I started not to care these small things after watching S102 driving on a straight course. To describe my feelings is that simply expecting to see excellent performance of my son with great care on the world stage and to watch S102 driving on Circuit de la Sarthe. I have been excited by these my feelings and been preoccupied with various plans for the Le Mans next year.

This time S102 test run after 2 years rest was to check everything working properly prior to the full-scale development test. We booked S102 test run during sports driving hours with less usage charge than exclusive use of the circuit, and tried not to push it too far. But, there were more than 20 cars on the course from not only high-end cars such as Porsche, Ferrari but also normal cars such as Vitz (Yaris in Europe) class.

We expected an inactive atmosphere of the circuit during weekdays, but were a little surprised with the number of cars involved. The speed difference between S102 and other cars was overwhelming and more than the speed difference between GT300 and GT500. S102 was a troublesome stranger and bothered other cars on the course. Driver Ara drove the car carefully according to our instruction to go through operational check, and continued a test run under such difficult situation.

After four sessions and 59 laps for 2 hours and 10 minutes, S102 shake down was finished without any trouble.

Future testing will be done for S102 improvement. S102 was manufactured 2 years before in 2008 and competed in the Le Mans without rehearsal and sufficient testing due to the delay of the outsourcing parts delivery. The car has not been driven since the Le Mans 2008 and been kept in our garage without further set up work. Actually, we did not have a chance to identify its ability.

In 2008 S102 was in 8th place in the qualify race and the lap time was 8 seconds behind the first-position Peugeot under the 2008 regulation advantageous to diesel engine cars which was totally unfair and all teams except Audi and Peugeot were unsatisfied with. After the revised regulation including restrictor size change in order to reduce the lap time difference, the difference between a top diesel engine car and a top gasoline engine car was approximate 4 seconds in 2009.

Still there was a wide gap which caused dissatisfaction from the teams with gasoline engine. In 2010, ACO made another revision to the regulation in order to reduce the gap. Most likely the gap will be reduced more in 2011. 1 second faster in a domestic circuit means that 2.5 seconds faster in Le Mans with four-times distance, and S102 can have a good chance of achieving a pole position of our dream. 2 seconds faster guarantees more opportunities.

Our testing target is to reduce 2 seconds at the basic-performance checking within this year, which can be achievable quite easily. My particular concerns are Yuchi, the person in charge of S102 development, tries to hide its best performance and a car with more down-force drives faster in domestic circuit which is a handicap to a circuit with longer straight course. A driver specialized in the Le Mans is vital to our development program. Ara, a well experienced driver, will be great support for our test with his knowledge of Le Mans cars and Circuit de la Sarthe, and this is the best choice to develop a car fast in the Le Mans.

We made a nuisance to other cars at the sports driving hours this time. I was relieved when one of the participants come to us during our lunch break and told us how lucky he was to have an opportunity of driving with S102 Le Mans car. For the future, it will be a serious development test to reduce the lap time with exclusive use of the circuit.

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