

Tsukuba – Team Zen



Report : Paul Blamire, Zen Performance

Pictures : Kaneko San, Japan

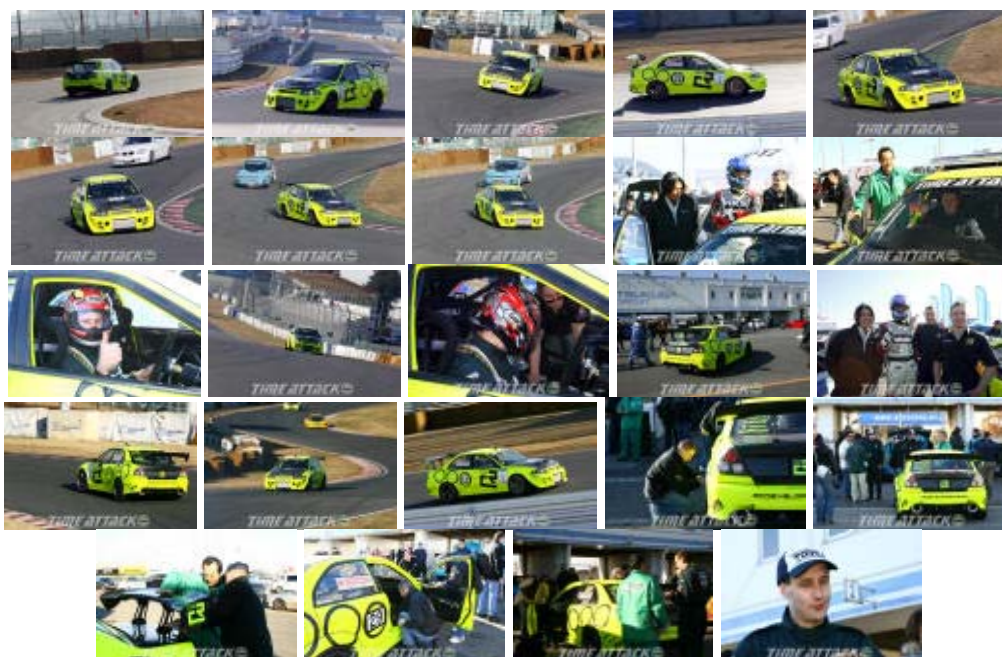


Tsukuba - Team RC



Report : Clive Seddon, RC Developments

Pictures : Kaneko San, Japan



Tsukuba - Team Fensport



Report : Adrian Smith, Fensport.

Pictures : Kaneko San, Japan

What an incredible experience!

We all arrived at the hotel on Sunday and were treated to an amazing welcome party from Japan's top tuning Companies. HKS, Do-Luck, Blitz, ARC, DAMD, Power Enterprise, Toyo, Rev Speed, Sunoco etc were all there to welcome us. It was quite a mind blowing experience and showed us all, how many people had helped organise the trip and how serious Time Attack is in Japan.

Off to Do-Luck on Monday to meet the cars and all was well, the Celica was duly polished and pronounced ready to go.....

After a 4.45am start on Tuesday we arrived at Tsukuba circuit, a 1 hour briefing in Japanese was fun, and we couldn't wait to get on the circuit. The track is very twisty and narrow and certainly a very good test of car and driver.

The plan was to get some mileage under our belt, bed in the new clutch and front brakes, and all was going well until I got a little sideways exiting the first hairpin, deciding to take the opportunity to shift up a gear, I got 1st instead of 3rd and over revved the engine to 11,430rpm. Totally my fault, and the next two laps confirmed my worst fears, A rattle started from deep in the cylinder head. I was absolutely gutted!

After a 2 hour drive back to the workshops of Do-Luck, and many frantic phone calls to get parts to repair the engine. We stripped the engine and found we had damaged 4 valves

and a con rod bearing, the piston was hitting the head, and we had to admit defeat at 9pm that evening.

At 9.02 after deep consultation with Blitz and Do-Luck it was decided to purchase a complete standard engine and fit it overnight! Huge thanks to Mr Ito from Do-Luck, for getting us an engine at that time of night, and huge thanks to John from Jems, Abe and Tomas from Blitz, for staying up all night to help fit it.

The engine ran at 7.55 in the morning and we headed off for a 1 hr mapping session at Autobacs. I was unable to detect detonation so settled on a safe ignition map and the engine made 296bhp at the wheels, running a whole bar of boost less than normal.

We had now missed the practise session on the Wednesday but at least we were running! Thursday dawned to beautiful sunshine and things were looking up, I had decided that all I could do was try my best. The magic minute was not going to happen especially with nearly 300bhp less than normal! On the first session we all tried the new R1R tyre from Toyo.

For session 2 we used the soft R888 and the car was much, much better, I was soon in the low 1.05` s The car was working well and now very easy to drive with only half the normal power, after a final push I managed to get in to the 1.04` s, a time deemed very respectable given the circumstances. We even had a few other Japanese teams question the power output at the end of the day, which made it all worthwhile!

We had done it, completed our first Japanese Time Attack, I say our first because we already have an invite to return and get that magic minute! I can't wait to try Tsukuba with full power.

As for comparing the UK with Japan, well we have a way to go to be competitive, but it's not impossible. The top cars in Japan are like GT cars, they are also far more advanced in the aero department. They only really run at Tsukuba so the cars are perfectly set up for the circuit and most are driven by Pro drivers. The classes are very different to the UK with an unlimited and a road class, we were all in the unlimited class, when our cars are all pretty road legal. I have learnt a lot and am keen to improve my cars setup for next year with some new ideas.....

Despite the engine failure, it has been a dream week and everyone we went with and met along the way has been an inspiration. All the UK teams have done so well, and been great fun both on and off the track (just ask Clive Seddon about the bar bill!), Tsukuba is a must for next year!

I would like to thank all the following who have supported and helped make the dream a reality, without their help the trip would not have been possible.

- ARC International Japan
- BLITZ Japan
- Boom Enterprises Japan
- Clash Productions France
- DAMD Inc Japan
- Do-Luck Racing Service Japan
- Fensport Performance
- HKS Europe and Japan
- JapaneseUsedCars.com Japan
- Jems Race Engineering
- Power Enterprises Japan
- Rev Speed Japan
- RC Developments
- Sumo Power UK and Japan
- Sunoco Fuels Japan
- Time Attack Series UK
- TM Works Japan
- Toyo Tires, UK and Japan
- Tsukuba Circuit Japan
- Zen Performance

All the above are an absolute credit to the industry both in the UK and Japan. Our trip to Tsukuba has been very worthwhile, cementing relationships on both sides of the world which can only be great news for us all.

Adrian.





Tsukuba - Team Sumo



Report : Andy Barnes, Sumo Power

Pictures : Kaneko San, Japan

