

We will compete in Le Mans 24 Hours in 2012

Dome to send a Dome S102.5 (the evolutional model of Dome S102) and Fushida Director to Le Mans for its 17<sup>th</sup> challenge in the 24-hour race. Pescarolo to take responsibility for the race operation. Our cash flow is as if a profligate son keeps borrowing money to spend on Geisha, which is why we don't have a choice not to enjoy the race.

Back in 2008, with our magnificent ambition and full of hope for a huge success, we invested obviously the largest budget in the history of Dome, which was still nothing compared to the budget Audi or some big names had, into the Dome S102 development programme and competed in the 24-hour race. Sadly, though, it was impossible to keep the ambition and the hope going forward after the race, and therefore the Dome S102 had to live in idleness for a few years.

The Dome S102 displayed in the reception hall in our HQ has never been talkative, but every time I saw her, who I believe has got world-class performance, left with no heart as if it was an exuvia, I asked myself a question with the obvious answer, "why does she have to be held captive here?" Although I had always felt a sense of discomfort to see her sleeping there, three years quickly passed with no mercy.

Some of you could have got wondering why she had not had any chance to come back to competition. I would disclose the reason in future, but the main point today is not about it. The thing which has turned out to be obvious after the three-year boredom is the boring days were more than enough for the Dome S102 and us. It is not our duty or obligation to compete in Le Mans 24 Hours. We have no reason why we challenge the race. There is no necessity for us to go to France. We don't have plenty of spare money, either. All the above are absolutely correct but are not enough to stop us from going crazy about her.

Dome is a racecar constructor. Therefore our pride is in our technology used to develop racecars but not in race operation. For that reason we often

worked together with race teams specialised in sports car racing such as RFH.

Some non-Japanese teams did contact us and asked us if we can lease the Dome S102 in the last three years. We also received some very interesting offer for 2012 season again. We would have been more than happy to make a contract with one of them if we hadn't had the bad memories in the past. As mentioned in the article "Graduation from Le Mans", all the relationships with the race teams in the past ended up with unpleasant financial dispute. As I never want another problem happening again, I have decided to fund the whole 2012 programme with Dome's own money.

There are still several components here and there on the Dome S102 we would like to update before the first test to be honest, but this time we have decided to limit design period and use most of the time and budget for developing and setting-up the car by running as many tests as possible. We have learnt from the previous challenges in which we suffered from lack of testing due to the too long design phase, and every race finished before we found the limit of our racecars. We will keep the new policy even after this year's race and will find the ultimate performance of Dome S102 by the end of this year.

We have to admit delivery of some important components has already delayed in the current design / manufacturing phase, which started last December. Because of the delay, we are now expecting even the worst case – i.e., not only postponing the scheduled shakedown but no update on the car in the delayed shakedown - but we are still working hard to get the car ready by the scheduled shakedown in mid March.

What we have already fixed are the engine supplied by Judd, the tyres supplied by Michelin, the director Hiroshi Fushida, and the chief engineer Hiroshi Yuchi. We are very close to decide a driver, but another driver is still under discussion among us, and we are still negotiating with some drivers for the last race seat. Our policy on the race drivers has been concrete, though, which is "two non-Japanese drivers + one Japanese driver".

We entrust race operation to the French squad, Pescarolo, this year. The audiences will see a Dome S102.5 occupying one of the two grids Pescarolo has got, but what is actually happening is Dome outsources the race operation to Pescarolo.

As I always speak out, Dome is not interested in or proud of strategy or techniques to manage the 24-hour long race because we are a racecar constructor. Le Mans 24 Hours is an endurance race indeed, but what Dome aims is the speed in the qualifying sessions in which the true performance of the racecars is tested. Incidents that could happen during the 24 hours, such as being collected by the car in front, engine blow, and puncture, are as out of control as natural disaster for a racecar constructor. For that reason our pride will never be hurt by a bad result due to such incidents during the 24 hours. Following the policy of ours, we have asked Pescarolo to cancel the 24 hour test Pescarolo had originally planned but have asked to have as many short tests as possible during which we will develop and set-up the car. I am pretty certain the guys in the French squad are shocked to know how we prepare for the 24-hour race, though...

That's how we have ended up with the very egoistic programme for the 2012 Le Mans 24 Hours. The detail of the Dome S102.5 and the team structure will be disclosed in a column or news by Hidenori Suzuki (Sportscar-racing) soon. I hope you would read it through, too.

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