



Sunday, July 21, 2024

2024 FIM Endurance World Championship 45th “Coca-Cola” Suzuka 8 Hours Endurance Race



Race Report

YOSHIMURA SERT MOTUL Takes 3rd Place Podium Finish Team SUZUKI CN CHALLENGE Completes Race in 8th place

It was race day for the 2024 FIM Endurance World Championship’s 45th “Coca-Cola” Suzuka 8 Hours Endurance Race, and Suzuka Circuit was blazing hot.

In the 8:30 a.m. warm-up session held for 45 minutes, Team Suzuki CN Challenge (hereafter CN Challenge) was 6th fastest overall, while the Yoshimura SERT Motul (hereafter Yoshimura) finished the session in 10th.

The race got underway at 11:30 a.m. as 46 machines rocketed down the starting straight, all aimed at taking the chequered flag eight hours later. For Yoshimura, the start was entrusted to Cocoro Atsumi, while for CN Challenge it was Etienne Masson who got the race underway.

On the opening lap, Atsumi slotted into 5th on the Yoshimura machine as Masson came across the line around 10th for CN Challenge.

There were a few crashes shortly following the start, but the race settled down from there, and within an hour bikes were coming in to make their first pit stops.

With nearly two hours complete, teams and riders were returning to the pits to make their second pit stops. Yoshimura had elected to delay their pit stop timing, coming in slightly later to switch riders from Dan Linfoot to Cocoro Atsumi once again. For CN Challenge, Masson got back on the bike to ride another stint. Albert Arenas made his Suzuka 8 Hours race debut after Yoshimura's fourth pit stop, and once on track he was able to ride consistent laps, making a solid contribution to the team's challenge.

Although positions shifted due to various teams' pit strategies, Yoshimura was lapping around 4th and CN Challenge around 10th going into the second half of the race. For CN Challenge, Etienne Masson and Sodo Hamahara rode back-to-back stints, sharing riding duties between the two of them.

With around two hours remaining, there had been no major changes to the leading group. That was when Yoshimura received a ride-through penalty while in 4th. Linfoot successfully completed the ride-through, after which he was able to return to the race in 4th thanks to the gap the team had built up, but once back on track they were significantly behind the bike in 3rd. However, with 30 minutes remaining, Yoshimura's Atsumi left the pits to begin his stint and was able to close in on the Ducati Team Kagayama machine ahead, then went on to make the pass to take over 3rd. At this point Atsumi was the fastest rider on track and began extending the team's gap to Ducati in 4th.

It was Atsumi who rode the final stint for the Yoshimura SERT Motul, keeping up a fast pace until the chequered flag to take a 3rd place podium finish, while Team Suzuki CN Challenge did well with only two riders to take a strong 8th place result.

Shinichi Sahara – Project Leader and Team Director, Team Suzuki CN Challenge

"As we came into the race weekend, I was amazed how well everything came together for us to be here with such an incredibly short time to prepare. Once we got here and got started, the whole team, including the riders, did their jobs perfectly and we made it to race day without issue. I feel a real sense of accomplishment because not only did we finish the race, which was our main goal, but we also got inside the single digits with an 8th-place finish. This won't be the end of our project. We still have work to do, like collecting data, verifying sustainable items, and figuring out our next goal. For now, I want to say good job to the riders for their hard work today, and to the team for working together to give a 100% effort. Our result is

thanks to everyone, including the fans who supported our project, all our partners, and everyone at their respective workplaces who supported our whole team. We hope to continue this success into the future, so we'll be counting on everyone's support!"

Etienne Masson – Team Suzuki CN Challenge

"The race and the conditions were so hot, the temperatures were so high during the race, but I pushed during all my stints. I got a good start and kept a good pace. Due to the high temperature I needed to be smoother on the bike, and lap after lap I tried to adapt my riding style. It was the target to be in the top 10, so I'm really happy, and the whole team deserves this result. I think the CN Challenge project is very interesting for all the paddock because there is a lot of potential for this discipline, and CN Challenge brings some solutions. I'll be back riding for the Yoshimura SERT Motul team at the EWC final round, the Bol d'Or, and fighting for the title. We're only six points behind the leaders in the standings. We're fighting for the championship and I love it, so we'll be pushing a lot and I hope we can take the championship."

Sodo Hamahara – Team Suzuki CN Challenge

"We had the bike set up in a way to make it easy to do long runs, so when I tried to set a fast qualifying lap the way I normally do in sprint racing, I lost my balance a bit and it made me feel my lack of experience here. In the race, the base bike has won many EWC races, so I could ride really comfortably on it. For the final stint, my back was in bad condition so I had to leave it up to Masson. He rode in my place and that was a huge help to the team. Last year, I actually worked as a commentator for the Suzuka 8 Hours and wondered if I would ever be able to race here again, so getting this chance to join the Suzuki factory team meant a lot to me, so much so that after the race I cried a lot."

Hideyuki Ogata – Team Suzuki CN Challenge

"In terms of new challenges and new developments on the bike, I've ridden the GSX-R in a lot of different variations in the past, so I think that allowed me to give good feedback to the team throughout the tests and the race. I also learned a lot about new paths we can take with the bike and the potential it has, and where we still need to do more. Not everyone on this team has a lot of experience with racing, so it's a "new" factory team in a sense. Every day we worked together, I felt like we came together more until we became a solid unit. This made the team stronger, and showed me again how important it is to build a cohesive team."



Yohei Kato – Team Director, Yoshimura SERT Motul

I'm very happy with this result. A podium finish at Suzuka is very special for Yoshimura, especially this year as the brand celebrates its 70th anniversary. It's an incredible feeling to experience it with Suzuki, our valuable sponsors and, of course, our fans. The riders worked really well. Cocoro did an incredible last stint, Albert put in a brilliant performance, and Dan pushed right to the end to help taking back third place from Ducati. I'd like to thank them very much for this result, even though the very hot weather didn't make things any easier.

Damien Saulnier – Team Manager, Yoshimura SERT Motul

Winning at Le Mans has a special meaning for us. But, when you're at Suzuka, at Yoshimura, at Suzuki, achieving a good result is also very special. I'm very happy with this great podium position. We've lost the lead in the championship, but only by six points. It's not over yet. We're now going to prepare for the final at the Bol d'Or with a single objective in mind; to offer our team and Suzuki another world crown.

Cocoro ATSUMI – Yoshimura SERT Motul

I've been the reserve rider for the team since the Bol d'Or 2023 so I've learnt a lot with them and I was honoured to be able to participate in this very important race and fight for the championship. We finished on the podium and the gap in the championship is very small so we're still in a good position to challenge for the title. I'd really like to congratulate Albert because he wasn't able to do much testing before the race. Dan has been my team-mate since the start of the season, he has an excellent pace and I've learnt a lot from him, as well as from Greg and Etienne. They should both be back for the final round, and I'll be doing my best to help them.

Albert ARENAS OVEJERO – Yoshimura SERT Motul

It was an incredible weekend that ended very well. I stayed totally focused from the start to try and help the team as much as possible. It was a big challenge for me to ride at a new circuit with a new bike, new tires, and the pressure of fighting for the

title. But the very warm welcome I received gave me the confidence to stay positive. I gave my best and I'd like to thank Yoshimura SERT Motul for this opportunity in Japan, which I really enjoyed.

Dan LINFOOT – Yoshimura SERT Motul

Cocoro did an incredible last stint in the dark. Albert also did an excellent job with just a few hours and a few laps of practice in which to learn the bike and the circuit. He did a stint that gave us a bit of a rest, which was perfect. After that I just tried to stay solid, do the best laps possible despite the traffic and respect the team's strategy. I'm very proud and happy to be on the podium in Suzuka after my fourth-place last year. A result like that, together with the atmosphere and the Japanese fans, is a memory of a lifetime!