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Nissan GTP & Group C Race Cars 1984-1993

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Veloce Classic Reprint Series

NISSAN

The GTP & Group C Racecars 1984-1993

Lightning Speed



John Starkey

Yes, I know, this is not a book about Porsches, but it does cover one of the 962's greatest rivals in IMSA and the Group C championships. Over the next few months, we will be bringing you a series of book reviews about some of Porsche's biggest competitors in these two international racing championships, as these other marques slowly but surely challenged the mighty 962 for global supremacy.

LIGHTNING SPEED

was getting Geoff Brabham. I have a lot of respect for Geoff. He's always spot on with everything he does and his driving is dead smooth. He's always race fit, too. When he goes out for a quick lap, you don't have to wait till lap three or four, he's already done it on lap one."

By 1987 the revisions to the

bodywork had doubled the original car's downforce at 200 mph. The car's competitiveness was also helped by new rules restricting its turbocharged opposition to the same 3-liter capacity.

Don Devendorf: "Yoshi (Sasaki - Author), designed new bodywork in our wind tunnel, which gave the car a wide

Electromotive produced all its own special bodywork for their car in a dedicated bodyshop attached to their plant in El Segundo. Here is that shop in 1988 with body panels stacked against the wall. (Photo: Courtesy of Ashley Page.)



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Nissan GTP & Group C Race Cars 1984-1993 by
John Starkey © Veloce Publishing Limited

In the '80s and early '90s, the racing world witnessed some of the greatest sports car racing in the history of the sport. As it dawned on the world's big manufacturers that the level of exposure and public interest in sports car racing was growing, they also began to enter this

sphere of racing. Porsche soon found its dominance being challenged by the likes of Jaguar, Mercedes, Toyota and Nissan, who all climbed in on the action.

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NPT1800. (Photo: Author's collection.)



90 Nissan I think that Nissan spent so much money on the NPT1-90, they just had to make it work. No matter which way you look at it though, they were spectacular, state of the art, racecars. Really, the best of the bunch."

At the end of the season, Irabham and Chip Robinson were first and second in the Drivers' Championship and Nissan had won the title yet again.

Don Devendorf: "I suppose that we could have carried on with the 1988 car, kept

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The well-known author, John Starkey, familiar to many Porsche enthusiasts, has compiled this handy history of the great effort and success achieved by the Nissan engineers and drivers, on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as in Japan.

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In 1985, Nissan of Japan decided to try and win Le Mans. As a start, they contracted with March Engineering of Bicester to build chassis for them based upon March's "Customer" 85G. This car had attempted to build upon the reputation of the successful March 82, 83 and 84Gs in IMSA GTP racing in America but, with the coming of the Porsche 962 in 1985, the March chassis was seen to be outclassed by that of the Porsche.

Nevertheless, in Japan, three 85Gs were entered for the Fuji 1000 km and Hoshino put his car on pole position on the first day of practice.

Don Reynolds, who had built the engine for the March-Nissan, remembered: "I was in the restaurant at the circuit, talking with Derek Bell and Hans Stuck. Derek had just put the Porsche on pole before Hoshino out-did him. Derek was amazed at how fast the March-Nissan was. He reckoned that he'd got every corner just right, but: 'Hoshino went by me like a rocket. What's

in that thing?' 'Course, the Japanese cheated like mad with rocket fuel, but that's another story'"

Porsche responded on the second practice day, pushing the March back on to the second row but race day dawned with a monsoon howling. All the European-entered cars withdrew and Hoshino led the Japanese contingent to outright victory, despite a spin halfway through the race.

In 1986, partly due to this success, Nissan purchased four March 86Gs. This was an all-new car, designed by Gordon Coppuck and called the 86S (Sport). For this car, Indy-car type suspension was used, the tub being made out of aluminum honeycomb with magnesium bulkheads. It was narrower and lighter (by 100 kg) than the previous 85G cars with side-mounted radiators. Bodywork was in carbon-fiber and Kevlar. The Electromotive-built Nissan six-cylinder engine installed was the FB30 V6.

Co-incidentally BMW USA bought six 86G cars, to be engined with BMW's 2.5-liter four cylinder turbocharged engine. This 86G was, however, more akin to the earlier 85G as Gordon Coppuck had taken over at March in time to design the Japanese



Masahito Marumi and Takao Wada drive this March 85G with a turbocharged V619 engine installed at the Fuji 500 mile race of 1985. (Photo: Courtesy of Nissan.)

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The book covers the design and development of the Nissan Group C and GTP cars and their racing history and success, but Starkey begins with the background to the Electromotive Nissan GTP ZX Turbo cars which began life as Lola T810s back in 1985. The book's Foreword has been written by Geoff Brabham, one of the cars' most successful drivers. He was approached by Nissan in '85 to drive the car, but following some worrying accidents around the time of the cars' development, he declined. Brabham was then approached again a few years later and, fortunately for us, he accepted. The Nissan team was rewarded with four straight IMSA Camel championships between 1988 and 1991!

1990 World Championship 4



Kazuyoshi Hoshino and Andrew Gilbert-Scott drove this Lola-Nissan R89XC in the WSPC round at Snetterton in 1990. They qualified in fifth place but failed to finish. (Photo: Courtesy of Nissan.)

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Constant development in the fiercely competitive Group C championship saw the Nissan improving all the time, and although it still had some way to go, the car was impressively fast.

Starkey has succeeded in interviewing most of the drivers ever to have sat behind the steering wheel of this race car. In addition, he has interviewed engineers, designers and team management, which all combines to make a very credible book on these potent cars. Such wide research always confirms the quality of the subject matter and this book is no exception, and makes excellent reading.

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The engine was terrific but ... anyway, the mechanical ratios of the pedal assembly were wrong. Also, the floor around the pedal box was too flexible. We ended up doing a brake pressure test and found that there was really very little, about 600 pound. We wanted 1000 at the calipers and so I

redesigned it and the work was done at Ray Mallock's shop."

"We ran a test at Silverstone in a downpour. It was worthless, so we couldn't do any effective testing. There was no more time to test the brakes before Le Mans itself."

By Sunday morning, the Japanese-created R90C was one of the few Nissans still running. (Photo: Courtesy of LAT)



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The photographs selected for this book show a wide variety of the races in which this car competed. This is complemented by a useful selection of technical images showing various components from engine and gearbox to aerodynamics and bodywork. A good smattering of photos of the team and personnel also adds to a satisfying feast of images.

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which was enough to give them the Drivers' title and Nissan the Manufacturers' one.

For 1992 the Nissans were further modified from the original Lola concept, although there were hardly any outwardly visible differences to the 1991 models. The most important area of change was in the front suspension.

In 1989 the World Sportscar Championship race in Japan was held at Suzuka. Anders Östborn and Masahiro Matsui shared this modified March 87G to take eleventh place overall. [Photo: Courtesy of Nissan.]

NISMO carried on in the All-Japan Sports Prototype Championship, as did Nova Engineering with the chassis that Lola had supplied them in the middle of 1991. There was also a new Nissan entry from

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At 160-pages, this is not a huge book, but it offers a useful reference for these cars during what was one of the most exciting eras of motorsport in recent history. Reasonably priced at just £35.00, this offers a good opportunity to build a collection of books on those race cars that contributed to the motorsport spectacle in the '80s and '90s. First published in 2002, this is a timely reprint of a great title. Other titles in this Classic Reprint series will be published in due course, so be sure to check back for reviews of those books.

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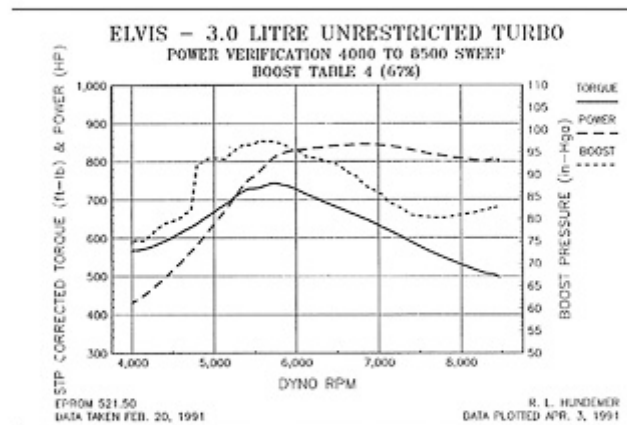
Nissan R92CP JSPC 1992

Chassis	Monoocoque in carbon fiber and synthetic materials. A development of the R89C.
Bodywork	Kevlar and Carbon Fiber.
Engine	Nissan VRH35Z 90 degree V8. Four valves per cylinder. 2 x IHI turbochargers.
Bore x Stroke	85 x 77 mm = 3496 cc.
Compression	8.5:1.
Power	800 bhp @ 7600 rpm.
Torque	80 mkg @ 5600 rpm.
Electronic Engine Management	ECCS-R-NDIS.
Gearbox	Hewland VGC with 5 forward, 1 reverse gear.
Weight	910 kg.
Wheelbase	2794 mm.
Length	4800 mm.
Width	1990 mm.
Height	1100 mm.
Tires	Dunlop.
Max. Speed	380 kph plus.

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Is this title worthy of a place on your bookshelf? If you missed the first printing back in 2002, then yes, this would be a great opportunity to acquire this issue at a very reasonable price. As a motorsport enthusiast, and it is fair to say that most Porsche enthusiasts probably are, then you will want to make sure you get a copy of this book. To have a complete library of books covering other race car manufacturers can only make you a more informed proponent of the sport down at the pub. Enjoy!!

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