13 October, 2014

**Keiko IHARA climbed the podium of the 6 Hours of Fuji**

- First ever woman driver in the World Endurance Championship -

**Keiko IHARA, who has been in races of the European Le Mans series (ELMS) and Asian Le Mans series (AsLMS) as well as the World Endurance Championship series (WEC) including the 24 Hours of Le Mans, participated in the 6 Hours of Fuji, the 5th round of WEC, on 12 October. She finished in 3rd position and climbed the podium at the Fuji Speedway as the first woman driver in the World Championship race.**

In the qualifying session on Saturday the car number 35, Morgan-Judd car run by the OAK Racing, recorded the 2nd fastest time in the LMP2 class. The 35 car, however, started the race on Sunday from the 27th grid due to a mistake using a false part.

At 11 o’clock on Sunday, the race started. Her team mate, Gustavo YAKAMAN and Alex BRUNDLE drove the Morgan-Judd in the first half of the race to improve the position to 4th in class (12th overall). After about three and half hours from the start, BRUNDLE came into the pit and IHARA got behind the wheel at 2:20 P.M. With steady drive she improved the position to 3rd in class during her double stints for one and half hours.

YAKAMAN pushed the car number 35 to overtake their rival car which passed the OAK Racing’s car during pit stop. For the last one hour, YAKAMAN made a final scheduled pit stop and crossed the finish line in the 3rd place in class (9th overall) at 5 P.M.

IHARA commented about her dream to climb the podium of the World Championship race;

“It is fantastic to be on podium in my home country! It’s quite tough for a woman to drive a race car in one of the top categories. Thanks to great support by OAK Racing and supporters in Japan, however, I finally arrived here. I really appreciate to all for their help so far. I got 2 podium finishes in a row from the AsLMS race in August. So, I will try to get on the top of the podium at my next WEC race in Bahrain.”

**Activities in Diversity**

As a member of the FIA “Women in Motorsport”, IHARA participated in the talk show, held on Saturday, and talked about her desire to improve the social environment so that more women can work in motorsports especially in Asia including Japan. She also participated in the international forum titled “World Assembly for Women in Tokyo: WAW! Tokyo 2014”, operated by the Japanese government, and discussed importance of diversity with Ms Christine Madeleine Odette Lagarde, Managing Director of International Monetary Fund (IMF), and reported about her activities in the “Women in Motorsport” to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe during the evening reception.

**IHARA’s comments in the “Women in motorsport” Talk Show at Fuji Speedway**

“I’d like to contribute to making the environment where women can work in motorsports and the car industry more easily, as a racing driver, an official, a mechanic, an engineer or a team director. In the rapidly changing society we live in, individuals, companies and nations have to further evolve through challenges based on new ideas. I think the new ideas will be brought up from diversity. And the gender is an important part of diversity. I have participated in races in approximately 50 countries and faced various obstacles such as gender, nationality and age. But I experienced that if people work together to challenge, regardless of differences in positions and sense of value, we can succeed. As a first step to make the environment where different people can work together without any obstacles, I’d like to contribute to making the society where women can fully utilise their skills.”

IHARA is also active in education about safe and environmentally-friendly driving as a BMW Japan’s spokesperson of the “i Series”(electric vehicle) all over Japan.

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