Nissan Playstation® Gt Academy Goes From Strength To Strength

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- Abu Dhabi to host the GT Academy Europe Race Camp for the first time this October
- Jose Gerard Policarpio from the Philippines wins the first ever GT Academy Asia Race Camp
- Matthew Simmons from Australia becomes the 2015 GT Academy International Champion

In 2008, Nissan and PlayStation® joined forces in Europe to create an experiment to see if a Gran Turismo® gamer could transfer their skills to become a real racing driver. Fast forward to 2015, and the Nissan PlayStation GT Academy has attracted over five million entrants and become an established route into top-level motorsport. Its talented alumni continue to deliver race wins and podiums for Nissan in a variety of championships across the globe.

GT Academy is getting bigger and better each year. In 2015, 24 countries across the world have participated in three virtual-to-reality competitions. The fastest gamers on PlayStation's Gran Turismo®6 racing game take part in three ultra-competitive Race Camps where their skills and determination are put to the test behind the wheel of Nissan performance cars such as the 370Z and GT-R, under the tutelage of world class racing drivers. The three winners then take part in Nissan's all-encompassing Driver Development Programme to ready them for a career as a racing driver.

The results of GT Academy have been spectacular. Lucas Ordoñez, an MBA student from Spain, spearheaded the programme in 2008. He now races for Nissan in the Super GT500 class in Japan and has two Le Mans 24 Hour podium finishes to his name. Jann Mardenborough, the 2011 winner from the UK, competes in the GP3 series and took another step towards Formula 1 last weekend when he raced in the GP2 class in Monza, Italy. A host of other NISMO Athletes, who won their opportunities through GT Academy, continue to impress around the world.

This year the International (Australia, Mexico, North Africa, Turkey, USA) and Asia (India, Indonesia, Japan, Philippines, Thailand) Race Camps took place at the beginning of August at Silverstone Circuit. Australian Matthew Simmons, a 26-year-old courier from Brisbane, managed to beat 29 competitors to be crowned 2015 GT Academy International winner. The following week an overwhelmed Jose Gerard Policarpio, a 26-year-old customer service agent from Parañaque in the Philippines, was named inaugural winner of GT Academy Asia. Both have already embarked on the Nissan Driver Development programme to prepare them for the 2016 Dubai 24 Hour endurance race in January.

"The GT Academy programme is amazing," commented Simmons. *"You can really tell the driver development programme trains you to become an athlete and they teach you all the aspects so by the time you reach that pinnacle and you're at the Dubai 24 Hours you're ready to take on the world."*

Darren Cox, NISMO Global Head of Brand, Marketing & Sales, who has been a driving force behind the programme, explains, *"The global expansion of GT Academy has been fantastic and we're delighted to have been able to host the first-ever Asia Race Camp. The new markets have so much enthusiasm for the competition. They only have to look at the instant rewards and opportunities that drivers from new markets, many that don't have an established motorsport infrastructure, have been given as a result of GT Academy. It's great that we're able to provide them this unique route into the world of motorsport."*

Changes have also been made to the European competition. GT Academy Europe Race Camp moves from its traditional Silverstone home to the glamourous surroundings of Abu Dhabi's Yas Marina Formula One circuit next month. A total of 56 finalists, 28 from online and 28 from live events, from 11 countries will compete for the chance to live their dream as a professional racer.

"Abu Dhabi has some fantastic facilities, guaranteed good weather and some stunning backdrops to enable us to bring GT Academy to a new audience," comments Olivier Pierini, Nissan Europe Manager of Sponsorship and Partnerships. *"GT Academy is about making people's dreams come true, and in Abu Dhabi we are certainly showing off the more glamorous side of becoming a racing driver. However, the competitors should be under no illusion that they will get an easy ride. The road to success is long and hard and only those with the determination and talent to succeed will make it to the end."*

More details about GT Academy 2015 can be found on various platforms including: www.facebook.com/GTAcademy, www.gran-turismo.com and Twitter @GTAcademy.
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Notes to Editors

About Nissan in the UK

- NissanSunderland Plant produces the Nissan Qashqai, Note and Juke and the 100% electric Nissan LEAF
- Production of lithium-ion batteries for electric vehicles began in 2012
- Total plant volume since 1986 stands at more than eight million units with 80 per cent of production exported to 100 markets worldwide
- Total investment made and announced since then is over £3.5 billion
- 500,238 units were produced at Sunderland plant in 2014
- In 2014, one in three cars built in the UK was a Nissan.
- Sunderland Plant currently employs more than 6,700 people
- Nissan's European Design Centre is located in Paddington, London and employs around 65 people
- Nissan's European Technical Centre is based in Cranfield, Bedfordshire and employs around 1,000 people
- Nissan's sales and marketing headquarters in Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire employs around 190 people

NOTES TO EDITORS

About GT Academy 2015

GT Academy is a collaboration between PlayStation® and Nissan that uses the virtual world of the Gran Turismo®6 game to unearth real-world racing talent. Now in its seventh year, GT Academy includes separate competitions for Europe (France, Italy, Germany, UK, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Poland , Hungary, Czech Republic), Asia (Japan, India, Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia) and 'International' (USA, Australia, Mexico, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Turkey).

The GT Academy qualification round will be part of a free Gran Turismo®6 update on PlayStation®3 (terms and conditions apply). The fastest gamers in each participating territory will qualify for their place at their territory's Race Camp. A number of competitors will also gain access via a series of Live Gran Turismo® events organised locally.

At Race Camp competitors are put through their paces on track and in a series of challenges in Nissan sports cars under the watchful eyes of high profile judges and mentors. One winner from each competition will be invited to take part in the intensive Driver Development Programme. They could qualify for an international race license and race for Nissan in 2016, before potentially joining Nissan's elite NISMO Athlete group of racers.

Previous winners of GT Academy are now regular racing drivers. In 2015, Jann Mardenborough (UK, winner in 2011) and Lucas Ordoñez (Spain, winner in 2008) represented Nissan in its LMP1 factory assault on the Le Mans 24 Hours. Jann also races single-seaters in GP3, a feeder series to Formula One, while Lucas is racing in the Super GT500 Championship in Japan. GT Academy winners are also present in the World Endurance Championship and Blancpain Endurance Series.

Since its inception, GT Academy has attracted well over 5 million entrants worldwide. GT Academy winners have recorded two Le Mans 24 Hour podiums as well as 90 further podiums in international racing and over 22 race wins.

News and views on GT Academy 2015 and the progress of all the GT Academy drivers can be followed on various platforms including: www.facebook.com/GTAcademy | www.twitter.com/GTAcademy | www.nismo.tv |www.flickr.com/photos/gtacademyeurope.

About the Gran Turismo® Franchise

Gran Turismo® celebrated its 15th anniversary in 2013, having first appeared internationally in 1998. The multi-award-winning franchise has been the most successful ever for PlayStation®, and in 2013 it also surpassed worldwide sales of 70 million units. Various iterations of Gran Turismo® have been created for PlayStation® , PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system, PlayStation®3 and PSP (PlayStation® Portable), and have always been regarded as the best and most authentic driving simulators ever created due to true-to-life graphics, authentic physics technology and design. Since the inception of Gran Turismo®, famed creator Kazunori Yamauchi and Polyphony Digital Inc. in Japan have revolutionized the racing category as we know it today. His offerings provide the most realistic driving simulation in the industry and a unique medium for automotive manufacturers to showcase their products. Gran Turismo®6, the latest iteration of the game, was released on 6 December, 2013.

About Sony Computer Entertainment Europe Ltd
Sony Computer Entertainment Europe (SCEE), based in London, is responsible for the distribution, marketing and sales of PlayStation®4 (PS4®) computer entertainment system, PlayStation®Vita (PS Vita) portable entertainment system, PlayStation®3 (PS3®) computer entertainment system, PSP™ (PlayStation®Portable) handheld entertainment system and PSN software and hardware in 109 territories across Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Oceania. SCEE has revolutionised home entertainment since they launched PlayStation® in 1994. PlayStation®4 redefines rich and immersive gameplay with powerful graphics and speed, intelligent personalisation and deeply integrated social capabilities. PS Vita is an ultimate portable entertainment system that offers a revolutionary combination of rich gaming and social connectivity within a real world context. PS3® is an advanced computer system, incorporating the powerful Cell Broadband Engine and RSX processors. PSP® is a handheld entertainment system that allows users to enjoy 3D games with high-quality full-motion video and high-fidelity stereo audio. SCEE also delivers the PlayStation® experience to open operating systems through PlayStation®Mobile, a cross device platform. SCEE also develops, publishes, markets and distributes entertainment software for these formats, and manages the third party licensing programs for the formats in these territories.

More information about PlayStation® products can be found at www.playstation.com.

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About Nissan in Europe

Nissan has one of the most comprehensive European presences of any overseas manufacturer, employing more than 17,600 staff across locally-based design, research & development, manufacturing, logistics and sales & marketing operations. Last financial year Nissan plants in the UK, Spain and Russia produced more than 675,000 vehicles including award-winning crossovers, small cars, SUVs, commercial vehicles and electric vehicles, including the Nissan LEAF, the world's most popular electric vehicle with 96% of customers willing to recommend the car to friends. Nissan now offers a strong line-up of 23 diverse and innovative models in Europe under the Nissan and Datsun brands.

About NISMO

For the full NISMO story please click here

For NISMO's GT Academy story click here

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