

Cyndie Allemann

Racing diary

"My story
in words
and images"

Fuji: back
to where it
all started.

Episode 2012.05

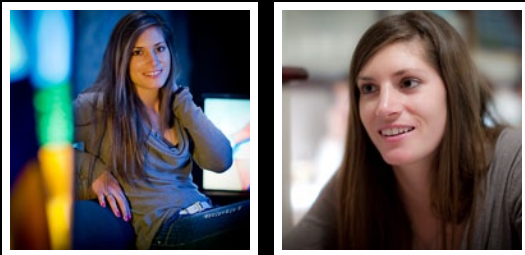


KATIE

Tuesday, 2012-05-01. Tokyo, Japan.
Becoming mainstream in Asakusa.

By now, with four trips to Japan in a mere two months, the Zurich to Narita flight has almost become routine for Cyndie. Same as lodging at the same hotel in Shiodome and visiting a few regular places in Tokyo. Such a regular spot is the Asakusa district and its colorful Nakamise street.

This is where Cyndie had her first taste of becoming a mainstream figure in Japan, when a young man, just a random local 'Shonen', hesitantly approached her as he had recognized his new racing idol. This moment was very simple, yet at the same time symbolic of the fact that Cyndie is slowly starting to be a mainstream figure in a foreign country.



Being recognized and sought after at a race track is quite common for a race car driver, as they are in their natural environment, wearing their suit and surrounded by 'their' fans. But on the street in a city like Tokyo, it is a totally different story as most of them will normally go unnoticed. Of course, being an elegant European 'femme fatale' always help to get noticed in Tokyo, but nevertheless, being recognized as "シンディ" (Shindi) in this context was an awesome experience and a defining moment.

"On the street, we are usually quite anonymous, contrary to what can be experienced at a race track. Being recognized in Tokyo was so cool. I'm aware that I'm still far from being a pop star, but establishing myself in the mainstream in Japan can only be good for my career, my partners and sponsors. And it's also good for a series like Super GT. A professional race car driver must go beyond her sport and reach out to the general public. The more positive attention you can get, the better it is. This simple encounter with this fan really symbolizes where I want to go, and fast."



Wednesday, 2012-05-02. Shizuoka, Japan.
Team building time.

Auto racing is a team sport. Each team member, from the race drivers to the mechanics, is responsible for a specific mission and if someone fail, there is an impact on the entire team. From the moment Cyndie arrived in Shizuoka, it was clear that this race event would be marked by this concept of team, even more than usual.

For one thing, Shizuoka is the base of Hitotsuyama Racing, and everyone in the family-run team wanted to make sure that Cyndie (and her entourage) had everything they needed and felt comfortable in their home town.



Also, a third driver would exceptionally join the usual (and still new) team of Cyndie and Aki (Akihiro Tsuzuki) on the #21 Audi, for this slightly longer race. This would no doubt change the dynamic between the drivers as well as the strategies.

On Wednesday, the 'team building' spirit also took several aspects: from a new pair of personalized racing shoes to a team dinner at a local Japanese (or was it Korean?) grill. The team spirit is slowly but surely taking shape at Hitotsuyama Racing.

"Team spirit is one the most important thing in order to work well together. It's also critical to motivate people to work harder, whether it's for the mechanics, the engineer or the driver. So for me, any occasion to spend time with my team is very important, like sharing dinner. My mechanics at Hitotsuyama Racing are doing a great job on the car and I am very thankful for their hard work. Plus, the little surprise to get my personalized pink shoes with my name on it, made me very happy! Little attentions like these make you feel like a part of the family."



Thursday, 2012-05-03. Shizuoka, Japan.
Here comes the rain again.

As far as weather conditions go, Thursday started badly and they got even worse in the morning. The constant rain that started the night before turned into a massive downpour early in the practice session. As a matter of fact, track conditions were at their worst at the precise moment that Cyndie took the car out for her practice run. She was not affected at all by the daunting conditions, and actually looked like she had fun in the torrential rain, as she got out of her car (on-board cameras don't lie :-)



After an excellent 12th time in the morning practice, things looked positive for the qualifying session. Cyndie's mission was to drive the car in the Super Lap session and go as fast as possible on this single flying lap. Things didn't work out as planned though, and the #21 Audi never made it to the top-10 in Q1, a necessary step to get in the Super Lap session.

A difficult day, all in all. But Mikio Hitotsuyama, the patriarch, did the right thing in the evening to get the team spirit back on track by hosting a dinner in an Italian restaurant. Nothing could have ended this day on a better note, especially for Cyndie, a major Italian food aficionado.

"The weather conditions today were catastrophic. In Japan, I've learned quite fast that weather is never what you expect and changes every single hour. So track changes very quickly and to be a good driver, you need to adapt to new conditions very quickly. When I drove the car in practice rain was pouring like hell, with a lot of aquaplaning. But that's my job to drive the car as fast as possible in every different track conditions. Disappointing qualifying but on the other hand, great challenge to start from the back and try to move up in the field. I'll practice my aggressive overtaking style..."



Friday, 2012-05-04. Shizuoka, Japan.
More fan support than ever, a more challenging race than expected.

Race day at Fuji was exceptionally on Friday, due to the 'Golden Week', the traditional Japanese holiday week. And also thanks to the 'Golden Week', a massive amount of fans flocked to Fuji Speedway, many of them making it all the way to the front of the Hitotsuyama pitbox, to get a chance to see their new idol in person — that manga racing girl from Switzerland. And Cyndie being Cyndie, she was all too happy to oblige and take countless photos and sign a massive amount of autographs.



The race itself was a very chaotic affair, as a sudden rain starts to fall five minutes before the green flag. From this point on, every race strategy was thrown out the window. The first stint by Aki was shorter than anticipated as stopping on the first lap to put on the rain tires changed everything. Aki drove a courageous stint, stopped again to switch to slicks and a change to third driver Yuki Taniguchi.

When Cyndie took the wheel, the car was almost last (Yuki unfortunately spun). From this moment, the plan for Cyndie was clear and she executed it perfectly: she drove a super long 40-lap stint and drove the car back up to the 16th position.

"Weather condition were again very uncertain, but still, the grandstand and paddock were packed with fans. During the 45-minute pre-race pitwalk, I kept signing autograph for the whole time and still had people asking for more, it was incredible. As for my race, it was not easy in the first few laps as this track is still quite new to me — I only did five laps during practice. But after a couple of laps, my pace was good and from almost last, I gave the car to my teammate Aki in 16th position. Of course, as a driver, you always want to win or at least get a good result, so for me, it was quite a disappointed race."



Credits and notes

Text

Cyndie Allemann and Eric Gilbert

Photos

Eric Gilbert

Additional content available

Media outlets wishing to obtain text in .doc format and photos in high resolution .jpeg format to publish on their platform are welcome to send their request to:

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Media requests

Other media requests should be forwarded to:

ericg@motorsport.com

About Cyndie Allemann

A World class driver, top athlete and brand ambassador. Always a fan favorite, whether in Europe, in the USA and soon in Japan, 25 years old Cyndie Allemann was literally born for speed.

Her 18-year racing career has seen her compete at the highest levels in many different series and tracks around the World: karting (winning the European junior title when she was only thirteen), open-wheel (EuroF3, Indy Lights, etc.), GT (FIA-GT1 World Championship) and endurance racing (GT1 podium at Spa in the Le Mans Series, 24 Hours of Le Mans, etc.). In 2012, she will compete in the Japan Super GT series with the Hitotsuyama Racing Audi R8 LMS.

For more info on Cyndie or to follow her, visit her web site and her facebook fan page at:

www.cyndieallemann.ch

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