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JULY 2004 • VOLUME 16, NO. 07

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Much of the legend of the Nissan Skyline GT-R was born in Japanese GT Championship (JGTC) competition. And now Nissan has gone and replaced the Skyline, which won the championship last year, with a racing version of the 350Z for the GT-500 class.

The GT-500 class is limited to 500 hp (three, duh, the name) and the 350Z reaches for that with a twin-turbocharged version of the Nissan VQ-series V6 displacing 3.0 liters and making 465 hp... and an almost

gruesome 520 lb-ft of torque at a low, low 4000 rpm. All that torque may lead one to expect a rather long-stroked engine, but in fact, the VQ in the GT-500 350Z has a relatively large 93mm bore (compared to the production 350Z 3.5-liter VQ's 95.5mm) and an ultra-short 73.3mm stroke (stock in the 350Z is

81.4mm). It's backed by a sequential six-speed transmission.

The physical dimensions of the GT-500 don't vary much from

those of the production 350Z, though obviously everything is reinforced and tuned for racing. In fact, if the photos are correct, much of the structure comes straight over from the production car.

How good a racecar is the GT-500? In testing this March at the Suzuka Circuit, Nissan claims to have already broken the track record, albeit unofficially.



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350Z
Sets JGTC Record



BMW Shows 1 Series

With the BMW 1 Series showing up in fresh spy photos every week, BMW admitted defeat in March and released these shots of the 1 Series that will enter production this fall.

A full 240mm (9.4-inches) shorter overall than the 3 Series, the 1 Series five-door retains rear-wheel drive and will be available with four different four-cylinder engines. The gasoline-fired 1.6-liter engine is rated at 115 hp, the 2.0-liter gas engine makes 150 hp, the 1.8-liter diesel goes at 122 hp and the 2.0-liter diesel is 163 hp. The 1.6-liter gas car gets a five-speed manual standard, while all the others have six-speed manuals to start and six-speed automatics as options.

Of course, the suspension is all independent. Of course, the structure is tight. Of course, there are all sorts of options. This may be a smaller BMW, but it's still a BMW.

While the 1 Series is going on sale in Europe this year, BMW says it won't come to the United States until a sedan or coupe version is developed, which means 2005 is the more likely target.

