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## **NISSAN RETURNS TO ITS MOTORSPORT ROOTS**

NISSAN will return to its motorsport roots in Australia this month when former team driver Glenn Seton embarks on his first tarmac rally in this year's Classic Adelaide from 18-22 November.

Nissan's entry of a new 370Z Coupe for the two-time V8 Supercar Champion, plus two other 370Z models for media and guest drivers, marks the company's return to the sport for the first time since the famous GT-R 'Godzilla' coupes won three successive Australian Touring Car Championships from 1990-1992.

However the Classic Adelaide entry resumes a much longer commitment to rallying, as Nissan's first international engagement in the discipline took place in Australia 51 years ago.

In 1958, Nissan's then Advertising Manager Yutaka Katayama adventurously entered two 1000cc Datsun 210 model sedans in the 19-day 1958 Mobilgas Trial, a successor to the original car-breaking REDeX Trial of 1953.

Katayama, a car builder and racer in his own right, was one of many Nissan executives who believed racing and rallying was an excellent way to test and develop products. And as a marketer, Katayama also thought motorsport was a great way to sell cars!

To everyone's surprise, the little Datsuns finished first and second in their class after 16,000km of Outback torture, delivering the company its first international victory and inspiring management and generations of engineers.

Nissan went on to embrace rallying with a passion and in 1963 made its first attempt at the East African Safari Rally with a team of Cedrics and Bluebird 311 models.

Their breakthrough victory came in 1970 when Edgar Herrmann and Hans Schuller won the Safari outright with a Datsun 510 (1600) and shared a joint victory in the 'round Australia' Ampol Trial the same year.

The following year Herrmann and Schuller headed a 1-2-7 Nissan blitz of the 1971 Safari by the newly-released 240Z sports cars, with the Japanese maker going on to virtually 'own' the East African event for the best part of a decade.

In Australia, Nissan was also a serial visitor to the rally podium, with West Australians Ross Dunkerton winning a trio of Australian Rally Championship titles in a Datsun 260Z from 1975-1977 – the first with fellow Sandgroper and late CAMS President John Large and then with Victorian Jeff Beaumont, sharing the 1977 title

on points with Victorian farmer George Fury and Monty Suffern in a Datsun 1600.

Dunkerton went on to win two further Australian Rally Championships for Nissan in 1979 (again with Beaumont) and 1983 (with NSW's Geoff Jones); Fury/Suffern won again for the Japanese maker in 1980, while Victorians Geoff Portman and Ross Runnalls retained the title for Nissan in 1981 and 1982.

Although Nissan Australia scaled back its involvement in rallying from the early 1980s, the company's eight individual driver titles and three Manufacturers' Championships places them second to only Subaru on the Australian Rally Championship honour roll.

Nissan began moving from rallying to circuit racing in Australia from 1981 and the team run by former Ford motorsport boss Howard Marsden and later Fred Gibson proved equally successful.

In 1987, 22-year-old Glenn Seton came within a whisker of winning the Australian Touring Car Championship in a Nissan Skyline DR30, while the R32 GT-R 'Godzilla' which racedebuted in 1990 promptly ended the reign of the previously all-conquering Ford Sierra Cosworths, winning Bathurst in 1991 and 1992 and taking three straight touring car titles from 1990-1992 in the hands of Jim Richards and Mark Skaife.

At Classic Adelaide, Seton will have similar power to his 1987 Bathurst car – 245kW in the new V6-engine naturally aspirated 370Z compared with 246kW in the 2.0 litre turbocharged, four-cylinder Skyline DR30– but says the cars are totally different to drive.

"The DR30 was a beast," he recalls after revisiting the car for a guest-drive in an Historic Group A race at Oran Park last year, "but the 370Z is a well-balanced, powerful and thoroughly enjoyable sports coupe. It will be a lot of fun to drive on Classic Adelaide roads."

Nissan's Head of Corporate Communications, Jeff Fisher, said the new 370Z and the R35 Nissan GT-R had together put grass-roots motorsport back into the hands of Australian enthusiasts.

Nissan has been addressing a wide range of actions under "Blue Citizenship" which represents the company's desire to protect the blue planet and to be a corporate citizen that can live symbiotically with people and society. These efforts range from such global issues as the environmental protection to contribution to communities, promoting diversity and making personal mobility available to as many people as possible. Nissan continues promoting the Nissan Green Program 2010 based on the "Blue Citizenship" spirit by introducing effective technologies, products and services into the market.

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