

Club Activities

Toyohashi Tech Auto Club: Not only for car lovers

As one of Japan's top engineering universities, it is no surprise that Toyohashi University of Technology (Toyohashi Tech) has a student-circle focused on cars. However, what may be surprising is that not all of the 17 members of the Automotive Club are crazy about cars.

"Some members love cars, of course," says Naoya Akazawa, the club's team leader during 2010 and now a first-year master's student in mechanical engineering. "But others are simply interested in designing things, and still others just want to build things."

All three groups find fulfillment in taking part in the annual Student Formula SAE Competition organized by the Society of Automotive Engineers of Japan. The aim of the competition is for student teams to design and build small formula racing cars so that they can put into practice the engineering skills that they have learnt in the classroom.

Some 63 universities took part in the 2009 competition, and the Toyohashi Tech Automotive Club's TG05 car was awarded a prize for technical ability in acceleration.

"It takes a whole year to design, build and test a car," says Akazawa. "Members meet officially once weekly, but you can usually find several of us getting together in the club's room almost every day."

While corporate sponsors like Honda, Topy, and MuSASHi help by donating a limited number of components, the students rely on their own initiative to come up with the rest of the parts and materials needed to take the car from the drawing board to the racing track.

"We build many of our own parts," explains Tatsuya Fujishima, the club's new team leader and a third-year undergraduate in mechanical engineering. "In fact, we were the first university club to use carbon fiber instead of steel for the body. Carbon fiber is more expensive than steel but it is lighter and gives us an advantage in races."

The members are now busy preparing for the 2011 competition that will take place in Shizuoka Prefecture, and Fujishima says they have high hopes of finishing in the top six in the racing event and doing even better in the design competition.



Members of the Toyohashi Tech Automobile Club



The Toyohashi Tech car accelerating during competition



Automobile Club garage