

Nuremberg, 24 June 2007

Motorsport

Audi achieves podium result in Nuremberg

- **Mattias Ekström third after chase to make up ground**
- **Brilliant comeback by Tom Kristensen**
- **Alexandre Prémat again scores points in last year's car**

In front of 141,000 spectators (throughout the weekend) Mattias Ekström clinched a podium result for Audi in the "home race" at the Norisring despite a spoiled qualifying. The Swede in his Red Bull Audi A4 DTM fought his way forwards from seventh position on the grid to third place. In the DTM's overall standings, Ekström as the runner-up lies merely 1.5 points behind title defender Bernd Schneider. Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline is the front runner in the team standings at the season's midpoint.

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Ekström pushed forwards to fifth place as early as on the starting lap and afterwards drove a flawless race. The Swede benefited from two perfect pit stops and in the final phase was able to put pressure on the two leading Mercedes cars driven by Bruno Spengler and Bernd Schneider. With a gap of merely 0.698 seconds to the second-placed contender, Ekström was the third driver to cross the finish line.

A brilliant comeback was managed by Tom Kristensen: 63 days after his serious accident in the Hockenheim season opener the Dane finished the Norisring race in an impressive fifth place.

Alexandre Prémat from Audi Sport Team Phoenix in his A4 from last year fought his way forwards from position 15 on the grid to eighth, thus scoring points for the second time in a row. His teammate Christian Abt occupied tenth place although his Audi was damaged in collisions that were no fault of his.

Struck by serious misfortune were Martin Tomczyk and Timo Scheider: Both became entangled in Norisring-typical accidents in the first corner,

which were caused by Mercedes drivers. Tomczyk retired and as a result dropped from first to third place in the overall standings. Scheider was able to continue the race, but consistently lost ground with his heavily damaged A4.

Mike Rockenfeller finished his first Norisring race in the DTM in 13th place. The first pit stop of his teammate with Audi Sport Team Rosberg, Lucas Luhr, was not counted. Shortly before race end, he retired after Mercedes driver Daniel la Rosa had hit him in the rear.

Adam Carroll was classified in 17th place despite brake problems. His teammate Vanina Ickx was hit in the rear by Mathias Lauda as she was braking to enter the Grundig hairpin and crashed into the guard rail at high speed. The Belgian sustained no injuries.

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The accident led to a disputed scene: The subsequent winner Bruno Spengler disregarded the lights that had just switched to red at the pitlane exit. Similar incidents had recently resulted in disqualifications in Formula 1. The race stewards, however, decided that the Canadian had no chance to notice the changing of the lights from his position. After studying the video footage, Audi opted against a protest in the interest of sport.

Quotes after the race

Dr Wolfgang Ullrich (Head of Audi Motorsport): “It’s good to see that Mattias (Ekström), after the qualifying that hadn’t gone all that well for us, managed to clinch third place. He was very strong in the race and had a car today that enabled him to keep up with the pace of the front runners. Towards the end, he had slight difficulties with the brakes but that’s not unusual at the Norisring. Unfortunately, it’s not unusual either that there’s a big chance of becoming entangled in a collision when you start in the middle of the field. It’s too bad that Martin (Tomczyk) became the victim of an accident in which he was not at fault. Timo (Scheider), as well, could have shown a better performance if his car hadn’t been damaged in the first turn. That Tom (Kristensen) managed a great comeback and Alexandre (Prémat) scored another point pleases me very much.”

Mattias Ekström (Red Bull Audi A4 DTM #3)**3rd place, + 2.501s**

“After a less than perfect qualifying I can be satisfied with third place. My Audi A4 was very good today. Of course the brakes heated up and there were a few minor problems. On this circuit, you need to be perfect to beat Mercedes. Today we were competitive and good enough to clinch a podium position. That’s a step forwards compared to the other years here at the Norisring. The position in the fight for the championship is good. I’m already looking forward to the race at Mugello.”

Tom Kristensen (Siemens Audi A4 DTM #7)**5th place, + 13.750s**

“It was very important to make my comeback as quickly as possible – and I managed to do that on Audi’s home circuit in front of so many Audi fans. It was also the most difficult race for a comeback, looking at it in terms of the temperatures and the track. The race went well. I had a bit of contact – a little bit with Christian (Abt) as well as with the barrier. I’m satisfied to have finished in fifth place. The pit stops, as well, were good. After the second stop I would have even had the chance to overtake Mattias (Ekström), but I stayed behind him.”

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Alexandre Prémat (Audi Bank Audi A4 DTM #17)**8th place, + 20.928s**

“I’m satisfied because I started from position 15 and finished in eighth place. For the second time in a row, I crossed the finish line and scored points again as well. The strategy was good, and the pure speed of the car was too. It was a very tough race. Too bad that we weren’t that good in qualifying, otherwise a lot more would have been possible.”

Christian Abt (Playboy Audi A4 DTM #16)**10th place, + 36.069s**

“I’m very disappointed today – unfortunately, about my brand colleagues Tom Kristensen and Timo Scheider in particular, who drove into my car. I don’t understand their actions. I’m really upset.”

Mike Rockenfeller (S line Audi A4 DTM #11)**13th place, - 1 lap**

“After the poor qualifying and grid position 18 I ultimately finished in 13th place. I hope that next time I’ll clinch a better result for the team. I was unfortunate in the race on numerous occasions as accidents in front of me kept forcing me to brake. But my car is undamaged, I found my rhythm and was not all that unhappy with my speed. After a difficult week, I’m happy about having finished my race. We can build on that next time.”

Timo Scheider (Gebrauchtwagen:plus/Top Service Audi A4 DTM #8)**14th place, - 1 lap**

“After a good start I was hit in the first turn by a Mercedes, which tore off the most critical aerodynamics components for the rear, which made the car difficult to handle. Later, a tyre was losing air, which cost a lot of time towards the midpoint of the race. Unfortunately, this was another bad race for me. That’s very disappointing.”

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Adam Carroll (Audi A4 DTM #20)**17th place, - 9 laps**

“The start was good. I was driving in the right-hand lane in the first corner, and that was the right thing to do because on the inside there was a crash, and I made it through the turn unharmed. Later, I got involved in a nice duel. That was good fun, the pace was good. Unfortunately, I received a drive-through penalty. That was incredible because three of us were engaged in a nice fight. Who was being blue-flagged? The Mercedes wasn’t even close to me, and when it came closer, I immediately let it pass. That warrants a drive-through? Towards the end, the performance of the brakes was heavily reduced.”

Lucas Luhr (Philips Audi A4 DTM #12)**18th place, - 15 laps**

“One lap before I could see the sign ‘Pit lane closed’. When I entered the pitlane it was gone. From my perspective, the pitlane was open at that time. If that’s seen differently, I ask myself why? Bruno Spengler ignored the red light, and nothing happened, whereas my stop wasn’t counted. I cannot understand this.”

Vanina Ickx (Audi A4 DTM #21)**Retired, lap 21 (accident)**

“Unfortunately, I was turned around by Susie Stoddard in the Dutzensteich hairpin. Later, as I was braking into the Grundig hairpin, Mathias Lauda pushed me into the guard rail. Unfortunately, that prevented me from finishing the race. I still can’t quite understand why the penalties are applied so differently.”

Martin Tomczyk (Red Bull Audi A4 DTM #4)**Retired, lap 2 (accident)**

“That was a short race through no fault of mine. While accelerating out of the Grundig hairpin I was running alongside Paul di Resta. We had both made it through the turn very well. But then Susie Stoddard came from the inside and hit me in the side. The undertray was destroyed, two tyres were slit. That’s too bad, particularly when the Championship is at stake. My expectations for the race had been better than retiring on the first lap. All the more I’m looking forward to the next five circuits, all of which suit me well.”

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Hans-Jürgen Abt (Team Director Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline):

“We did a good job. I’m happy that we enabled Mattias (Ekström) to finish far at the front with a good strategy. And of course he drove a great race. In this very tough fight our performance over the racing distance was good, which makes me feel confident about the next race. The minimum goal for Norisring – a podium place – we achieved. Our expectations had been very high, as had been our concerns. We should be pleased with our podium finish.”

Ernst Moser (Team Director Audi Sport Team Phoenix): “We’re very satisfied with Alex (Prémat), who finished in eighth place after starting from 15th, thus scoring a point. He made no mistakes, In the meantime he lost a few positions while fighting, for reasons we don’t know yet, otherwise he could have achieved a better result yet. The curve is still pointing upwards. Both cars finished the race. Unfortunately, Christian (Abt) became entangled in incidents of body contact with other cars. The damaged car made it impossible for him to continue fighting. Under these circumstances, I’m satisfied with tenth place.”

Arno Zensen (Team Director Audi Sport Team Rosberg): “We laid the foundation for the race on Saturday. That’s why a better result was hardly possible. We need to get this idea out of our minds as quickly as possible. During the tests at Mugello we were good. That’s why we should be in pretty good shape with both cars.”

The result at the Norisring

- 1 Bruno Spengler (Mercedes), 74 laps in 1h03m59.350s
- 2 Bernd Schneider (Mercedes), + 1.803s
- 3 Mattias Ekström (Red Bull Audi A4 DTM), + 2.501s
- 4 Gary Paffett (Mercedes), + 9.160s
- 5 Tom Kristensen (Siemens Audi A4 DTM), + 13.750s
- 6 Jamie Green (Mercedes), + 14.201s
- 7 Alexandros Margaritis (Mercedes), + 19.477s
- 8 Alexandre Prémat (Audi Bank Audi A4 DTM), + 20.928s
- 9 Mika Häkkinen (Mercedes), + 21.699s
- 10 Christian Abt (Playboy Audi A4 DTM), + 36.069s
- 11 Mathias Lauda (Mercedes), + 37.299s
- 12 Daniel la Rosa (Mercedes), + 45.537s
- 13 Mike Rockenfeller (S line Audi A4 DTM), - 1 lap
- 14 Timo Scheider (GW:plus/Top Service Audi A4 DTM), - 1 lap
- 15 Paul di Resta (Mercedes), - 1 lap
- 16 Susie Stoddart (Mercedes), - 2 laps
17. Adam Carroll (Audi A4 DTM), - 9 laps (brakes)
- 18 Lucas Luhr (Philips Audi A4 DTM), - 15 laps (accident)

Not classified:

- Vanina Ickx (Audi A4 DTM), - 54 laps (accident)
Martin Tomczyk (Red Bull Audi A4 DTM), - 73 laps (accident)

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Photographs, sound bites and additional information available on the Internet:
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