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Motorsport

Audi aim to continue run of success at Spa

- **First DTM race at Spa-Francorchamps**
- **Tests in France as preparation**
- **Pierre Kaffer quickest at pre-season test**

Eau Rouge, Blanchimont, La Source – these are the names that raise the pulse of motorsport fans and racing drivers alike and will now become common expressions in the DTM: From 13 to 15 May, the world's most spectacular touring cars race on one of the most picturesque and challenging circuits, which lies in the Ardennes barely thirty minutes drive away from the German-Belgium boarder. Audi won the 1000 kilometre race at Spa-Francorchamps twice in succession with the R8, and wants to continue this trend at the first DTM appearance at Spa with the A4 DTM. Audi tests at the French track Paul Ricard on Monday and Tuesday to prepare perfectly for the DTM's fastest track.

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All eight Audi works drivers got acquainted with the Spa circuit at the official DTM test before the start of the season, in which Pierre Kaffer set the fastest time in last year's A4. Mattias Ekström and Martin Tomczyk compete in a race around the challenging circuit for the first time. Also in action at Spa are the Audi drivers Frank Biela, Jean-Francois Hemroulle and Marco Werner: They will chauffeur journalists around the circuit in the powerful 220-hp Audi A4 DTM Edition on Saturday evening from 7 p.m. The special edition produced by quattro GmbH is available from Audi dealers from June.

The first appearance of the DTM at Spa-Francorchamps is regarded as one of the absolute highlights of the 2005 motorsport season. Tickets are available for as little as 20 Euro. ARD broadcasts qualifying (Saturday, 14 May from 2 p.m) and the race (Sunday 15 May from 1:45 p.m.) live from Belgium.

Quotes before the race at Spa-Francorchamps

Mattias Ekström (Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline #1): “At Hockenheim we were quick on a single lap, but not over the distance. In the Lausitz I wasn’t quiet as good as I’d hoped to be in Super Pole, and had three Mercedes’ in front of me. But during the race we were much stronger than at Hockenheim. Now we just have to get everything together. I think we’ll be in a good position at Spa – we learnt a lot about our new car during the first two races and will understand it even better after the test at Paul Ricard. The time has arrived to strike back!”

Martin Tomczyk (Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline #2): “I’ve never raced at Spa, but got know my way around the circuit at the pre-season ITR test. The circuit is very challenging – it takes time to learn all the subtleties. The new A4 was very fast during the race at the EuroSpeedway. It makes me confident for Spa. I hope that I have finally no bad luck and can score some points.”

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Tom Kristensen (Audi Sport Team Abt #5): “Along with Suzuka and Road America, Spa is one my three favourite circuits. To drive through Eau Rouge in a DTM car is really spectacular – just as much for the drivers as it is for the fans. The circuit has, quite simply, everything: banked corners, corners that drop away on the exit, compressions, up and downhill sections. Up till now I’ve driven three times at Spa and have started from pole position on every occasion. I won once, finished on the podium once and had a crash in the race once...”

Allan McNish (Audi Sport Team Abt #6): “The circuit in Spa is without doubt one of the world’s best. It ranks among my personal top three. I drove for the first time at Spa in 1988. At that time I was Mika Häkkinen’s team-mate and was third. In 1995, in Formula 3000, I took pole position by more than a second. As I was able to test at Spa with the A4 DTM before the season, even though it was only with one of last year’s cars, I have a clear goal: I want to make Super Pole and get my first DTM points.”

Christian Abt (Audi Sport Team Joest Racing #14): “It’s very difficult to judge just how good we’ll be with our year old cars at Spa. We lost time in the first sector on the long straight during the test, but we were, however, quickest in the other two sectors. I don’t believe that we’ll have a chance against the new Audi, and I guess that Opel will also be very competitive in Spa. It’ll be interesting. Spa

will certainly enhance the DTM and is a big challenge for the drivers. You can't afford to make any mistakes in the quick corners."

Pierre Kaffer (Audi Sport Team Joest Racing #15): "I can hardly wait to drive at Spa. The test went very well, and, apart from my fiery accident at the 1000 kilometre race last year, I only have fond memories of Spa. On the long straight we could have a small disadvantage with last year's cars, the twisting and turning downhill sections should be exactly what we need – the spectators can look forward to a well matched field."

Rinaldo Capello (Audi Sport Team Joest #18): "My car was totally stripped after the race at the EuroSpeedway to trace the understeer problem that has been slowing me down since the first race. Normally a DTM car tends to oversteer. I'm confident that we will find a solution. Spa is the first DTM circuit that I already know. So I don't have to learn the track again and can concentrate on set-up work from the off. A point should also be possible with a year old car if everything runs perfectly."

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Frank Stippler (Audi Sport Team Joest #19): "I'm really looking forward to Spa. The circuit is similar in style to the Nürburgring-Nordschleife, on which I grew up. Unfortunately I couldn't test quite as much as planned with the A4 DTM at Spa, that's why I still lack some experience in the quick corners. To use the downforce properly in these areas is the biggest change compared with the Cup car, which I had driven till last year."

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

"Finishing second at the EuroSpeedway was a great success. But we obviously want more. Perhaps everything will fall into place in Spa. The circuit is a challenge for every DTM driver. I think that the seasoned campaigners like Tom Kristensen, who have already driven many races there, will have a small advantage – and that obviously doesn't worry us in the slightest..."

Ralf Jüttner (Technical Director Audi Sport Team Joest): "Pierre was quickest at the pre-season ITR test at Spa. Obviously, we don't know just how much of their true potential the others revealed, but in general the track appears to suit our A4 well, we also found a good set-up, which leads me to believe that we could continue at Spa where we left off after the first two races."

Dr Wolfgang Ullrich (Head of Audi Motorsport): “We saw at Hockenheim and at the EuroSpeedway that the new A4 DTM has a lot of potential. Now it’s a question of finding the best basic set-up during the tests so that we can concentrate solely on fine tuning during the race weekend. The performance of the cars is so close in this year’s DTM that you can only win if everything is one hundred percent sorted. Our goal from Spa onwards is to be capable of winning.”

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