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Motorsport

Audi aim to strike back at DTM finale

- **Mattias Ekström guns for victory in Hockenheim**
- **Title battle to be decided at last race**
- **Record advance ticket sales for race on 23 October**

The 2005 DTM finale at Hockenheim on 23 October promises high drama: For the first time in the history of the “new” DTM the title will be decided at the final race of the year between the drivers of two different manufacturers. Because Audi factory driver Mattias Ekström went away empty handed at Istanbul after a receiving a shove from a Mercedes driver, there is only one plan for the Swede in Hockenheim: Attack is the best form of defence and scope his fourth victory of season. Only then can the defending DTM Champion make up the nine point deficit to Gary Paffett (Mercedes) and successfully defend his title.

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At the same time as playing wing man to Ekström at the all important race, his team mates have another target in their sites at the same time: An excellent team performance could possibly still bring the Manufacturers’ Championship back to Ingolstadt. Audi stand twelve points behind Mercedes-Benz heading into the finale – with 39 points up for grabs everything is still to play for.

The first Audi victory on the current Hockenheim Grand Prix circuit is long overdue: Mattias Ekström was beaten by Jean Alesi by a mere 0.213 seconds in a dash for the line at the 2002 finale. In 2003, Martin Tomczyk missed his first DTM victory by a scant 1.635 seconds after a nail-biting duel with Bernd Schneider. An Audi A4 DTM claimed pole position at the last two outings at Hockenheim.

The thrilling 2005 DTM season has lent the advanced tickets sales wings: The best grandstand seats and paddock tickets were snapped up some time ago. More than 60,000 tickets were sold in advance – a new record. Last year, 133,000 spectators watched the DTM finale over the course of the weekend, and even more are expected this year. Furthermore, millions of fans will watch the finale on television. In Germany, ARD broadcasts qualifying (Saturday, 22 October from 2

p.m. local time) and the race (Sunday, 23 October from 1.45 p.m.) live from Hockenheim.

Quotes before the DTM finale at Hockenheim

Mattias Ekström (Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline #1): “Whoever has already written us off is making a mistake. I’ll fight all the way to the chequered flag. The gap to Gary (Paffett) is big and my title chances are small, but nothing is impossible – especially in the DTM. I’ll try to win the race. I can’t do anything more.”

Martin Tomczyk (Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline #2): “We want to win the finale at Hockenheim and try as a team to possibly make the near impossible possible. I love driving at Hockenheim, the circuit is flowing. Last year only a hair’s breadth separated me from my first DTM victory.”

Tom Kristensen (Audi Sport Team Abt #5): “The crowd at Hockenheim is always fantastic. There’s barely a free seat left on the grandstands, and we can expect a very special atmosphere. We want to finish the year with a good result. I hope that we can score enough points so that Audi can win the Manufacturers’ Championship.”

Allan McNish (Audi Sport Team Abt #6): “For Audi it’s all about giving a response after Istanbul – the best would be when ‘Eki’ nevertheless takes the title. Personally I can still improve one or two places in the rankings and want to round off my first DTM season with a good result. I’m also looking forward to see 100,000 DTM fans filling the grandstands.”

Christian Abt (Audi Sport Team Joest Racing #14): “I’m looking forward to Hockenheim. The circuit suits me. In the first race at the start of the season there, I was very quick with the year old A4. I’m confident of finishing in the points again this time.”

Pierre Kaffer (Audi Sport Team Joest Racing #15): “Hockenheim is a fabulous circuit, which I enjoy driving on. I hope that our performance is just as good as it was in spring. Even if the new cars have improved since then anything is possible

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in the DTM. The most important thing is that I have a little more luck in qualifying than in the last few races.”

Dindo Capello (Audi Sport Team Joest #18): “At the EuroSpeedway I saw just how big the advantage is if you already know the circuit. We’ve already driven in Hockenheim, which is good for me. I hope that I can repeat the excellent qualifying performance from EuroSpeedway and then also score a good result.”

Frank Stippler (Audi Sport Team Joest #19): “Much to our regret there are equally long straights at Hockenheim as there were at Istanbul, which isn’t exactly ideal for our year old cars. At the season opener we were able to hold our own against the new cars. However, plenty of things have changed since then. We’ll see where we end up. I can hardly believe that the season is almost over already...”

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Hans-Jürgen Abt (Team Director Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline): “We can expect an exciting title fight all the way to the flag. Even though we go into the Hockenheim race behind on points and our title chances aren’t very big, there is still everything to play for. After Istanbul the entire team is highly motivated and ready to give their all, and to give the hoards of Audi fans in the grandstands a race to remember. You must never give up in the DTM. Fate will take care of the rest.”

Ralf Jüttner (Technical Director Audi Sport Team Joest): “A unique atmosphere and an impressive crowd await us at Hockenheim. Quite a few people will get goose bumps on the grid. It’ll be difficult for us even though things went well at the first Hockenheim race. The biggest question is how much faster the new cars have become since the season opener. As ever, we will do everything possible to collect as many points as possible for Audi – with all four cars.”

Dr Wolfgang Ullrich (Head of Audi Motorsport): “Our goal is crystal clear: We want to redress the balance at the finale at Hockenheim after the disappointing result at Istanbul. At the season opener at Hockenheim the new Audi A4 DTM took pole position on its debut. It’s got even quicker since then, that’s why we are confident of finishing the season in winning style.”

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