

Press Information

Laguna Seca, 8 September 2001

Audi conquers first three places on the grid

In an unusual qualifying session, Audi conquered the first three places on the grid for the penultimate round of the American Le Mans Series (ALMS) at Laguna Seca, California. While normally a few fast laps are decisive for the starting grid, a different strategy was the right way this time: Who ever was doing many laps and bringing his tyres to the correct temperature this way, was at the front.

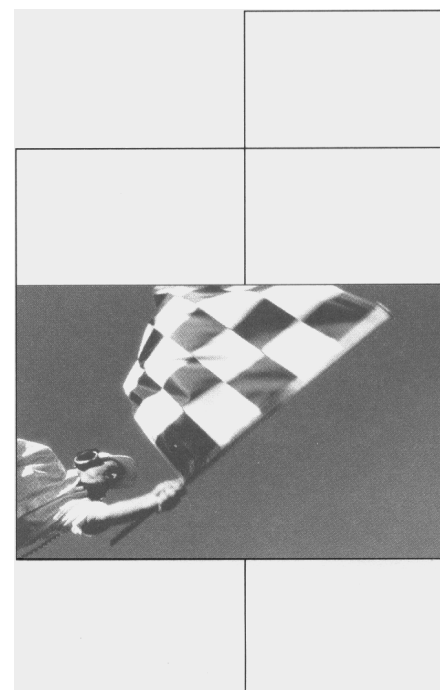
Rinaldo Capello with the #1 Infineon Audi R8 used this strategy best. The Italian improved his time lap by lap, before setting by far the fastest time of the day on his sixth lap. Capello repeated his Laguna Seca pole position from last year with an unusually big margin of seven tenths of a second.

Capello's team mate Frank Biela missed the front row of the grid with the other Infineon Audi R8 by just 0.076 seconds. The two time Le Mans winner spun in the famous "Corkscrew" corners at the decisive moment and had to be content with third place.

Despite that, two Audi sportscars will be on the front row of the grid on Sunday. For the first time, an Audi customer team was able to qualify for the front row. Stefan Johansson had two reasons to celebrate: The Swede scored the best ALMS qualifying result for his team and also celebrated his birthday on Saturday.

The other 2000-spec R8, entered by Champion Racing, starts from the third row on Sunday.

The race at Laguna Seca begins at 12 p.m. local time. Rinaldo Capello (#1) and Frank Biela (#2) are scheduled as start drivers in the two Infineon Audi R8 sportscars.



Quotes after qualifying

Rinaldo Capello (#1): "We learned this morning that we need a lot of time here to warm up the tyres. Tom set his fastest lap this morning with a new set of tyres after ten laps. So we decided to go out immediately and do as many laps as possible. This was a good strategy."

Tom Kristensen (#1): "Laguna Seca is a very challenging track. The conditions change all the time. But I felt at home immediately. After the qualifying I can only say: well done Dindo! I am optimistic for the race, but we know that we have to do a good job tomorrow."

Frank Biela (#2): "We were not happy with the handling of our car during the midday session. Before the qualifying we changed the setup of the car back to what we used in the morning. The car was good to drive again. I had slight understeer, but that did not cost any time. Unfortunately I spun in the Corkscrew. Until this moment I was faster than on my best lap."



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Emanuele Pirro (#2): "According to Frank the car behaves much better now than in the last free practice. Our position for the race could have been better, but compared to the Panoz we do not look so bad. It is quite promising for the race."

Stefan Johansson (#18): "My front tyres took four laps to come up to temperature and by the time they had some grip the rears had gone off, but I'm thrilled to be on the front row - it's a tremendous achievement for the team. We're looking strong - it should be a good race for us."

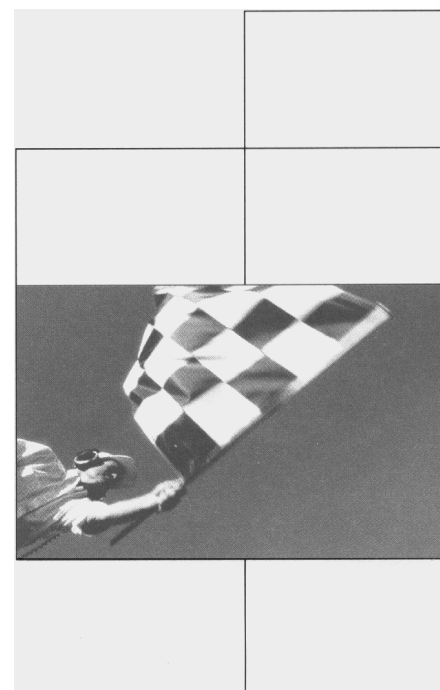
Patrick L  marie (#18): "It's going to be a tough race - no question. We've been consistently quick from the first test on Friday so I'm optimistic we can win our second consecutive race following the ELMS win at Most. It's an interesting and demanding circuit - overtaking will be tough but that will affect everyone."

Johnny Herbert (#38): "We struggled with a handling imbalance for a couple of days but our guys have worked on it and it's getting better although still has too much understeer. But I think we should be okay in race trim."

Andy Wallace (#38): "The Audi was the best it has been all weekend in the qualifying session, but still 'pushing' a little. I went out from the start of the session, we pitted to change the front tyres from side to side, and improved my time slightly."

Reinhold Joest, Team Director Audi Sport North America: "It is not easy to find the right setup on this racetrack. If Frank had not spun, we could have taken the complete front row of the grid. Stefan Johansson seems to like this racetrack very much. That he proved from the first day and I am sure that tomorrow he could be a thorn in our side."

Dr Wolfgang Ullrich, Head of Audi Sport: "The conditions of this racetrack changed with every practice session. This happens mainly because of the permanent changing winds which blow in fine sand from the coast. Both of our cars were the fastest but Frank was unlucky when he spun. Until this moment, he was already three tenths of a second faster compared to his best time. Too bad, but we still are very happy with the qualifying result."



Starting grid at Laguna Seca

1. Capello/Kristensen (Infineon Audi R8)	1m 15.238s
2. Johansson/Lemarie (Audi R8)	1m 15.953s
3. Biela/Pirro (Infineon Audi R8)	1m 16.029s
4. Magnussen/Brabham (Panoz)	1m 16.104s
5. Graf/Lagorce (Panoz)	1m 16.156s
6. Herbert/Wallace (Audi R8)	1m 16.463s
7. Taylor/Angellelli (Cadillac)	1m 17.479s
8. Tinseau/Collard (Cadillac)	1m 17.843s
9. Field/Sutherland (Lola-Judd)	1m 18.927s

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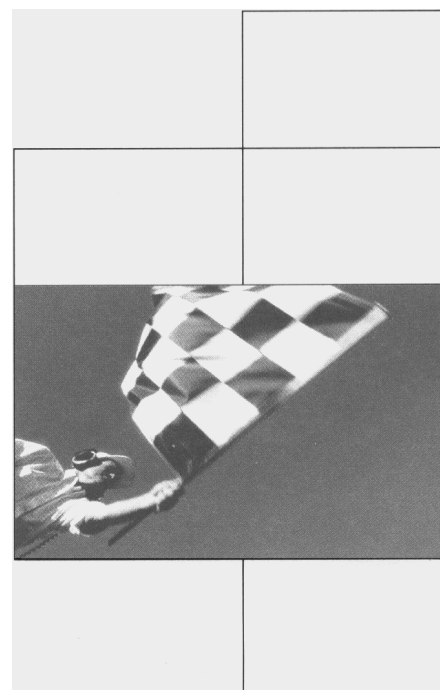
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10. de Radigues/Duno (Reynard-Judd)

1m 19.706s

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