

Ingolstadt, 17 December 2006

Motorsport

Audi driver Ekström wins “Race of Champions”

- **Audi factory driver “Best of the Best” in Paris**
- **DTM driver defeats Rally World Champion in final**

Audi factory driver Mattias Ekström has won the “Race of Champions” in Paris – the world final for the best race and rally drivers. The 28-year old Swede, who brought the DTM title to Ingolstadt for Audi in 2004, underlined his exceptional driving abilities once again. At the controls of various vehicles on the way to the final in the “Stade de France” the Audi driver eliminated record DTM Champion Bernd Schneider (Germany), new Formula 1 star Heikki Kovalainen (Finland) and record breaking ChampCar Champion Sébastien Bourdais (France). In the “Super Final” Ekström saved his best till last to beat three-time Rally World Champion Sébastien Loeb in his own car.

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“To have beaten Sébastien, particularly at the wheel of his Xsara is simply incredible”, cheered the Swede after his victory on Saturday evening. “Sébastien is the world’s best rally driver. To have defeated him means a lot to me personally and demonstrates just how high the driving level is in the DTM.”

Mattias Ekström, who remains under contract at Audi till 2008, has been following Walter Röhrl’s tracks for many years already. The Swede is not only regarded as one of the world’s best circuit racers, but has also proven his speed and consistency in numerous World Rally Championship starts.

Last year Ekström won the “Nations Cup” together with team mate Tom Kristensen (Denmark) at the “Race of Champions”. This year “Team Scandinavia” was eliminated in the first round against Finland, even though Ekström beat World Rally Championship runner-up Marcus Grönholm. Tom Kristensen was defeated in both the “Nations Cup” and later in the “Race of Champions” on each occasion by Heikki Kovalainen, who claimed the title in 2004 in Paris – against the likes of Michael Schumacher.

“Winning the Race of Champions is fantastic and means a great deal to me,” explained Mattias Ekström immediately following his sensational victory. “Now it’s time for a short holiday in the sun, and then its time to devote my full attention to the 2007 DTM. Since we have a score to settle with our friends from Stuttgart...”

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