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Audi driver Timo Scheider defends DTM lead

- **Unfortunate tyre choice at the Nürburgring**
- **Nürburgring weather deprives Audi of chance for victory**
- **Scheider and Ekström score points after strong recovery**

Ingolstadt/Nürburg – With a fifth-place finish Audi driver Timo Scheider defended his overall lead in the DTM. However, a tyre choice that failed to work out deprived Audi of a possible fourth victory of the season in the Eifel.

As is often the case at the Nürburgring, the weather played a crucial part. Shortly before race start a thunderstorm with dark rain clouds was coming up. Since the meteorologists contracted by Audi, who are normally right on the mark, predicted rain – said to last for at least 30 minutes – for the beginning of the race, most of the Audi A4 DTM cars started to the formation lap on rain tyres.

However, instead of a shower there were only a few drops of rain. Mattias Ekström, Timo Scheider and Markus Winkelhock got a call by their teams to switch to slicks immediately as early as during the formation lap. They started from the pit lane thus containing the damage. The other Audi drivers pitted during the first few laps to switch to slicks as well and hopelessly lost ground.

Mattias Ekström and Timo Scheider thrilled the spectators (85,000 throughout the weekend) with strong recoveries, which ultimately resulted in places five and six and thus valuable championship points.

Mattias Ekström was running in front of his team-mate Timo Scheider by a narrow margin for almost the whole race. This duel was ultimately decided by a

tyre gamble: When rain did set in during the final phase Scheider switched to wets five laps before race end. On the last lap he managed to overtake Ekström and on the finish straight almost outperformed Mercedes driver Gary Paffett too with whom Scheider and Ekström had previously fought a tough duel.

Martin Tomczyk drove the fastest race lap by far, but retired due to a defect of the right rear suspension. Tom Kristensen, who had started from the pole position and was a victim of the unfortunate tyre choice as well, slid into the gravel trap shortly after his second mandatory pit stop.

The best driver of an A4 from last year was Markus Winkelhock, who – in ninth place – barely missed scoring a further point. His team-mate Mike Rockenfeller was able to enjoy leading the race after the start for only a short period of time: Running on rain tyres, 'Rocky' dropped to the rear of the field as early as on the first lap.

In eleventh place, Christijan Albers in the two-year-old Audi A4 DTM achieved his best result of the season. Oliver Jarvis, Alexandre Prémat and Mike Rockenfeller occupied places 13, 14 and 15. Katherine Legge retired due to a collision with the Mercedes of Maro Engel.

Before the last four races of the season, Timo Scheider leads the standings with a four-point advantage over Jamie Green (Mercedes). Title defender Mattias Ekström is lying in wait with two points behind him in third place overall. The next race will be held at Brands Hatch (Great Britain) on 31 August.

Quotes after the race

Dr Wolfgang Ullrich (Head of Audi Motorsport): "Of course, considering the grid positions we had, the result is very disappointing. As the saying goes among skiers, we 'used the wrong wax' and that was a truly major mistake. We relied on the information from our meteorologists, with whom we've been working for a very long time, that heavy rain would be setting in immediately after the start. For such conditions, rain tyres would certainly have been the only right choice. But then, during the formation lap, we were informed that the rain would be passing by and there would only be a few drops. Then we took the right decision to immediately call our two most important cars back into the pit lane, to put them back on slicks and to start behind the field from the pit lane. We thus minimised our time loss and managed to defend the lead in the championship. But we were no longer able to fight for victory that way."

Timo Scheider (GW:plus/Top Service Audi A4 DTM #10): "That was one of the most eventful races in my DTM career so far. I can't remember ever having pitted four times in a single race. It all started with a wrong tyre decision. When we changed tyres after the formation lap we were initially running at the rear of the field. Afterwards, the 'weather gods' were neither in favour of nor against us. After using slicks twice it was not an easy decision to risk wets once more. I didn't know whether the remaining distance would be enough for that. In the end, I at least came fifth. And I continue to lead the championship."

Mattias Ekström (Red Bull Audi A4 DTM #1): "Starting from the pit lane was a new experience. But then the whole race was a bit unusual. On the first five to ten laps I had to overtake a lot of cars. After that, the race was more or less normal. On the last ten laps we were running on slicks in the wet. I had a hard fight with Gary Paffett. Unfortunately, I lost it in the end. Sixth place after starting from the pit lane is okay, but on the whole the race was of course a huge disappointment."

Markus Winkelhock (Playboy Audi A4 DTM #19): "I started out on rain tyres but returned to the pit lane as early as during the formation lap to switch to slicks. That was the right decision. I was the last to start from the pit lane. I spun once at the start-finish straight when the rear wheels locked. Fortunately, I stayed on the track, but I had to pit because I had flat-spotted a tyre. Unfortunately, this meant I was only able to finish ninth, although – in the end – the car was even better in the rain than in qualifying. The good thing about it is that I'm the best Audi car from last year."

Christijan Albers (Audi A4 DTM #21): "I had a very good start. I made up some places and had lots of nice fights but another car hit me in the rear. My car turned sideways and I lost two places. We achieved the maximum with this car. Now I'm eager to go to the next race."

Oliver Jarvis (Best Buddies Audi A4 DTM #15): "In view of the dry track we opted for slicks. Starting from grid position 18, we had nothing to lose, no matter what was going to happen. The decision was right and the first lap was great. In the first section of the race I was following Susie (Stoddart) for a long time. We pitted on the same lap and I went out again behind her. The team called me into the pit lane early, which proved to be a good decision. I was running in ninth place when the rain started getting heavier. I should have switched to wets a bit earlier. When the jack didn't work properly during the change to rain tyres, I

suppose I lost 20 seconds, so I only finished 13th. Still, the team did a great job and we had a chance to score points.”

Alexandre Prémat (Audi Bank/Shell Helix Audi A4 DTM #14): “Unfortunately, the race was a disaster. It all began with starting on rain tyres. I’d have preferred slicks but the team split the risk among the cars. Consequently, I had more pit stops in the end than usual.”

Mike Rockenfeller (S line Audi A4 DTM #18): “Of course with the benefit of hindsight we know that slicks would have been the right choice – and the safer one as well. The track was actually dry and we were running on wets. But at the time our information was different. The reason I stayed out on rain tyres longer than the others was because it was all over anyway and the only hope was that it would start raining after all two or three laps later. But that wasn’t the case. That’s why the gamble didn’t work out at all. I’m incredibly disappointed after having such a good chance here. Unfortunately, we gambled it away. It’s a particular shame for my mechanics who repaired the car overnight. They would have deserved points today.”

Martin Tomczyk (Red Bull Audi A4 DTM #2): “What can I say? A very disappointing result. I wasn’t even able to develop a rhythm for the race. And then my race ended prematurely because the right rear suspension broke. Too bad!”

Tom Kristensen (Audi A4 DTM #9): “My race was finished as early as at the start to the formation lap when I had to go out on rain tyres in just slightly drizzling rain. I’m very disappointed that we didn’t make use of our good starting base.”

Katherine Legge (Audi A4 DTM #20): “It could have turned into a really good race. I was driving very consistent lap times. Then there was the incident with Maro Engel, and that of course was really unfortunate.”

Hans-Jürgen Abt (Team Director Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline): “We’re upset because we made the wrong choice. According to the information we had there was going to be real rain. But the rain wasn’t heavy enough, so our plan didn’t work out. The risk we took was too high. But we took the decision jointly. When you take a decision you’ve got to stick to it. In this case it was wrong, but it’s not the end of the world either. It was a very thrilling race. Mattias Ekström and Timo Scheider made a strong recovery. That shows that our car was in good shape. Timo made the right choice by switching to rain tyres. In this race,

everything was possible. What counts is that we continue leading the championship. The meteorologist is not to blame. Trust has to go both ways. On Saturday, his forecast was absolutely correct.”

Arno Zensen (Team Director Audi Sport Team Rosberg): “Starting from second place, you expect something different. We relied on the weather forecast. Then I made the mistake of putting both cars on rain tyres. Actually, I wanted Markus (Winkelhock) to start on slicks. But as early as during the formation lap we decided to change that. Markus drove a good race. Altogether, we had seven or eight stops. The team did a good job but the strategy was wrong. I’m sorry for Mike (Rockenfeller). Yesterday, we were lucky, today – unfortunately – we weren’t. Some things did work well, though. Markus finished among the top ten. That was a halfway consoling finish after a disappointing event.”

Ernst Moser (Team Director Audi Sport Team Phoenix): “At the start we took a gamble – one car on slicks, the other one on wets. That decision was not wrong. But it caused Alex (Prémat) to lose a lot of time in the race. We’d been hoping that it would pay off to keep him out on the track up to the end of the pit stop window. But the rain came only later and we were no longer able to close this gap. Oliver (Jarvis) was running in ninth place and towards the end definitely wanted rain tyres for safety reasons. Unfortunately, one of the air jacks failed during the pit stop.”



The results at the Nürburgring

- 1 Bernd Schneider (Mercedes) 43 laps in 1h 04m33.024s
- 2 Paul di Resta (Mercedes) + 5.764s
- 3 Jamie Green (Mercedes) + 13.069s
- 4 Gary Paffett (Mercedes) + 19.416s
- 5 Timo Scheider (GW:plus/Top Service Audi A4 DTM) + 19.582s
- 6 Mattias Ekström (Red Bull Audi A4 DTM) + 21.074s
- 7 Bruno Spengler (Mercedes) + 37.484s
- 8 Ralf Schumacher (Mercedes) + 45.630s
- 9 Markus Winkelhock (Playboy Audi A4 DTM) + 59.601s
- 10 Mathias Lauda (Mercedes) + 1m 00.671s
- 11 Christijan Albers (Audi A4 DTM) + 1m 06.751s
- 12 Susie Stoddart (Mercedes) + 1m 07.939s
- 13 Oliver Jarvis (Best Buddies Audi A4 DTM) + 1m 11.250s
- 14 Alexandre Prémat (Audi Bank/Shell Helix Audi A4 DTM) - 1 lap
- 15 Mike Rockenfeller (S line Audi A4 DTM) - 1 lap

Not classified:

- Martin Tomczyk (Red Bull Audi A4 DTM) - 14 laps (suspension)
- Tom Kristensen (Audi A4 DTM) - 16 laps (spin)
- Katherine Legge (Audi A4 DTM) - 18 Rd. (accident)
- Maro Engel (Mercedes) - 18 laps

- Ends -

Photographs and information available at www.audi-motorsport.info

AUDI AG sold a total of 964,151 cars in 2007 and thus achieved its twelfth consecutive record year. With revenue of €33,617 million and profit before tax of €2,915 million, the company attained its best figures ever. Audi produces vehicles in Ingolstadt and Neckarsulm (Germany), Győr (Hungary), Changchun (China) and Brussels (Belgium). At the end of 2007, production of the Audi A6 started in Aurangabad, India. The company is active in more than 100 markets worldwide. AUDI AG's wholly owned subsidiaries include Automobili Lamborghini Holding S.p.A. in Sant'Agata Bolognese, Italy, and quattro GmbH in Neckarsulm. Audi employs about 54,000 people worldwide, including 45,000 in Germany. The brand with the four rings invests more than €2 billion each year in order to sustain the company's technological lead embodied in its "Vorsprung durch Technik" slogan. Audi plans to significantly increase the number of models in its portfolio by 2015, from the 26 currently on offer to 40.