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Motorsport

Audi drivers in top form for new season

- **DTM and sportscar drivers train in Bavaria**
- **Perfect fitness decisive on the race track**
- **New team mates are welcomed in family**

After one week of aqua jogging, spinning, weight training and many kilometres around the cross country skiing trail one thing is clear: The Audi drivers are in excellent condition for the challenges of a new motorsport season. At the long-standing, traditional fitness camp in Ofterschwang (Bavaria) the works drivers prepared themselves for the stress and strain of the DTM and the American Le Mans Series. The conclusion of Audi Team Doctor, Dr Christian John, was entirely positive: "The entire team is in excellent condition. The season can begin."

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The priority of the six-day training session was to optimise the drivers' basic fitness level and stamina. The fitness level of each and every participant is analysed before, during and after the programme. "As a result of these results each driver has received a personal trainings plan for the next few months," says Dr Christian John. The experienced team doctor stresses the importance of his protégées excellent physical condition: "Perfect fitness is an important component for success in motorsport. Whoever is unable of making the correct decision at important moments and under extreme stress makes mistakes – and these can make the difference between success and failure on track."

In addition to works drivers Christian Abt, Frank Biela, Rinaldo Capello, Mattias Ekström, Pierre Kaffer, Tom Kristensen, Allan McNish, Emanuele Pirro, Frank Stippler, Martin Tomczyk and Marco Werner, Vanina Ickx also got to know her new team mates in the Audi family. "I was made to feel very welcome by the guys. They are all incredibly pleasant and passed on lots of valuable tips. There's a fantastic atmosphere at Audi, I'm made to feel like a princess within their ranks," says the Belgian. Timo Scheider, another newcomer to the DTM squad, also trained together with the Audi team in Ofterschwang.

Although the trainings programme began early each morning and the drivers were occasionally driven to their absolute limits, there remained sufficient time for plenty of fun and games and interesting chats. "It's great to see my team mates again after the winter break. Everyone had something to say, they are all looking forward to the new season and we have loads of fun. It's almost as if you are out on the town with a group of friends," reports 2004 DTM Champion Mattias Ekström.

The mix of fun and work is welcome. "Obviously work and fitness is the main priority. However, our fitness camp is also the perfect opportunity for everybody to get to know each other even better and to strengthen the team spirit. Motorsport is team work and this has always been one of Audi's great strengths," says Head of Audi Motorsport Dr Wolfgang Ullrich, who also trained with the drivers.

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The Audi drivers will benefit almost immediately from their trainings programme this coming week at the official DTM test at Vallelunga, Italy. Things start getting really serious on 18 March when the new Audi R10 contests its first race at the American Le Mans Series season opener at Sebring (Florida). The DTM season starts on 9 April at Hockenheim.

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Photographs from the fitness week, sound bites and additional information to download at: www.audi-motorsport.info (accreditation necessary)