

Ingolstadt, 31 August 2001

## Audi enters final spurt in the ALMS

Suspense is guaranteed in the final spurt of the American Le Mans Series (ALMS). Prior to the last two rounds of the season in Laguna Seca and Road Atlanta, the four front-running Audi works drivers Rinaldo Capello, Tom Kristensen, Emanuele Pirro and Frank Biela are separated by just a few points in the overall championship. However, after securing victory in Mid-Ohio, Panoz drivers Jan Magnussen and David Brabham still have a good chance to take the title.

Team Audi Sport North America faces a difficult task in Laguna Seca on 9 September: On the one hand, all drivers of the team have delivered an open and mighty duel against each other with their two Infineon Audi R8 sportscars. On the other hand, the strong opposition from the Panoz team prevents the Audi squad from taking any unnecessary risks.

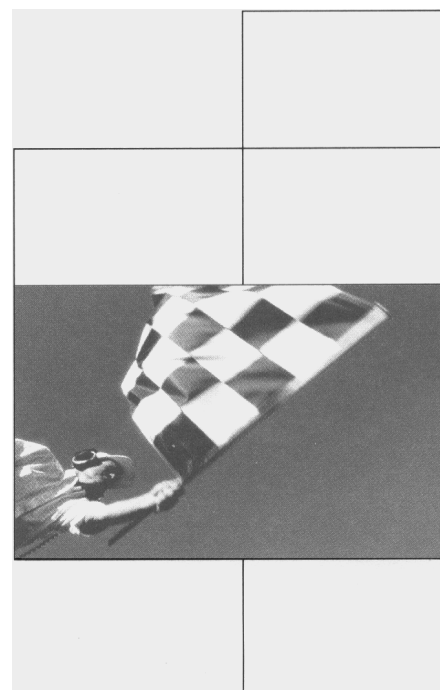
Moreover, the 2.24 mile circuit near Monterey on the Californian coast is regarded as unpredictable, with fine sand blowing over the track from the nearby ocean. "If you leave the racing line it gets extremely slippery," remembers Head of Audi Sport Dr Wolfgang Ullrich from last year. "Apart from that, in the early morning hours it can be very cold before turning really hot around midday." Changing temperatures and grip conditions make finding a suitable set up difficult.

For this reason, Team Audi Sport North America are pleased to have experience at hand from last year, when, after a sensational fight, Audi secured not only a double win but also took the ALMS manufacturer's title before the season had even finished. "In the meantime we've become familiar with the Laguna Seca track and have managed to gain a great deal of experience with the Audi R8 last year," explains team director Reinhold Joest. "We know exactly where we stand, and for this reason I'm convinced that we can reach our goal and win the race."

The Audi works drivers are particularly looking forward to the race in California. "Laguna is situated in one of the most beautiful regions of the USA," enthuses Tom Kristensen, who travels through California with his family since the previous ALMS round in Mid-Ohio. "Again the track is new for me, but I've heard a lot about it – mostly of course about the famous Cork Screw corners."

The "Cork Screw" curve combination, which drops away sharply after a crest, is regarded as one of the most fascinating passages in the world. "It'll be fantastic to drive the R8 through this section," believes Andy Wallace, who competes for the Audi customer team Champion Racing and is a dedicated fan of this race track. "I like this circuit a lot. The right set up will be decisive there."

"Laguna Seca is without doubt one of the most beautiful race tracks on the ALMS calendar," agrees Rinaldo Capello. "But it is also one of the most



## Press Information



difficult circuits," adds Frank Biela. "At first glance it seems quite easy, because you have already memorised it after a couple of laps. But it is not easy to find the perfect line. There are a couple of corners that are much quicker than you think at first."

The main objective for Biela and his partner Emanuele Pirro is to make up as much ground as possible to their team mates Rinaldo Capello and Tom Kristensen. "The championship now enters a critical phase," says Pirro. "A lot depends on this race. I'm motivated and I'm looking forward to another tough fight."

Eager to join the fight again are Johnny Herbert and Andy Wallace with their Champion Audi R8. "Lately we have been able to show that we are capable of winning," believes Herbert. "Now we just need that little bit of elusive luck."

Stefan Johansson and his team return to the ALMS for the Laguna Seca round. Driving a 2000-spec Audi R8, Johansson already clinched the European Le Mans Series (ELMS) title and now focuses on the last two rounds of the ALMS together with his team mate Patrick Lemarie.

### Schedule in Laguna Seca

Friday, 7 September

12:40 – 14:10 hrs	Test
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Saturday, 8 September

08:55 – 09:55 hrs	1st free practice
12:40 – 13:40 hrs	2nd free practice
17:20 – 17:40 hrs	Qualifying

Sunday, 9 September

08:25 – 08:45 hrs	Warm-up
12:00 – 14:45 hrs	Race

Find updated photos and information on the internet:

[www.audi-sportpress.com](http://www.audi-sportpress.com) (password required)

