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Audi has to be content with class win at Sebring

- Unexpected problems cost overall victory
- Impressive fight back in the closing stages
- Places three and six overall

Ingolstadt/Sebring – The Audi R10 TDI remains unbeaten after 22 races. In a turbulent 12-hour race at Sebring (US state of Florida), Audi achieved a 1-2 victory in the LM P1 category with their diesel-powered sports cars.

Following eight Sebring victories in a row, however, Audi had to be content with class glory in the American endurance classic for the first time. In the overall classification, the two R10 TDI prototypes finished third and sixth.

At the mid-point in the race, the two Audi R10 TDI cars were running in front of the field. Lucas Luhr, Mike Rockenfeller and Marco Werner had a 40-second lead over their team mates Dindo Capello, Allan McNish and Tom Kristensen, when the right turbo charger and the front brake discs had to be changed on their R10 TDI. This cost them 16 laps and any chance to fight for victory. An off track excursion at dusk plus two stop-and-go penalties further delayed them.

The number 1 “sister car”, which had started from pole position, lost 30 seconds due to a stop-and-go penalty in the opening stages of the heated battle. At the start of the eighth hour, the push-rod of the right front suspension had to be fixed while less than an hour later, the front brake discs had to be replaced.

Almost four laps down, Dindo Capello, Tom Kristensen and Allan McNish impressively fought their way back to the front, making it back onto the lead lap

and eventually finishing third overall. They missed the outright victory by just 67 seconds – after losing almost ten minutes in the pits.

Quotes after the race at Sebring

Dr Wolfgang Ullrich (Head of Audi Motorsport): “The race was very disappointing for us. We had many technical issues we now have to sort out. These problems did not allow us to run at the pace we wanted. Also the drivers and the team were not faultless today which caused some penalties. We’ve simply been not on the level we wanted to be here. We need and will work immediately on that.”

Dindo Capello (Audi R10 TDI #1): “I did not enjoy this race. It started unfortunately with my early penalty stop-go when I couldn’t avoid the Porsche GT2. The car handled okay in the early stages but then it was obvious to me that something was not quite right. My second time in the car was a nightmare – the car was touching the floor and for me the car was undrivable with the brake situation.”

Tom Kristensen (Audi R10 TDI #1): “It was a great, classic race with lots of things happening throughout. We lost time with some problems which cost us a victory. Our friends from France with the Peugeot were very fast and we have to keep our heads down. Congratulations to the ‘Postmen from Stuttgart’ – they didn’t make a mistake so have a deserved victory. We had a great battle and tried everything we could do to come back. But being three laps down was simply too much for the amount of time left.”

Allan McNish (Audi R10 TDI #1): “We had a very fast car but unfortunately had an issue with the right front suspension which had to be rectified and cost us time. Then bizarrely we had to change the brake discs which has never ever happened before with the R10 TDI. This problem cost us more time. So to be three laps down and to ultimately finish on the lead lap the entire Audi team can be proud of a fine recovery.”

Lucas Luhr (Audi R10 TDI #2): “We had the speed to win the race. We’d been running in front for a while. Then unfortunately the problems started – first for our car, then for the ‘sister’ car. This is of course not nice. The points we scored are important for the Championship. But we wanted to take an overall victory here.”



Mike Rockenfeller (Audi R10 TDI #2): "Of course this was not what we wanted. We had too many problems. We had the speed and were running in front at mid-distance. But then we got the problem with the turbo charger, after this the race was over for us. Congratulations to the Porsche guys."

Marco Werner (Audi R10 TDI #2): "After we had been not happy with the set-up during the whole week, the car was quite okay today. Without the broken turbo charger it could have been a great race for us. Instead we have to be content with the second position in the class."

Ralf Jüttner (Technical Director Audi Sport Team Joest): "We had problems here we did not expect at all. Additionally there were the stop-and-go-penalties and accidents. Like this you do not win a race against strong competition. We now have a long list we have to work on until Le Mans. We will take this as a warning from which we will learn. The brake problems have been especially strange. Changing the front discs cost car number one the victory. The R10 TDI simply is not built for changing brakes during the race. Doing this in five and a half minutes is quite an achievement."

The results at Sebring

- 1 Dumas/Bernhard/Collad (Porsche) 351 laps in 12h 01m 39.587s
- 2 Franchitti/Leitzinger/Lally (Porsche) + 1m 02.084s
- 3 Capello/Kristensen/McNish (Audi R10 TDI) + 1m 07.697s (1st in LM P1)
- 4 Smith/Dyson (Porsche) - 1 lap
- 5 Brabham/Sharp/Johansson (Acura/Honda) - 2 laps
- 6 Luhr/Rockenfeller/Werner (Audi R10 TDI) - 18 laps (2nd in LM P1)
- 7 Lienhard/Theys/Lammers (Porsche) - 18 laps
- 8 O'Connell/Magnussen/Fellows (Chevrolet) - 23 laps
- 9 Field/Field/Berry (Lola) - 24 laps (3rd in LM P1)
- 10 Beretta/Gavin/Papis (Chevrolet) - 31 laps