

Monza, 8 May 2004

Audi on pole for season opener at Monza

Audi have given a clear indication they have the car to beat in the season opener of the newly founded Le Mans Endurance Series (LMES): Johnny Herbert, driving for Audi Sport UK Team Veloqx, qualified the Audi R8 on pole position for tomorrow's race at Monza. He set the fastest time in the second of the two 45 minute sessions of qualifying on Saturday.

Allan McNish qualified the second Audi Sport UK Team Veloqx Audi R8 in third place on the grid, completing the excellent result for the British importer. Audi Sport Japan Team Goh is starting the race from fourth position. Tom Kristensen set the best time in the number 5 R8 sports car during the last ten minutes of the session.

The race will start on Sunday at 13:20hrs local time and will be finished after 1000 kilometres or six hours of racing.

Quotes after qualifying at Monza

Jamie Davies (Audi Sport UK Team Veloqx Audi R8 #88): "The track conditions were a little tricky this morning and we failed to get the best out of our tyres. But we made changes to the R8 during the lunch break which really helped. I drove for the final few minutes after Johnny had set the pole time and the balance felt really good. I feel comfortable in the Audi and I'm very excited about our prospects."

Johnny Herbert (Audi Sport UK Team Veloqx Audi R8 #88): "This is my first pole position since 1988 – I'd forgotten what it was like to be fastest – and I'm delighted. I wasn't too happy in the morning session but we sorted some things in between the two sessions and the changes worked very well. For me, the Audi is the best it's been this year and that showed in my times."

Pierre Kaffer (Audi Sport UK Team Veloqx Audi R8 #8): "Driving the Audi R8 in the wet for the first time was especially exciting and over the past two days I've needed to adapt my driving style from the last time I was here in a Porsche Super Cup car. Allan did a great job in qualifying but it was the luck of the draw as to who managed to find the clearest lap. It should be an exciting race."

Allan McNish (Audi Sport UK Team Veloqx Audi R8 #8): "Testing on Friday had gone well but I'm a little disappointed and frustrated to have only been third fastest overall. The Audi felt really good, especially in the afternoon session, and if I'd managed a clear lap, without traffic, I'm positive we'd have been on the front row – and possibly pole. Bottom line, I'm confident for the race."

Sam Li (Head of Audi Sport UK Team Veloqx): "The entire team did a superb job today in what was a very exciting final qualifying session. Johnny gave a fantastic performance to grab pole while it was a little frustrating for car #8 which was running a different tyre strategy."

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Press Information

Both cars showed competitive qualifying pace but our race pace also looks very impressive."

Seiji Ara (Audi Sport Team Goh Audi R8 #5): "It's my first time here at Monza. So the most important thing for me was to get as much time on the track as possible. I really like high-speed circuits like Monza and I'm sure I will do even better tomorrow during the race."

Rinaldo Capello (Audi Sport Team Goh Audi R8 #5): "I didn't drive in the afternoon session. This morning I had some bad luck because in my first outing there was some oil on the track and during my second try the session was interrupted due to a red flag. Our R8 is well prepared for the long race tomorrow."

Tom Kristensen (Audi Sport Team Goh Audi R8 #5): "I only had very little time on the track today. So therefore I'm of course happy with the time I did. Actually, I'm here at Monza to support my team mates and to be together with the team to prepare for the Le Mans 24 Hour race."

Kazumichi Goh (Head of Audi Sport Japan Team Goh): "Today everything went in the right direction. We have sorted out all small problems experienced during the sessions yesterday and can now focus our concentration on the race. I'm sure we will see a thrilling fight against the other two Audi cars and of course the Zytek."

Dr Wolfgang Ullrich (Head of Audi Motorsport): "I'm satisfied with the three Audi R8 sports cars. Especially the Audi Sport UK Team Veloqx is showing a good performance. And with the third row on the grid, the Audi Sport Japan Team Goh is also starting the race from a promising position. As we expected, the competition is very high here at Monza and I'm sure it will be exactly the same during the race tomorrow. But over the distance and with the advantage of the lower fuel consumption of our FSI engines we should have a good chance for a win at the season opener."

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The starting grid at Monza

- 1 Davies/Herbert (Audi R8) 1m 38.461s
- 2 Brabham/Johansson/Wallace (Zytek) 1m 38.617s
- 3 Kaffer/McNish (Audi R8) 1m 38.672s
- 4 Campbell-Walker/Minassian/Zacchia (DBA) 1m 39.542s
- 5 Ara/Capello/Kristensen (Audi R8) 1m 39.580s
- 6 Katoh/Michigami (Dome-Mugen) 1m40.012s
- 7 Barbosa/Barff/Short (Dallara-Judd) 1m 40.222s
- 8 Ayari/Collard (C60-Judd) 1m 40.730s
- 9 Lupberger/Stirling (Nasamax) 1m 42.078s
- 10 Belmondo/Gosselin/Saviozzi (C65-Courage) 1m 43.112s

Photographs and further information are available in the Internet:
www.audi-sportpress.com (accreditation required)