

Communications Motorsport

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Audi on the podium again at Le Mans

- **Third place for R15 TDI on Le Mans début**
- **Unexpected difficulties rob Audi of chance of victory**
- **Clear commitment to 24 Hours of Le Mans**

Ingolstadt/Le Mans – Eleven starts, eleven times in succession on the winner's podium: Audi continued its impressive series of podium results in the 24 Hours of Le Mans. After taking three consecutive victories Audi Sport Team Joest had to settle for third position on this occasion in probably the world's toughest endurance race.

"If you win the 24 Hours of Le Mans five times in succession and eight times overall this doesn't happen by chance," declared Rupert Stadler, Chairman of the Board of Management of AUDI AG, after the eventful race. "We know how difficult it is to win Le Mans. Also Peugeot, who we congratulate on this well deserved victory, needed three attempts. I trust our technicians implicitly as well as the entire team and I am convinced that we will strike back next year. We are fully committed to this race. Audi will leave no stone unturned in its quest to reclaim the Le Mans winner's trophy in 2010."

The Le Mans début of the technically innovative Audi R15 TDI demonstrated that it has become even more difficult to win the 24 Hours of Le Mans first time out with a completely new sports prototype. After cancellation of the traditional test day, and Wednesday's wet and rainy free practice session the subsequent four-hour qualifying session on Thursday and the 45-minute warm-up on Saturday morning was insufficient time to set-up the new Audi R15 TDI perfectly for the 13.629 kilometer track around which it is impossible to test.

With considerably higher temperatures on race day than on Thursday evening, and the correspondingly different grip levels caused by this, every Audi driver complained that the cars understeered excessively during the opening stages of the race. This was corrected on Saturday evening by fitting another front bodywork section with a different aerodynamic configuration. "Our car was very good after the changes," said Le Mans record winner Tom Kristensen.

However, another phenomenon occurred early on which had never appeared during the test race at Sebring (USA) in March or throughout the subsequent test program: The intercoolers mounted in the sidepods of the three Audi R15 TDI became so dirty that they had to be cleaned repeatedly. Due to the increasing intercooler temperature the engine power had to be reduced occasionally.

Furthermore, two of the three Audi R15 TDI were torn out of the fight for overall victory in the opening hours. The three Germans Lucas Luhr, Mike Rockenfeller and Marco Werner were forced to retire after six-and-a-half hours due to an accident. Lucas Luhr lost control of his Audi R15 TDI over a bump in the extremely fast "Porsche Curves" and slammed backwards into the barriers. The stewards prohibited the heavily damaged R15 TDI from continuing due to safety reasons.

Timo Bernhard (Germany) and the two Frenchmen Romain Dumas and Alexandre Prémat tumbled down the running order and were left in a hopeless position because the high-pressure injection pump, which normally runs absolutely reliably and which is barely accessible, had to be changed on the V10 TDI engine in their R15 TDI.

As a result, Audi Sport Team Joest were left with the single Audi R15 TDI of Dindo Capello, Tom Kristensen and Allan McNish, who put the two leading Peugeots under constant pressure up until Sunday afternoon by setting fast lap times, before changing the right-rear suspension cost them four laps. At the end last year's winners restricted themselves to defending their third position from the fourth placed Aston Martin.

"There is absolutely no doubt that race did not run as we had imagined," pronounced Head of Audi Motorsport Dr Wolfgang Ullrich. "We have once again seen why the 24 Hours of Le Mans is justifiably regarded as the world's toughest car race and why absolutely everything must be correct if you want to win. This



was definitely not the case with us this time. We had unexpected problems with our new R15 TDI, which we will now analyze in peace and must solve. However, especially in the second half of the race we saw just how much potential the car has. We will build on this before making a new attempt next year.”

- Ends -

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

AUDI AG sold a total of 1,003,469 cars in 2008 and thus achieved its 13th consecutive record year. The Company posted new record figures with revenue of €34.2 billion and profit before tax of €3.2 billion. Audi produces vehicles in Ingolstadt and Neckarsulm (Germany), Győr (Hungary), Changchun (China) and Brussels (Belgium). Aurangabad in India saw the start of CKD production of the Audi A6 at the end of 2007 and of the Audi A4 in early October 2008. 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 currently employs around 58,000 people worldwide, including 46,500 in Germany. The brand with the four rings invests around €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 to 40. The AUDI brand celebrates its 100th birthday in 2009. The company was founded by August Horch in Zwickau on July 16, 1909; he named it AUDI after the Latin translation of his surname (“hark!”).