

Laguna Seca, 20. Oktober 2006

Audi R10 TDI cars fourth and fifth on the grid

- **Weight handicap clearly visible at Laguna Seca**
- **Dindo Capello beats track record in qualifying**
- **Difficult task for the Audi drivers in ALMS finale**

Audi Sport North America's pair of Audi R10 TDI sportscars will start the final round of the American Le Mans Series at Laguna Seca (USA) from positions four and five on the grid. As expected, the petrol driven LM P1 cars had an advantage over the diesel powered cars in qualifying, benefiting from 65 kilograms less weight allowed by the regulations. On the track near California's Pacific coast, featuring many uphill and downhill sections, they took the top two positions on the starting grid. Also the fastest car of the smaller LM P2 class will start ahead of the two Audi R10 TDI sportscars on Saturday at 2:45 p.m. local time (11:45 p.m. in Germany).

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Dindo Capello (Italy), who together with Allan McNish (Scotland), has already clinched the Drivers' title in the LM P1 class, was able to beat last year's track record in qualifying. Losing only 0.385 seconds to pole-setter Stefan Johansson, Capello set the fourth fastest time. Emanuele Pirro (Italy), driving with Frank Biela (Germany), followed just behind with the "sister" Audi in fifth position.

Meanwhile, the Automobile Club de l'Ouest (ACO) has issued changes to the regulations for 2007. This means LM P1 cars with diesel and petrol engines next year will again have the same weight. The capacity of the fuel tank of diesel-powered cars will be reduced by 10 percent. The prototypes of the smaller LM P2 class will be cut in engine power.

In the final sportscar race of the 2006 season, the Audi drivers, however, face maybe their most difficult task of the year due to the current rules. Despite that, they will try everything in Saturday's four-hour race to give the revolutionary diesel sportscar another victory. Since its début in March the Audi R10 TDI is unbeaten.

Quotes after qualifying at Laguna Seca

Dr Wolfgang Ullrich (Head of Audi Motorsport): “The fastest six cars are very close together after qualifying. We know that weight is an important factor at Laguna Seca. With 65 kilograms more weight it was just impossible to take pole-position. We can also see that a LM P2 car can be right at the front here. It will be a difficult race for us. We’ll try to make the best out of the situation.”

Dindo Capello (Audi R10 TDI #2): “I struggled with understeer during my first run in qualifying. I pitted and swapped over the tyres and we made a small change to the car which immediately made it better. On my first flying lap after the stop I set my quickest time but unfortunately a car then went off at the Cork Screw bringing much sand on to the track and from that moment I was losing too much time in that section. The time gap to the Zytek and Creation is not as big as expected and that is a good sign for us for the race.”

Allan McNish (Audi R10 TDI #2): “I’m pleasantly surprised that we we’re as close to the Zytek and Creation in qualifying. With the knowledge we have of our car for the race I know we’ll be competitive but I also know it’s going to be a hard, hard fight. Laguna always suffers from the same problem in that sand gets blown and dragged on to the track surface which means the condition can be inconsistent – you have to have this in your mind corner to corner, lap to lap.”

Frank Biela (Audi R10 TDI #1): “We expected the cars ahead of us to be at the front. They’ve already been strong at Atlanta. We were not able to cure the understeer we have in our car. I hope we’ll be able to sort it out for tomorrow. Fourth and fifth is definitely not what we were looking for. But the race is long, everything is still possible.”

Emanuele Pirro (Audi R10 TDI #1): “We have a disadvantage on the rules. We saw already at Road Atlanta how quick, good LM P1 petrol cars can be. On top of that our car is built for Le Mans. Laguna Seca is not the ideal place for the R10 TDI. I’m quite satisfied with qualifying. We have had a difficult weekend so far, we were struggling with the set-up. Now we are heading in the right direction.”

Dave Maraj (Team Director Team Audi Sport North America): “That was an interesting qualifying session. We always knew the lighter LM P1 Zytek and Creation cars would be very fast here but the LM P2 Porsche surprised me a little. But we’re happy because we’re less than four-tenth’s from the Zytek’s pole time and know that we have a competitive car for the race. It’s going to be a tough, long race but our team’s aim is for the R10 TDI to go undefeated this season – but it’s going to be especially difficult.”

The starting grid at Laguna Seca

- 1 Johansson/Mowlem (Zytek) 1m 13.731s
- 2 Minassian/Primat (Creation-Judd) 1m 13.838s
- 3 Maassen/Bernhard (Porsche) 1m 14.030s
- 4 Capello/McNish (Audi R10 TDI) 1m 14.116s
- 5 Biela/Pirro (Audi R10 TDI) 1m 14.351s
- 6 Luhr/Dumas (Porsche) 1m 14.364s

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