

Ingolstadt/Le Mans, 15 June 2006

## **Motorsport**

### **Audi R10 TDI cars provisionally on second row**

- **First qualifying at Le Mans held in heavy rain**
- **Track conditions extremely treacherous**
- **Final grid positions likely to be set on Thursday night**

The two Audi R10 TDI sportscars of Audi Sport Team Joest hold third and fourth positions respectively after the first qualifying session for the Le Mans 24 Hour race (France). With the session being held in extremely difficult weather conditions on Wednesday evening, the Audi drivers concentrated fully on completing the required number of laps enforced by the regulations so as to fulfil the terms for qualifying for the race. This includes a minimum of three laps per driver at night.

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Having been dominated by searing summer heat for days in the Le Mans region of France, rain set in on Wednesday evening at 1900 hrs just in time for qualifying. Thereafter, conditions kept changing, with the track remaining wet and slippery throughout the four hours of the session. As more favourable weather has been forecast for the final qualifying session on Thursday, the Audi drivers did not take unnecessary risks, especially as both Audi R10 TDI cars were equipped with their "race" engines already.

On Wednesday, many spins and off-track excursions showed how slippery the track was. The Audi Team was no exception either. In the final hour, Dindo Capello spun off at the "Tertre Rouge" S corners and touched the barriers. His Audi R10 TDI incurred slight damage on the right rear suspension and will be back on track on Thursday.

The Le Mans grid positions will be finally decided on Thursday night in the second qualifying from 1900 hrs to 2100 hrs and from 2200 hrs to 2400 hrs. The race will start on Saturday at 1700 hrs.

## Quotes after first qualifying

**Dr Wolfgang Ullrich (Head of Audi Motorsport):** “All in all I draw a positive conclusion as both cars were in the top-four on the time sheets all of the time. We concentrated on finding a good balance for the special circumstances on the wet circuit here at Le Mans. Today it was difficult for all drivers as they found completely different grip levels in the various parts of the track. If it’s raining again tomorrow we will go on working on the perfect set-up for these conditions. If it is dry, we will do some fine tuning for the race.”

**Dindo Capello (Audi R10 TDI #7):** “The day for me was not so busy. At the beginning I just did my mandatory laps at night. When I joined the track again later, I aquaplaned off on a slippery corner. I’m sorry for the team because I gave them some extra work. But I hope I will pay them back tomorrow evening with a strong performance.”

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**Tom Kristensen (Audi R10 TDI #7):** “After so much sunshine, the weather turned into two rainy sessions tonight. We were curious how our Audi R10 TDI would feel under wet conditions but we found a good balance very quickly. The car produces a lot of downforce and the TDI engine has a huge amount of power. Despite the difficult conditions I enjoyed my first laps of this racing week very much.”

**Allan McNish (Audi R10 TDI #7):** “The track was tricky, there was aquaplaning on the Hunaudières straight and before Indianapolis. The ‘standard’ road sections of the track were additionally slippery due to fuel and oil spillage which required a delicate balance of power. The car was good straightaway and had good balance. Also in this weather and track conditions, the torque of the diesel engine could be used to good advantage.”

**Frank Biela (Audi R10 TDI #8):** “We did not want to take big risks today because there will be another qualifying session tomorrow which will hopefully be drier. We believe it did not make much sense to take big risks today. We went through our routine. We did the night qualifying for each driver. On my last run, unfortunately, I encountered traffic. The car was good, everything is running well, so we are looking forward to the second qualifying.”

**Emanuele Pirro (Audi R10 TDI #8):** “So far we are happy. The conditions were very difficult with the rain. The target was to check the car and make sure it was running properly. In wet conditions, it was important that the three drivers qualified at night. Besides that, we produced some good laps and we saw that the speed was there.”

**Marco Werner (Audi R10 TDI #8):** “I hardly regard this as qualifying because the weather didn’t allow us to run through our programme. I hope it will be dry on Thursday. Of course, every lap counts as everybody still needs to improve a little bit. I was happy that I kept the car on the road in these conditions and completed my mandatory laps.”

**Ralf Jüttner (Technical Director Audi Sport Team Joest):** “The sudden rain upset the plans of all the teams but that was the same for everyone. On the other hand, we haven’t previously had much experience with the Audi R10 TDI in wet conditions so gained some valuable information. We had to find a compromise between getting enough knowledge in the rain and not taking too much risk. Many cars had problems this evening and also Dindo (Capello) had an off which can always happen under these circumstances. We were not going for quick lap times today as we should have enough time for that tomorrow.”

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## Results of first qualifying

- 1 Minassian/Collard/Comas (Pescarolo-Judd) 4m 13.832s
- 2 Helary/Montagny/Loeb (Pescarolo-Judd) 4m 14.447s
- 3 Capello/Kristensen/McNish (Audi R10 TDI) 4m 17.189s
- 4 Biela/Pirro/Werner (Audi R10 TDI) 4m 17.676s
- 5 Ortiz/Campbell-Walter/Gabbiani (Creation-Judd) 4m 22.021s
- 6 Lammers/Yoong/Johansson (Dome-Judd) 4m 22.873s

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