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Audi R15 TDI on the front row on its debut

- **Audi misses pole position at Sebring by just 0.082 seconds**
- **Audi R15 TDI fastest diesel-powered sports car**
- **Grid positions two and four for Audi Sport Team Joest**

Ingolstadt/Sebring – Good debut for the Audi R15 TDI: The all-new diesel-powered sports car from AUDI AG will start its first ever race from the front row of the grid. Le Mans record winner Tom Kristensen (Denmark) missed the pole position for the 12-hour race at Sebring (US state of Florida) by just 0.082 seconds. Almost as fast was youngster Mike Rockenfeller (Germany) who qualified fourth with the second R15 TDI.

The five fastest prototypes were covered by only 281 thousandths of a second in Thursday afternoon's qualifying session. Literally in the very last moment Scott Dixon from New Zealand in the Acura/Honda snatched the pole position from Tom Kristensen. The Dane recorded his fastest lap only on lap seven after he caught traffic on his previous attempts. In the end he qualified second as the fastest driver of a diesel-powered sports car.

Mike Rockenfeller also got stuck in traffic on his first flying lap. With his second lap he jumped to the top of the field. The team, however, decided to save the tires for the race and not to try another qualifying attempt.

The 12-hour race at Sebring serves Audi Sport Team Joest mainly as a test for the Le Mans 24 Hours on June 13/14. The Audi squad used all practice sessions since last Saturday to learn as much as possible about the new diesel sports car and to try different setup options. Both cars ran basically without any major problems so far.

The race, which begins on Saturday at 10:30 a.m. local time (3:30 p.m. in Germany), will be a test under race conditions for Audi Sport Team Joest. Following the race, the crew will stay for three further days at Sebring to complete a further twelve hours with the two R15 TDI prototypes.

Mike Rockenfeller (car number 1) and Allan McNish (car number 2) are nominated as start drivers for Saturday's race. Audi has won the 12 Hours of Sebring eight times so far in ten events.

Quotes after qualifying at Sebring

Dr. Wolfgang Ullrich (Head of Audi Motorsport): "The grip level in qualifying was not at the same level as the previous practice sessions. I would also like to reiterate that we are here to prepare for the 24 Hours of Le Mans. Therefore, we have not spent any time setting the car up specifically for qualifying. We have seen here at the very first meeting that the various vehicle and car concepts are very closely matched. We will now try to make a good race collecting as much experience as possible for Le Mans."

Ralf Jüttner (Technical Director Audi Sport Team Joest): "So far it actually went quite well. We have been faced with surprisingly few problems so far and have worked well through our program. In qualifying, the fastest cars were covered by less than three tenths of a second – which is unusually tight. This promises a very good and close race."

Dindo Capello (Audi R15 TDI #2): "Sebring is just one small step behind Le Mans for me in terms of importance and the most historic and important endurance sports car race in the US and to be a part of this great event is something very special. Sebring has been kind to me with three wins already and every race here I have very special memories. My very first race here in 1999 I was driving with two Formula One heroes of mine – Stefan Johansson and Michele Alboreto. Sebring has always been, and always will be, very important preparation for Audi for Le Mans. The fast and bumpy track is very hard on car and driver. Survive 12 hours here and you're in good shape for Le Mans."

Tom Kristensen (Audi R15 TDI #2): "Wow! It would have been really cool to have made a debut pole for the R15 TDI. We had pole but it was snatched away

on the last lap of qualifying which was very close and exciting. Our focus is for the race and a successful warm-up for Le Mans but as a driver, of course I wanted the pole. I could have been luckier as it took until my seventh lap before I had a clear lap out of traffic. I had to back off and make space. Thankfully I had enough diesel in the car so I could do the extra laps. Well done to Scott (Dixon). We're eagerly looking forward to the race."

Allan McNish (Audi R15 TDI #2): "The V10 engine in our new R15 TDI gives a different and improved power response compared to the R10 TDI. It's most noticeable at the hairpin (Turn 7) while the better weight distribution from the smaller and lighter engine allows the car to be more agile. We benefit from this element especially in the Esses section (Turns 15 & 16) but we can also throw the car around in the higher speed corners. We can place the car a little better too. For the 12 hour race, we've a comfortable car to drive over the bumps and through the high-speed corners. It's going to be a tough race with the first five cars covered by less than three-tenths of a second."

Lucas Luhr (Audi R15 TDI #1): "The R15 TDI is a brand new car, our baby. We are all very pleased and happy with the car. It reacts to changes, which is very positive. We are of course still in its infancy. The R10 TDI was developed over three years and fully exploited. The R15 TDI is still, let's say, like a new-born child. We will for sure face minor problems. But our aim is Le Mans, and we've still got some time until then. Sebring is the perfect platform to test the car for Le Mans. And so far it looks very good."

Mike Rockenfeller (Audi R15 TDI #1): "Our starting position does not satisfy me even if it is not so important from where you start in a 12-hour race. Unfortunately we've narrowly missed the pole with both our cars. Tom (Kristensen) was two tenths faster than me, but he did significantly more laps. It was a shame to sit in the pits and watch losing the first position. But on the other hand I now have the fresher tires for the race."

Marco Werner (Audi R15 TDI #1): "Basically the work with our R15 TDI just starts here. The tests in Europe were completed mostly in the rain and in cold temperatures. This here is the real world, and actually it looks very good so far. We know that we have a fast car. There was certainly a little bit more possible in qualifying. But the pole is not so important during a long race. Our car is fast, the rest we'll see in the race."



The starting grid at Sebring

- 1 de Ferran/Pagenaud/Dixon (Acura/Honda) 1m 45.278s
- 2 Capello/Kristensen/McNish (Audi R15 TDI) 1m 45.360s
- 3 Minassian/Lamy/Klien (Peugeot) 1m 45.462s
- 4 Luhr/Rockenfeller/Werner (Audi R15 TDI) 1m 45.551s
- 5 Sarrazin/Montagny/Bourdais (Peugeot) 1m 45.559s
- 6 Brabham/Sharp/Franchitti (Acura/Honda) 1m 46.504s
- 7 Fernandez/Diaz (Acura/Honda) 1m 49.686s
- 8 Dyson/Smith/Lally (Lola-Mazda) 1m 51.534s
- 9 Willman/McMurry/Burgess (Lola-AER) 1m 51.598s
- 10 Leitzinger/Franchitti/Devlin (Lola-Mazda) 1m 51.840s

- Ends -

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

AUDI AG sold around 1,003,400 cars in 2008 and thus achieved its thirteenth consecutive record year. Audi produces vehicles in Ingolstadt and Neckarsulm (Germany), Győr (Hungary), Changchun (China) and Brussels (Belgium). Aurangabad in India saw the start of local 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 57,000 people worldwide, including 45,000 in Germany. The brand with the four rings invests more than € 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!").