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Audi R8 LMS aims for another endurance race victory

- **Two Audi R8 LMS cars at the 12-hour race at Sepang (Malaysia)**
- **First racing commitment for Team WRT outside of Europe**
- **Two high-caliber driver line-ups**

Ingolstadt, September 12, 2011 – Two Audi R8 LMS cars will contest the Malaysia Merdeka Endurance Race (MMER) at Sepang on September 17. In its so far most successful endurance race season the customer sport race car from Audi is to fight for another victory there.

Overall victory at the Bathurst 12 Hours in Australia in February, at the 24-hour race at Spa in Belgium in July and at the Zolder 24 Hours in September plus class victory at the Nürburgring 24 Hours in June – this almost automatically sets the goal for the last major endurance race of the Audi R8 LMS this season: In Malaysia the customer sport race car of which more than 40 units have been sold worldwide to date is to prove its qualities in front of Asian prospects by clinching another victory.

Last year Frank Biela/Darryl O'Young/Marco Werner celebrated second place at the first run of the Audi R8 LMS in this race. All three drivers are part of the grid again this year, albeit in a different formation. The two former Audi factory drivers Biela and Werner will be supported by the Swiss Marcel Fässler who has won the Le Mans 24 Hours for Audi this year. The trio's combined track record totals nine Le Mans successes. The second Audi R8 LMS will be driven by another former Le Mans winner, Seiji Ara. The Japanese will share the car with Darryl O'Young from HongKong and Alex Yoong. The Malaysian enjoys a particular bonus at his home round on account of his huge popularity as he is the only former Grand Prix racer in his country.

The two Audi R8 LMS cars are fielded by WRT. They are competing under the entry submitted by the Belgian Audi Club as part of a factory-supported Audi customer sport program. The Belgian team headed by the former racer Vincent Vosse clinched the first two 24-hour overall victories of the R8 LMS at Spa and at Zolder.



The car that won at Spa, the R8 LMS with chassis number 218, will run at Sepang with three European drivers at the wheel. The Asian drivers are sharing the second WRT race car from Spa with chassis number 319. In Malaysia both race cars are fielded with the same endurance specification as at the 24-hour races in Europe. To make conditions in the cockpit more bearable in view of track temperatures above 30 degrees centigrade both cars have been slightly modified. An electrically operated, air conditioning system with a weight of merely three kilograms conducts cooled air into the driver's helmet and via a tube in the cockpit also toward the driver's body. Marcel Fässler already tried out the system on the last weekend in August at the fourth round of the Blancpain series at Magny-Cours and was convinced of its effectiveness.

Big race with a brief tradition

The 12-hour race at Sepang is considered the major endurance race in Asia. The original name "Merdeka Millennium Endurance" refers to the inaugural year and the occasion: For the new millennium the Sepang International Circuit organized this race for the first time in 2000 in order to be able to offer Malaysian drivers a new, attractive competition. The name "Merdeka" stands for a square in Kuala Lumpur on which the independence of the country was celebrated in 1957. The upcoming twelfth running of the race has been scheduled to coincide with the beginning of the Malaysia Day and the country-wide festivities on September 16.

Strong regional partner on board

The two Audi R8 LMS race cars feature different liveries. Seiji Ara, Darryl O'Young and Alex Yoong compete in the blue-white colors of MediaCorp, the leading media company in Singapore that offers a comprehensive portfolio ranging from TV, radio, newspapers, magazines and films through to digital media. More than 50 products are offered in four languages, English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil.

The second Audi R8 LMS for the European driver line-up sports the colors of Audi Sport performance cars, the sportiest vehicles of AUDI AG. In addition, the windshield and rear wings feature the inscriptions "Audi ultra lightweight technology." The road-going sports cars made of aluminum with the Audi Space Frame (ASF) provide the direct basis for the GT3 model: 54 per cent of the parts with which the Audi R8 LMS goes on the chase for times in racing stem from production cars.

Strong rivals and special rules

The WRT team will be meeting with high-caliber opponents in the field of the 32 cars that have been provisionally entered. In the GT class, which is open to GT3 vehicles like the R8 LMS as well as to GT2 cars and ST-X/ST-1 models from Japan, the sports cars of no less than seven brands are competing. Since no final rating of the vehicles is available yet it is difficult to judge the relative balance of power. Furthermore, the field is enhanced by many top-class international racers.

In addition to the two Audi cars of the WRT team, another race car bearing the four rings will be on the grid. The HongKong based Absolute Racing team of the German Team Director Ingo Matter has submitted an entry for an R8 LMS to be driven by the Taiwanese Jeffrey Lee, Alexandre Imperatori from Switzerland and Aaron Lim from Malaysia.

The special characteristics of the Sepang event not only include the fact that the race starts at twelve on Saturday and lasts until 24:00 hrs whereas the starting flag was lowered at midnight last year. The qualifying format is unusual too. Every driver has to contest a qualifying session. The aggregate of the respective fastest times of all three drivers determines the grid position of the car. Furthermore, the rules prescribe that the fastest driver per team also has to drive the starting stint. In addition, the tire specifications of three nominated manufacturers are prescribed for all entrants. Audi is working together with its reliable and highly capable partner Michelin that was previously on board at endurance race victories at Bathurst, Spa and Zolder as well as at the Nürburgring.

Topics of the weekend

- Will the Audi R8 LMS be able to clinch its fourth major endurance race victory in the 2011 season?
- Will the Sepang-experienced racers Alex Yoong, Seiji Ara and Darryl O'Young be able to bring their long-standing track knowledge to bear?
- What type of weather conditions in the sub-tropical region will influence the race near the equator?

Quotes by the officials

Vincent Vosse (Teamchef WRT): “Our young team has contested many international races before but never outside of Europe. We’re very pleased to be able to represent the colors of the brand in this factory-supported customer sport commitment at Sepang. At the 24-hour races at Spa and Zolder we celebrated two victories with the Audi R8 LMS in the past six weeks. The entire squad learned a lot again in the process. The challenge at Sepang though will be a completely new one. One of the biggest tasks before the race is logistics. The competition itself is half as long as our two most recent races in Belgium. But we’re running on a track that is new to us, the weather conditions are completely different, there are new competitors on the grid and the rules are different. The power ratios are not predictable. We’re also working with a few drivers who have never competed for our team. But all of them have proven their qualities in endurance racing at many events.”

Facts and quotes by the Audi drivers

Frank Biela (47/D), Audi Sport performance cars R8 LMS #1 (Belgian Audi Club)

- The five-time Le Mans winner was the runner-up at Sepang last year
- He most recently celebrated overall victory in the Audi TT RS at the Nürburgring 6 Hours

“When I competed for the first time at Sepang last year I was surprised to see how big the event is. It enjoys high prestige in Asia and was organized very professionally. In 2010 we were lucky not to have had to race on an extremely hot day. Still, the permissible stint length of 75 minutes is pretty strenuous at track temperatures of 30 degrees centigrade and the high humidity. It’s difficult to judge our competitors in advance. I don’t know yet what cars will be competing in what class and how the various models will be rated. That’s why I won’t make any predictions. But after finishing as the runner-up last year I don’t have too many goals left ...”

Marcel Fässler (35/CH), Audi Sport performance cars R8 LMS #1 (Belgian Audi Club)

- Won the Le Mans 24 Hours in the Audi R18 TDI this year
- Celebrated the GT3 victory at the Nürburgring 24 Hours in the Audi R8 LMS

“Sepang is one of the tracks on which I’ve never been in a race car. But I did get a first impression some years ago when I was driving a production-vehicle race taxi. I really like this track. Naturally I’m intimately familiar with the Audi R8 LMS and the WRT team for which I’m competing in the Blancpain Series. The Audi is a top-class endurance race car, a quality it has proved by clinching major victories this year.

Personally, I particularly appreciate the fact that it is very easy to control in difficult mixed weather conditions which makes it suitable for any type of weather. If we should have Monsoon rain the R8 LMS will no doubt be the best car. In that case important tactical decisions will have to be made as well: How long can we run on slicks, when do we have to change to wets? Besides that, all endurance races, so that goes for this one as well, have long become sprinting competitions in which every second counts.”

Marco Werner (45/D), Audi Sport performance cars R8 LMS #1 (Belgian Audi Club)

- Has won the Le Mans 24 Hours three times
- Was the runner-up in the Audi R8 LMS at Sepang last year

“The circuit at Sepang is a typical modern Grand Prix track with large run-off areas and special cornering characteristics. The radii do differ very much but since most of the turns are drawn inwardly you tend to enter them a bit too fast. Naturally there are no ‘courage corners’ at such a facility of the type you can find on many traditional tracks. Instead there are many other challenges: the humidity and the blazing heat which is extreme for ‘man and material.’ Fortunately, the R8 LMS is an extremely reliable car and has an engine that has been designed for high mileage of 20,000 kilometers. Team WRT that has just won two 24-hour races in Belgium in a row is another known entity. I’m very much looking forward to this squad and to my team-mates. They are experienced and successful endurance racers. The qualifying format of adding up the best times of all three drivers is special. This ensures good balance. I like this idea.”

Seiji Ara (37/J), MediaCorp Audi R8 LMS #2 (Belgian Audi Club)

- Won the Le Mans 24 Hours in the Audi R8 Le Mans sports car in 2004
- Is celebrating his debut in the Audi R8 LMS at Sepang

“I’m very much looking forward to this race because endurance racing is my passion. The team spirit there is very special, not just among us drivers but among all team members. Plus driving an Audi again that is called R8 is very special. After all, in 2004 we won the Le Mans 24 Hours in an LM-P car with the same name. Of course the current R8 LMS is a completely different, production-derived race car. Driving an Audi again is a dream. Hopefully we’ll have very good chances of battling for victory with this car. By the way I learned how to win endurance races at Audi from Tom Kristensen. We need to drive consistently, fast and without making mistakes. Even though I don’t know this event yet I’m very familiar with the track. Every year we’re competing in the Japanese GT Championship at Sepang and twice I’ve won there.”



Darryl O'Young (31/CN), MediaCorp Audi R8 LMS #2 (Belgian Audi Club)

- Won the 12-hour race in Malaysia in 2008
- Was on the podium there three times in a row
- Won the Bathurst 12 Hours in the Audi R8 LMS in February

"The race at Sepang is becoming increasingly professional and prestigious every year. That's why I'm happy to be on the grid for the fourth consecutive time. Twelve months ago I took part in this race when the Audi R8 LMS contested it for the first time and we finished in second place. Now we aim to move up by one more position. At Bathurst we won the 12-hour race with the Audi R8 LMS this year whereas Team WRT decided the Spa 24 Hours in its favor. I'd like to help Audi achieve a positive conclusion of this endurance racing season that has been positive so far. That won't be easy. Malaysia is known for its extreme heat which I've never experienced in this form in any other country. Like the cars, the drivers have to be able to cope with the temperatures in the race. The Grand Prix circuit has all types of corners and some very extreme braking areas. The Audi R8 LMS is particularly good in this discipline. I think we'll be in for a nice battle this year."

Alex Yoong (35/MAL), MediaCorp Audi R8 LMS #2 (Belgian Audi Club)

- With four runs under his belt is the most experienced Audi racer at the 12-hour race in Malaysia
- Is contesting his home round at the Grand Prix circuit
- Celebrated GT3 victory at the ILMC race at Zhuhai in the R8 LMS last year

"I love the Merdeka endurance race. It's not only the major race in Malaysia but also the perfect contest in which local and international teams can compete with each other. Last year I also got to know the Audi R8 LMS in which we achieved class victory at the ILMC race at Zhuhai. And just in August I contested the 6-hour race at the Nürburgring in it. I also did some demo drives at Kuala Lumpur and in Singapore. The R8 LMS is by far the easiest to drive GT3 model. Traction and the brakes are excellent and the car is gentle on the tires. These are very important qualities for being in contention for victory at the MMER. And belonging to a team there that has won the Spa 24 Hours raises my confidence level even further. If we're able to stay clear of all trouble we should be able to battle for victory."

The Audi drivers at Sepang

Seiji Ara (J): * May 05, 1974 in Chiba (J); residence: Kobe (J); married to Misato; height: 1.68 m; weight: 63 kg; Audi driver 2002-2004, 2011; Sepang 12 Hours: race: 0; victories: 0; pole positions: 0; fastest laps: 0.

Frank Biela (D): * August 02, 1964 in Neuss (D); residence: Monte Carlo (MC); married to Patricia, one daughter (Isabelle), one son (Patrick); height: 1.83 m; weight: 80 kg; Audi driver since 1991; Sepang 12 Hours: race: 1; victories: 0; pole positions: 0; fastest laps: 0.

Marcel Fässler (CH): * May 27, 1976 in Einsiedeln (CH); residence: Gross (CH); married to Isabel, four daughters (Shana, Elin, Yael, Delia); height 1.78 m; weight 78 kg; Audi driver since 2008; Sepang 12 Hours: race: 0; victories: 0; pole positions: 0; fastest laps: 0.

Darryl O'Young (CN): * March 26, 1980 in Vancouver (CDN); residence: Hong Kong (CN); single; height: 1.73 m; weight: 75 kg; Audi driver since 2010; Sepang 12 Hours: race: 3; victories: 1; pole positions: 2; fastest laps: 0.

Marco Werner (D): * April 27, 1966 in Dortmund (D); residence: Ermatingen (CH); married to Annett, one daughter (Janina); height: 1,75 m; weight: 66 kg; Audi driver since 2002; Sepang 12 Hours: race: 1; victories: 0; pole positions: 0; fastest laps: 0.

Alex Yoong (MAL): * July 20, 1976 in Kuala Lumpur (MAL); residence: Kuala Lumpur (MAL); one son (Alister); height: 1,78 m; weight: 75 kg; Audi driver since 2010; Sepang 12 Hours: race: 4; victories: 0; pole positions: 0; fastest laps: 1.

All victories of the Sepang 12 Hours (since 2000)

2000 Low/Singh/Lee (Proton)
2001 Wong/Sharhal/Lee (TVR)
2002 Albon/Lee/Hamman (Porsche)
2003 Yeo/Tzer-Jinn/Mohkzani (Porsche)
2004 Lew/Katoh/Fauzy (Honda)
2005 Djan Ley/Hashimoto/Ricciardello (Lotus)
2006 Djan Ley/French/Alang (Lotus)
2007 Mahathir/Herberger/Nielsen (Porsche)
2008 Nicholas/O'Young/Mok (Porsche)
2009 Kataoka/Orido/Adzmi (BMW)

2010 Hammam/Kox/Haase (Lamborghini)

Track info

Track length: 5.543 km

Race distance: 12 hours

Pole position 2010: Weng Sun Mok / Craig Baird / Richard Lietz (Porsche 911 GT3 RSR), 6m 17.346s (cumulative) = 158.646 km/h (August 06, 2010)

Fastest lap 2010: Tunku Hammam/Peter Kox/Christopher Haase (Lamborghini Gallardo), 2m 07.061s = 157.049 km/h (August 07, 2010)

Alex Yoong about Sepang: "Sepang is a real driver's track. It offers a great mix of long, fast turns and long straights. And there are also some very tight corners. This makes for nice overtaking opportunities on a length of 5.5 kilometers. As you'd expect of a modern facility the tarmac is very even and not aggressive. However, due to the heat it's important to prudently use the tires and the brakes across the whole distance."

Schedule (local times; CEST +6 hours)

Thursday, September 15

17:50–18:20 Free practice 1

21:30–22:00 Free practice 2

Friday, September 16

11:50–12:20 Qualifying 1

14:40–15:10 Qualifying 2

16:40–17:10 Qualifying 3

Saturday, September 17

12:00–24:00 Race (12 hours)

– End –



The Audi Group delivered around 1,092,400 cars of the Audi brand to customers in 2010. The Company posted revenue of €35.4 billion and an operating profit of €3.3 billion in 2010. In the first half of 2011, the Audi Group sold 652,970 vehicles bearing the four rings worldwide and achieved record figures in terms of revenue (€21.5 billion) and operating profit (€2.5 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, of the Audi A4 in early October 2008 and of the Audi Q5 in July 2010. Production of the new Audi A1 has been running at the Brussels plant since May 2010. The Audi Q3 has been built in Martorell (Spain) since June 2011. The Company is active in more than 100 markets worldwide. AUDI AG's wholly owned subsidiaries include AUDI HUNGARIA MOTOR Kft., Automobili Lamborghini Holding S.p.A. in Sant'Agata Bolognese (Italy) and quattro GmbH in Neckarsulm. Audi currently employs around 60,000 people worldwide, including around 46,600 in Germany. Between 2011 and 2015 the brand with the four rings is planning to invest more than €11 billion, mainly in new products, in order to sustain the Company's technological lead embodied in its "Vorsprung durch Technik" slogan. By 2015, Audi plans to increase the number of models in its portfolio to 42.

Audi has long been fulfilling its social responsibility on many levels – with the aim of making the future worth living for generations to come. The basis for Audi's lasting success is therefore formed by environmental protection, the conservation of resources, international competitiveness and a forward-looking human resources policy. One example of AUDI AG's commitment to environmental issues is the newly established Audi Environmental Foundation. Under the heading of "Audi balanced mobility," the Company is directing its activities toward a major goal – comprehensive CO₂-neutral mobility.