

Communications Motorsport

Jürgen Pippig

Telephone: +49 (0)841 89 34200

E-mail: motorsport-media@audi.de

www.audi-motorsport.info

Eva-Maria Veith

Telephone: +49 (0)841 89 33922

E-mail: eva-maria.veith@audi.de

Audi R8 LMS wins the most important endurance race for GT cars

- **Audi Sport Team WRT triumphant at the 24 Hours Spa**
- **Victorious against GT cars from twelve other manufacturers**
- **DTM stars Ekström and Scheider in winning car**

Ingolstadt/Spa, July 31, 2011 – The Audi R8 LMS won the most important endurance race for GT cars ahead of BMW and Mercedes-Benz. Audi Sport Team WRT overcame the strongest competition during the 63rd running of the 24 hours of Spa (Belgium). The two DTM stars Mattias Ekström (Sweden) and Timo Scheider (Germany) and the Belgian endurance specialist Greg Franchi shared driving duties in the victorious mid-engine sports car.

Experts agreed before the race started that the endurance classic, held since 1924, had never fielded so many potential winners as this year. A total of 62 cars representing 13 different manufacturers joined the grid, including no less than 57 cars of the worldwide booming GT3 category.

The opening stages of the endurance classic in particular fulfilled expectations. Spectators lining the 7.004 kilometer track and in front of television screens enjoyed tough battles for position, countless overtaking maneuvers, retirements and small and big dramas which are typical for a 24-hour race. The Audi R8 LMS was the fastest car in the field from the very beginning. After just a few hours it was clear that the V10 powered R8 sports cars were the favorites for the victory.

The race of the victorious #33 R8 LMS fielded by Audi Sport Team WRT was particularly impressive. The car driven by Mattias Ekström, Greg Franchi and Timo Scheider ran like clockwork for 24 hours, while many other GT3 cars were no match for the stresses and strains of the hard fought endurance race. The brake discs and pads were changed twice as scheduled. Apart from this, the R8 LMS only entered pit lane to refuel, change tires and to swap drivers. At the start of the tenth hour Ekström/Franchi/Scheider took the lead which they duly held all the way to the checkered flag. At the finish the trio had a two-lap lead over the closest rival.

Audi led 22 of the 24 hours. Just after midnight three R8 LMS actually occupied the first three positions. However, while Audi Sport Team WRT also celebrated fourth overall for the #32 car, Audi Sport Team Phoenix was struck by bad luck.

Marc Basseng, Christopher Haase and Frank Stippler led convincingly for many hours in the #99 R8 LMS and had eked out an advantage of almost an entire lap. Just after 1 a.m. Haase lost first place due to a faulty air jack system. Only an hour later the youngster slid off the track on a damp patch at Turn 9 and had to retire the car.

The #98 sister car was hit by a slower car on the left rear wheel while fighting for the lead towards the end of the third hour. Shortly afterwards second gear was lost. Although they had to continue without second gear as a result and lost additional time due to a puncture, Marcel Fässler, Andrea Piccini and Mike Rockenfeller worked their way back up to third from 13th before a gearbox change was required just after midnight. The change cost 1 hour 36 minutes. The trio still managed to battle their way through the field from 36th to 14th thanks to consistently quick laps and in the process recorded the absolute fastest race lap (Mike Rockenfeller / 2m 20.286s).

The second Audi R8 LMS entered by Audi Sport Team WRT put in two exciting comeback drives. After an accident in qualifying, Stéphane Ortelli scythed spectacularly through the field from 41st to second in the opening 90 minutes, before a drive-through-penalty for contact cost almost a lap. Changing the front left suspension components took 24 minutes and threw the #32 car back to a seemingly hopeless 42nd position. However, Filipe Albuquerque, Bert Longin and Stéphane Ortelli had other ideas, overtook car after car and finished the race in an almost sensational fourth overall. This was the icing on the cake for Audi Sport Team WRT which celebrated an important victory in its first outing as “factory” team for Audi.

“Vincent Vosse’s team really did a fantastic job during its home race,” explained Head of Audi Motorsport Dr. Wolfgang Ullrich. “Mattias (Ekström), Greg (Franchi) and Timo (Scheider) drove fast and without mistakes – and it was exactly this that was the key to victory this weekend alongside the reliability and speed of the R8 LMS. Unfortunately out other three cars were rather unlucky and especially Ernst Moser’s squad. That’s why it was almost like Le Mans at the end: After just a few hours we only had one iron still in the fire – but we won with this car. This shows our strong nerves and team spirit because everybody helped to take the win with the only remaining car.”



The Audi R8 LMS, which is supplied to customers by Audi Sport customer racing since last year, notched up win number 96 this weekend. "After three class victories in the 24-hour race at the Nürburgring and the one-two in the 12-hour race at Bathurst at the start of the year, this is without doubt the most important victory for the Audi R8 LMS and our still relatively young customer racing program," said Werner Frowein who is responsible for the company's customer racing program as Managing Director of quattro GmbH. "I'd like to thank everybody who worked so hard and with so much commitment to make this victory possible. After Le Mans, Audi now stands in the winners list of another great 24-hour race. We were able to show that the R8 is a fantastic sportscar. Our increasing number of customer teams also confirms this."

One of these customer teams, United Autosports, contested the 24 hours Spa with three R8 LMS. Following an eventful race with drivers Richard Dean, Zak Brown, Stefan Johansson and Johnny Herbert can be delighted with 13th overall and sixth place in the Pro-Am category.

The Audi Group sold around 1,092,400 cars of the Audi brand in 2010. The Company posted revenue of €35.4 billion and an operating profit of €3.3 billion in 2010. 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 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 around €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.