



Press Information

10 June 1999

Audi R8R drivers optimistic

Ex-Formula One driver Michele Alboreto was the quickest Audi driver in the opening qualifying session staged last night in readiness for the 67th Le Mans 24 Hour race this weekend (12-13 June).

The Italian set a time of 3min 37.140secs – almost half a second faster than the quickest time Audi achieved in pre-qualifying for the annual sportscar race last month.

„It would have been possible to go quicker but the traffic was really bad,“ remarked Alboreto. The open Audi R8Rs were 10th and 11th in the 48-car field.

„We worked for the race,“ confirmed Audi’s Head of Sport Dr Wolfgang Ullrich. „For a 24 hour race, start positions are not so important. Our qualifying tyres did not work on the R8R but all drivers are very optimistic for the race.“

„The car feels extremely good in race conditions and our new gearchange which is activated on the steering wheel has been fantastic,“ added Alboreto.

While the two Audi Sport Team Joest cars ran faultlessly during the four hour session, the Audi Sport UK team were kept busy when both enclosed Audi R8Cs encountered problems early in the session.

„On one car the clutch was malfunctioning and on the other R8C they lost sixth gear,“ said Dr Ullrich. „We’ve never experienced this problem before after so few laps.“

Due to gearbox changes to both cars, the R8C drivers were forced to set their fastest times in full darkness causing their lowly grid places of 22nd and 23rd positions.

Final qualifying for this year’s race which begins at 16.00 on Saturday is staged on Thursday (19.00-24.00).

