

Le Mans, 17 June 2001, 18:00 hours

Audi repeats its Le Mans triumph

For the second consecutive year, Audi has won the toughest motor race in the world: the Le Mans 24 Hours. After last year's searing heat, the Audi sports racing car now had to prove its qualities in torrential rain. "This success is even more valuable than last year's," declared Dr. Franz-Josef Paefgen, the Chairman of the Board, AUDI AG. "To get both cars home in the top-two places in these extremely difficult conditions is anything but normal."

The 69th running of the French endurance classic was at times similar to a speedboat race and will be remembered as a big rain battle. "During the entire race, the drivers had to be absolutely concentrated," said Audi Head of Sport Dr Wolfgang Ullrich. Audi works driver Tom Kristensen echoed the sentiments of all his team-mates by stating that it was "the toughest race I ever drove".

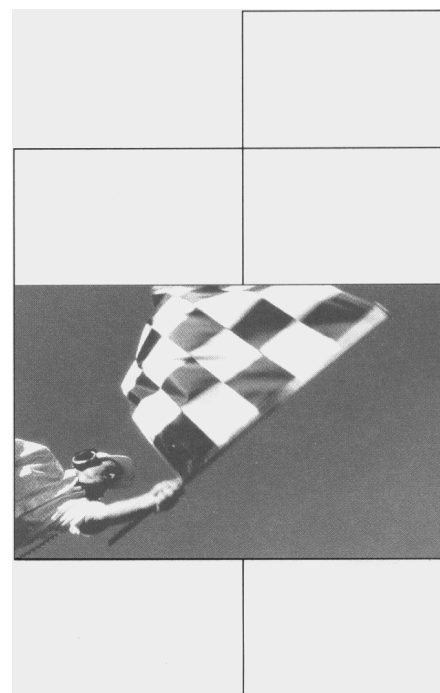
For hours, rain was so relentless that drivers could only use half throttle on the long straights of the Le Mans circuit. It was also a particularly tough test for the cars' technology. Both Infineon Audi R8 cars, however, turned out to be "water-proof" and managed the 321 laps without major problems.

Both Infineon Audi R8 cars battled hard from start to finish for victory. In the course of the race, new Audi technology proved its worth: a V8 twin turbo engine with petrol direct injection (FSI) powered both works cars. This is a new invention in the Le Mans prototypes class (LMP).

In a repeat of last year's victory, Frank Biela, Tom Kristensen and Emanuele Pirro crossed the finishing line as winners. The sister car of Laurent Aiello, Rinaldo Capello and Christian Pescatori completed an Audi 1-2.

The two Audi customer teams Champion and Johansson were quick but had little luck: The two R8 cars in 2000-specification retired in the first part of the race.

With its second triumph at Le Mans, Audi continued its stunning series of victories in endurance racing: at Le Mans, the R8 celebrated its 13th consecutive victory in sports car racing. For almost a year, the successful sports racing car remains unbeaten.



Quotes after the race

Frank Biela (#1): "To win Le Mans is difficult. To achieve it a second time is even more difficult. When we came here we knew we had a very competitive car but you have to make sure that everything is reliable and lasts for 24 hours. We made it. Very often we had to take decisions at the right moment. We were very good at this. The team did a great strategical job."

Tom Kristensen (#1): "This was the most difficult race of my career. It was mentally very hard for everybody out there. Jacky Ickx told Frank Biela and myself before we went on to the podium that he had never experienced such a hard race at Le Mans himself. When that comes from him, it really means something."

Emanuele Pirro (#1): "This is fantastic. It was a very difficult race for everybody because of the weather conditions. To bring two cars to the finish in 1st and 2nd positions is an incredible achievement for us all. Of course I am happy that the one in front was ours. We had a lot of luck, especially during the night. Last but not least, my thoughts are with Michele. I wish he could have been here with us."

Laurent Aiello (#2): "It was the first time I experienced conditions like this at Le Mans. This is a new experience for me and will help me next year. Our team-mates won the race because they did not make any mistakes and they had the same great car as ourselves. The R8 was such a good car in all conditions."

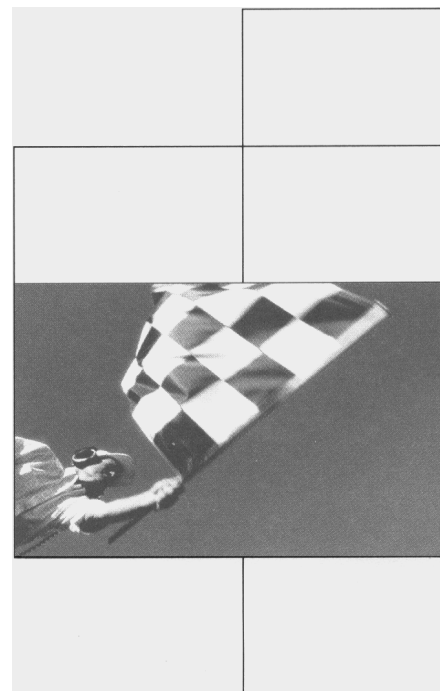
Rinaldo Capello (#2): "This was the toughest race of my life. Running with such low downforce was impossible to go flat out on the straight. The corners were okay but you could not do anything against the aquaplaning. I saw a lot of cars spin and crash on the straight. I have to congratulate Emanuele, Frank and Tom. To avoid mistakes in those conditions was a good achievement."

Christian Pescatori (#2): "I was looking for a good result and concentrated not to do any mistakes. I achieved this and hope that the team is happy with me. The conditions were really difficult with all this water during the night."

Johnny Herbert (#3): "When I stopped for Didier to take over the car was fine. I think we could have caught the #2 Audi and made it a good battle. The Champion team did an excellent job - this was just bad luck."

Ralf Kelleners (#3): "It is never nice to retire from Le Mans. But it is even worse when you are making a serious charge at the front as we did. Despite of this the car was good."

Didier Theys (#3): "The clutch pedal had a harder feel to it when I left the pit lane to start my stint. The car began to hesitate and I coasted to a standstill. I tried to fix it but it was something internal."



Tom Coronel (#4): "I have never witnessed weather conditions like what we had in that first hour. Stefan drove superbly and we were just unlucky. He had been incredibly fast."

Stefan Johansson (#4): "I immediately backed off when the huge downpour began and felt a tap from behind. Great pitwork got me out again and the Audi was incredibly good before the engine cut out. I spent over an hour working on the car but it just wouldn't fire up due to an electrical problem."

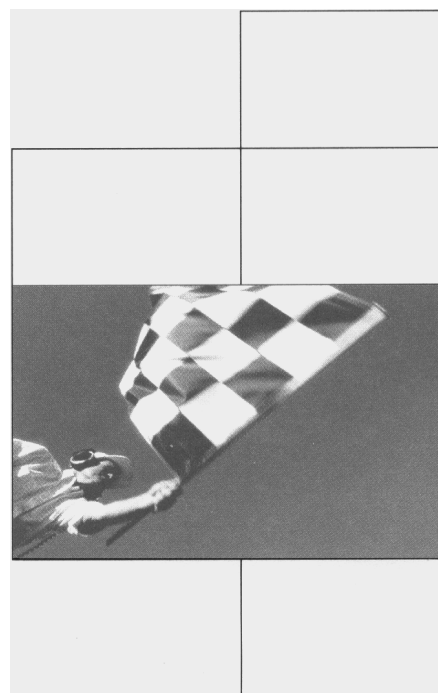
Patrick Lemarie (#4): "After the crash Stefan was very quick and we were all prepared for a big fight throughout the night to get inside the top-three. You could not prepare for weather like that."

Reinhold Joest (Team Director Audi Sport Team Joest): "The first hour didn't go quite as we planned but the pace soon settled as we continued to work our strategy. We fought through the night which wasn't easy at all. In the morning, however, we were more calm. The pit stops were superb, the team was better than ever. Fortunately, there has been no serious accident either – but maybe there was a lord who was looking after all of us."

Thierry Boutsen (Project Manager Champion Racing): "Ralf spun early on and left the pits in 27th but handed the car over to Johnny in third. At one point we were the fastest car on the track. It is very disappointing for me and especially the Champion Team who prepared so well for their first Le Mans."

Mike Earle (Team Director Johansson Motorsports): "Stefan believes he was bumped from behind which caused the crash. We managed to repair the car within 13 minutes. Stefan was setting very competitive times which moved him from 40th to 16th but then the ECU cut out."

Dr. Wolfgang Ullrich (Head of Audi Sport): "Due to the ever changing weather it was really a difficult and a very extreme race which put us under much more stress than last year. It was extremely important to react quickly and correctly in every situation and to avoid any risk in tyre choice. We were always on the safe side and we've never been using slicks at any cost even if it might have been possible at times. This was correct because in doing so, we simply avoided any errors."



Race Results

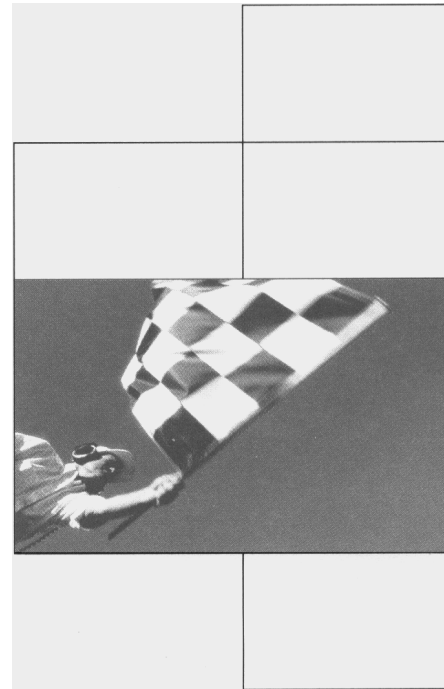
- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Biela/Kristensen/Pirro (Infineon Audi R8) | 321 laps |
| 2. Aiello/Capello/Pescatori (Infineon Audi R8) | - 1 laps |
| 3. Wallace/Leitzinger/van de Poele (Bentley) | - 15 laps |
| 4. Beretta/Wendlinger/Lamy (Chrysler) | - 23 laps |
| 5. Deletraz/Fabre/Gene (Reynard-VW) | - 37 laps |
| 6. Rosa/Babini/Drudi (Porsche) | - 38 laps |
| 7. Jeannette/Dumas/Haezebrouck (Porsche) | - 39 laps |
| 8. Fellows/O'Connell/Pruett (Chevrolet) | - 43 laps |
| 9. Perrier/Neugarten/Smith (Porsche) | - 46 laps |

Press Information



10. Chereau/Dumez/Goueslard (Porsche) - 47 laps

Find updated photos and information on the internet:
www.audi-sportpress.com (password required)



AUDI AG
Sport Press
D-85045 Ingolstadt
Phone + 49 841 89-34200
Fax + 49 841 89-38617
sportpresse@audi.de