

Mugello, 13 July 2007

Motorsport

Audi sets the standards at Mugello

- **DTM's Italian round starts with best times by Audi**
- **Youngster Mike Rockenfeller quickest on Friday**
- **Heat battle in Tuscanny**

An impressive performance by the Audi A4 DTM cars kicked off the Italian round of the DTM at Mugello on Friday. In the first of the two 90-minute test sessions five and in the second four Audi drivers were leading the field. The day's best time was set by Mike Rockenfeller, who, at age 23, is Audi's youngest factory driver.

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In the first test in the morning Martin Tomczyk in the Red Bull Audi A4 DTM of Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline was the quickest contender. His best time was topped by Mike Rockenfeller in the S line Audi A4 DTM fielded by Audi Sport Team Rosberg by 99 thousandths of a second in the afternoon. The fastest Mercedes was lacking 0.8 seconds to the front runners.

Numerous incidents on Friday showed that the longest and quickest circuit on the DTM calendar is one of the most difficult tracks as well, and one that does not forgive any mistakes. What is more, blazing heat with temperatures far above 30 degrees in the shade is turning the Italian round into a heat battle that puts a particular strain on the tyres.

On account of a puncture Tom Kristensen spun off the track towards the end of a long run. Martin Tomczyk, as well, spent some time in the gravel trap following an excursion. As early as at the beginning of the first test Alexandre Prémat damaged the right-hand front suspension of his A4 and was only able to return to the track in the afternoon. On the first lap of the second test Lucas Luhr touched a capstan and was forced into the role of a spectator for the remainder of the session.

Vanina Ickx, too, damaged the suspension of her A4 during an excursion. At Mugello the Belgian received a new team-mate: Formula 1 test driver Markus Winkelhock, who deputized for Tom Kristensen at the EuroSpeedway and at Brands Hatch, took over Adam Carroll's cockpit in the Audi customer team Futurecom TME.

Following the tests, things will get really serious for the first time on Saturday: In the qualifying session starting at 1:28 p.m. (local time) the field will be fighting for the grid positions in the race, which – due to TV coverage of the Tour de France – will only start in the late afternoon on Sunday. ARD will broadcast the qualifying practice and the race live on "Das Erste".

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Quotes after Friday's tests

Dr Wolfgang Ullrich (Head of Audi Motorsport): "We tested here before and came to Italy with a good basic set-up, which we were able to apply on Friday. Nevertheless, it was necessary to go through a programme with all of our cars. In the second session we tested long runs. Due to a few red flags we weren't able to follow through with our plans completely. Still, we managed to gather information we needed. At the moment, things are looking good for us, but only Saturday will present the true picture."

Mike Rockenfeller (S line Audi A4 DTM #11)

5th place / 1st place, 1m 45.099s

"Even though it was only a test it's good to have started to the weekend this way. My last three DTM race weekends were off to a bad start, and we weren't able to improve. Here, we've got a good base. In the race, things won't be easy over the distance. But we'll be giving everything to be fighting for points."

Martin Tomczyk (Red Bull Audi A4 DTM #4)

1st place / 2nd place, 1m 45.198s

"The circuit is huge fun. Mugello is my new favourite track because driving these fast turns here is simply cool. No matter whether it's on used or new tyres – my Audi A4 is always holding to the track nicely. It's fun to work

with the car. Now I'm looking forward to the qualifying tomorrow when I can go on the chase for times on new tyres."

Tom Kristensen (Siemens Audi A4 DTM #7)

2nd place / 4th place, 1m 45.549s

"Mugello is a beautiful circuit. I'm delighted about the fact that we're racing here with the DTM. This weekend, we're going to experience the first genuine heat race this year, because today's track temperatures were already above 50 degrees Celsius. The major task will be to find the optimum combination of tyre pressure, temperature and camber for these conditions. Because that is the key to consistent and fast laps."

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Mattias Ekström (Red Bull Audi A4 DTM #3)

3rd place / 7th place, 1m 45.563s

"The weather here is really beautiful. After all the rain during the past few weeks, that – in itself – is a great thing here in Italy. Today we gathered a lot of experience with our Audi A4 DTM in these conditions. When we tested here prior to the season, we also had a blue sky but it was pleasantly cool. Now we need to adjust to these new conditions as quickly as possible."

Timo Scheider (Gebrauchtwagen:plus/Top Service Audi A4 DTM #8)

4th place / 10th place, 1m 45.649s

"After today, we're pretty well prepared for the race. Despite the fact that I wasn't able to drive my long run continuously this afternoon due to two interruptions, it was okay. In the first session we had a few difficulties with the rear suspension, and we didn't completely manage to get a handle on this. What counts now is that we're sorted for the crucial lap in qualifying."

Alexandre Prémat (Audi Bank Audi A4 DTM #17)

20th place / 3rd place, 1m 45.776s

"Friday was marked by ups and downs for me. In the morning I hit the base of a capstan at the edge of the track. The repair of the suspension cost us a lot of time. The afternoon, though, was much better. We're in third place and can still make some more progress. The qualifying will be crucial. The car is very sensitive on this circuit. I hope that we'll be able to secure a place at the front of the field."

Christian Abt (Playboy Audi A4 DTM #16)**8th place / 16th place, 1m 46.327s**

“We were very satisfied with the first practice session, but not as much with the second one because we had a defect in the drive train. We didn’t complete our standard programme but put ourselves at the service of the marque. I did some tyre tests and even used a set that I might otherwise have used in the race.”

Lucas Luhr (Philips Audi A4 DTM #12)**9th place / 20th place, 1m 46.329s**

“The first session was pretty good because I was among the top ten. In the second session I spun while approaching a fast chicane. I hit a capstan, which caused some component in the area of the front wheel suspension to come off. The repair took a very long time. In the past, Fridays went well for us, but that wasn’t necessarily true for Saturdays – so now I’ll just turn the tables.”

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Markus Winkelhock (Audi A4 DTM #20)**14th place / 17th place, 1m 46.910s**

“I have to learn everything anew again. I don’t know the team, the car’s new for me, and I have to adjust to the circuit, which I – unlike my colleagues – did not test before. I got along well, though. On new tyres I made a mistake and, on the last turn, went through the gravel with two wheels. Although I had to lift, it was my personally best lap. So there’s still improvement potential for my time.”

Vanina Ickx (Audi A4 DTM #21)**19th place / 19th place, 1m 48.399s**

“It’s great to compete at Mugello. It’s also fantastic that the weather’s so nice. In the first session I lost a lot of time when I drove over a track barrier and a wishbone broke. On Wednesday, we significantly changed the set-up. I’m not satisfied yet.”

Hans-Jürgen Abt (Team Director Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline): “In the DTM, Fridays aren’t very conclusive. We simulated a heat battle. Our

long runs were pretty good. We tried out a lot of things. The circuit suits us well. That makes us hopeful for Saturday. We're all highly motivated."

Ernst Moser (Team Director Audi Sport Team Phoenix): "This Friday was fair to middling, because we lost our first car as early as on the first lap – that meant we couldn't collect any data or obtain any results. With the second car, we made good progress, but in the afternoon this car had a technical problem. We did not complete our programme as planned. Still, I'm not completely unhappy."

Arno Zensen (Team Director Audi Sport Team Rosberg): "Yet again I'm looking on Friday with mixed emotions. One car is running all the way at the front, and the other all the way at the back! I'm very happy for 'Rocky'. After his misfortune in the past few races this is exactly what he needed. With Lucas (Luhr), such a result should have been achieved as well but on the first timed lap he spun off the track. We need to make up for his missing laps on Saturday."

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