

02 / Le Mans, 8 June 2004

Audi teams contest two 24-hour races on only one weekend

“25-hour race” for Audi

The weekend of the 12th and 13th June ranks very highly for Audi: With a total of six cars, Audi teams simultaneously compete at Le Mans (France) and at the Nürburgring (Germany) in the two most prestigious 24-hour races. This double-header is a huge logistical challenge for the Audi Sport Customer Department. However, the two long-distance classics offer AUDI AG the chance to prove the marque's sporting organisation once more.

Four teams with six cars and 18 drivers are in action in France and in Germany. The importer teams of Team ADT Champion Racing (USA), Audi Sport Japan Team Goh and Audi Sport UK Team Veloqx start in Le Mans with a total of four Audi R8 prototypes – the most successful sports car of the modern era, which has already won three times at Le Mans. Infineon Team Abt Sportsline competes at the Nürburgring with two Abt-Audi TT-R coupés, which are based on last years DTM cars. The race entry is supported by quattro GmbH, the AUDI AG sporting subsidiary.

Top-flight drivers occupy all six cockpits: Eight of the twelve Le Mans drivers have won the French endurance classic at least once – Audi works driver Tom Kristensen even five times. Included in the driving squad for the legendary Nürburgring-Nordschleife, the world's longest race track, are two current Audi DTM works drivers: Mattias Ekström, who gave the Audi A4 DTM its first win in the middle of May, and Christian Abt.

Even for seasoned campaigners like Tom Kristensen and Christian Abt the two long distance races are no stroll in the park. “Le Mans is unique, every year something special and for me simply the best”, says Tom Kristensen, who could equal Jacky Ickx's record (six wins). Christian Abt's heart beats for the Nürburgring: “The Nordschleife is my absolute all-time favourite circuit and a huge challenge for every racing driver.”

Audi Motorsport Head Dr Wolfgang Ullrich will follow the “Audi 24h-weekend” from Le Mans, but does not want this to be understood as showing preference: “Both races are of equal importance for us. Le Mans is of great international importance, and the 24-hour race around the Nürburgring is very important for the German market.”

The Audi R8 and Abt-Audi TT-R will not be the only cars attracting attention at the 24-hour races. Audi supply all “Official Cars”, which have been prepared by quattro GmbH for their special on-track duties. The new A6 serves as ‘Safety Car’ in Le Mans, the Nürburgring race directors rely on the powerful 480 hp Audi RS 6 plus. Visitors to Le Mans can also admire the Audi Le Mans quattro – the sports concept car that was publicly unveiled last year at the IAA.

More than 400,000 spectators are expected to attend both endurance classics, millions of fans worldwide will follow the live transmission on television. Eurosport broadcasts from Le Mans, and DSF from the Nürburgring.

The race week in Le Mans starts on Monday with the public technical scrutineering in the town centre. Qualifying is on Wednesday and Thursday evenings. Friday is symbolised by the customary driver parade. The first high-light for fans at the Nürburgring is the "Racing Day" held in Adenau on Thursday evening. Qualifying is held on Friday. Both races start on Saturday afternoon. Start and finish at the Nürburgring is at 3 p.m., Le Mans starts and ends traditionally at 4 p.m. This means that the two "Audi 24h-weekend" races actually last 25 hours for Dr Ullrich and his team.

Editorial notes

Photographs of the Audi teams and the Official Cars, as well as original sound recordings of Audi Motorsport Head Dr Wolfgang Ullrich and the Audi drivers are available to download for your previews in the Internet at www.audi-sportpress.com/24h (no password required). From this address, you can also download a PDF version of our newspaper "Audi Express" during both 24-hour races (published on Saturday and Sunday morning).

During the two events, the database www.audi-sportpress.com (accreditation necessary) will be constantly updated with photographs and information.

We can be contacted on location at Le Mans and at the Nürburgring by E-mail at lemans@audi-motorsport.info and nuerburgring@audi-motorsport.info.

An Audi press conference with Dr Wolfgang Ullrich, all the drivers and the team principals will be held on Friday, 3 p.m., at Le Mans in the Automobile Club de l'Ouest (ACO) museum.