

02 / Portland, 21 July 2006

Audi third and fifth on the grid

- **First defeat in qualifying for the Audi R10 TDI**
- **Weight reduction for LM P1 rivals**
- **Dindo Capello fastest Audi driver at Portland**

Following another change of the regulations at short notice, the two Audi R10 TDI sports cars will start the sixth round of the American Le Mans Series at Portland (US state of Oregon) from the second and third rows of the grid. Dindo Capello and Emanuele Pirro (both Italy) had to be happy with third and fifth places respectively in Friday's qualifying session after the toughest competitors in the LM P1 class, Team Dyson Lola, had been granted a further weight-reduction of 40 kilograms (88 pounds). This means the Lola is now 65 kilograms (143 pounds) lighter than the Audi R10 TDI.

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For the first time since its début in March, Audi's revolutionary diesel sportscar will thus not start from pole-position. At Sebring, Le Mans and Salt Lake City a week ago, the 650-hp R10 TDI has always been the fastest car in qualifying. This time, Dindo Capello, as the fastest Audi driver, had to be happy with third place on the grid – 0.319 seconds from pole. Emanuele Pirro in fifth position was outpaced by the fastest and even lighter LM P2 car.

Despite the further handicap, the drivers of Team Audi Sport North America will try everything to continue the winning streak of the Audi R10 TDI in Saturday's race – the car has been undefeated in its three outings so far. The race at Portland starts Saturday evening at 6 p.m. local time (3 a.m. Sunday morning in Germany).

Quotes after qualifying in Portland

Dr Wolfgang Ullrich (Head of Audi Motorsport): "The team and the drivers did the best they could from this new situation. The decision at short notice to give our toughest competitor in the LM P1 class, Team Dyson-Lola, a further 40-kilogram weight reduction just before qualifying had an immediate influence on the starting grid. The situation is not nice for us. We had to accept a smaller diameter of the refuelling rig last week now we must also accept this measure

because we are interested in the health of the American Le Mans Series which has been created with the support of Audi to a large extent. We are sure that IMSA will correct the weights again to make sure there is a balance of performance.”

Dindo Capello (Audi R10 TDI #2): “Considering the new weight difference of the LM P1 Dyson Lola cars which qualified 1-2 and our Audi R10 TDI, I feel I did a good job to achieve P3 today. We are quite close to the front row times but importantly I was able to consistently set mid 1min 3.5secs laps which makes me hopeful for the race. I was on the limit in my first qualifying laps and decided to pit because it was a little too close at times. I think we will have a good race.”

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Allan McNish (Audi R10 TDI #2): “I haven’t been here since 2000 but the track is identical – exactly the same bumps are still here! A track temperature of over 50 degrees Celsius means we’re sliding around especially in the low-speed, infield section but that’s the same for everyone. We’ve been tuning the car to get a good balance on ‘used’ tyres which will be very important in the race. It’s difficult to assess how the latest weight adjustment in LM P1 will affect us but at this track and in these weather conditions, weight will definitely play an important factor in the race as we saw in qualifying.”

Frank Biela (Audi R10 TDI #1): “After the very good result of Salt Lake City it is a lot tougher than I expected. On the other hand Dyson was strong here last year. We must be happy with what we have. The race will be long and we have to look for a good strategy. This is definitely one of the shorter tracks, so it is difficult to overtake even the GT2 cars in the infield.”

Emanuele Pirro (Audi R10 TDI #1): “I am quite happy with my time. At this circuit, grip is very poor. The car was sliding a lot and we could not find more grip. We are very close to the Porsche, but due to the new weight rules the Dysons are unreachable. The race is long and anything can happen. The balance of the Audi R10 TDI is quite good. It is a very hard track for the car and the drivers. It is very difficult to overtake and strategy will be crucial here. Because of our good fuel consumption we can have a wider window when choosing to stop for fuel. I learned that when you keep it steady and cool, things can improve.”

Dave Maraj (Team Director Team Audi Sport North America): “We did a very good job taking everything into account. Dindo and Emanuele did fantastically well to get that close to the lighter Lola LM P1 cars. We just now have to wait and see how the race plays out. Everything is to play for and in the race and I feel we’ll have a very good car over the duration of 165-minutes. Obviously Audi Sport North America is aiming to keep our record on-going of claiming maximum LM P1 points in all of this season’s races.”

The starting grid at Portland

- 1 Weaver Leitzinger (Lola-AER) 1m 03.102s
- 2 Dyson/Smith (Lola-AER) 1m 03.233s
- 3 Capello/McNish (Audi R10 TDI) 1m 03.421s
- 4 Bernhard/Dumas (Porsche) 1m 03.702s
- 5 Biela/Pirro (Audi R10 TDI) 1m 03.814s
- 6 Maassen/Luhr (Porsche) 1m 03.870s

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