

**Communications Motorsport**

Daniel Schuster

Tel: +49 841 89-38009

E-mail: [daniel2.schuster@audi.de](mailto:daniel2.schuster@audi.de)

[www.audi-mediacycenter.com/en](http://www.audi-mediacycenter.com/en)

## **Dieter Gass: “Competition in the DTM is extremely fierce”**

- **Two weeks left until the start of the new DTM season**
- **Season begins at Hockenheim on May 7 and 8**
- **Interview with the Head of DTM at Audi Sport**

**Ingolstadt, April 20, 2016 – Dieter Gass, Head of DTM at Audi Sport, about the aims for the 2016 DTM season which kicks off on May 7 and 8 and the changes made last winter.**

**Last year, with ten victories scored in 18 races, the Audi RS 5 DTM was the most successful car. Still, a second place in the drivers,’ teams’ and manufacturers’ classifications was all that was achieved ...**

The Audi RS 5 DTM was no doubt the fastest car. That’s why not having clinched a title was particularly frustrating. Due to our success in the initial races, we had a lot of weight in our cars at an early stage. That was probably one reason – but not the only one. On some tracks, we simply didn’t extract the maximum and failed to score points on too many occasions. We intensively worked on improving in these areas over the winter.

### **How were you able to continue to improve the car although the technology of the cars has been “frozen” by the regulations?**

Obviously, we couldn’t take any major steps, so we had to focus on detailed work. We spent a lot of time doing analyses and are confident that we took the right actions. Our objective was to develop a large number of set-up options in order to be optimally prepared in a wide range of conditions. In view of the DTM’s extreme competitiveness, this is really crucial. For instance, in winter we worked on the “tool box” which is available to our teams. In 2016, we intend to deliver more consistent results, irrespective of the performance weights.

### **There was a lot of discussion and controversial debate about the performance weights last year. Why are they needed to begin with?**

For cost reasons, no further development of the cars is allowed at the moment. That’s why, as manufacturers, we cannot respond if a brand has an excessive

advantage for whatever reason. The performance weights are intended to keep the cars on the same level in order to prevent the dominance of a single manufacturer that way. Last year, unfortunately, the system of the performance weights in general wasn't perfectly coordinated and significantly intervened with the race results. This has been optimized for 2016. I'm confident that we've come up with a solution and that the performance weights will work well.

**What does this solution look like?**

The weights are now going to be adjusted from race to race – directly after qualifying, based on the time gaps. All cars of a brand receive the same weight. After all, we don't mean to punish a driver, but to prevent the dominance of a single manufacturer that way.

**Changes have been made with respect to the drag reduction system (DRS) as well. Why?**

Basically, use of the DRS results in more overtaking maneuvers, as expected. But it's supposed to be used more specifically for overtaking and not for enabling a driver to follow a faster car. That's why the number of activations has been limited.

**Last year, the format of the DTM was changed radically. Has the new format proved successful?**

Absolutely! Two races and one qualifying session per race – that's the way to go in my view. It's true that it puts a strain on everyone involved and we now have more starting laps which are always particularly costly. But the fans are treated to a double dose of action. We're continually working to make the DTM more and more attractive. That's why the move toward two races per weekend was definitely right.

**In 2016, there will only be a single rookie in the entire DTM field. Will this make the series even more competitive?**

That's hardly possible anymore in the DTM. We're expecting the entire field to be extremely close together again, not least because nobody was able to make a major leap in terms of technology. A small unknown quantity, no doubt, are our colleagues from Mercedes-Benz who, following a production model change are now putting a new DTM car on the grid as well. For us, that won't be the case until 2017.

**Oschersleben has been replaced with Budapest on the 2016 DTM calendar. How do you feel about that?**

Personally, I feel this is good, even though we weren't so strong at Budapest in 2014. We'd like to correct that impression in 2016. The race at Budapest was a nice event in 2014 with a large crowd in spite of the date of the event that may not have been the best. Enthusiasm for the DTM there is huge. That was the case at Oschersleben as well, but the races were always extremely expensive. Due to the

track characteristics, we'd regularly ruin our cars there.

**You're competing with a near-unchanged driver squad. Only Nico Müller and Adrien Tambay swapped teams. What was the reason for swapping cockpits?**

It's no secret that our expectations of both drivers were a little higher last year, especially as both have previously shown that they have higher potential. Switching to another team often breathes new life into a situation and provides new energy to improve it. That's what we're hoping for in Nico and Adrien's case.

**In Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline, Mattias Ekström and Edoardo Mortara are forming a team for the first time this year. Why?**

As a team, the two would have scored a dominant win of the teams' classification by points last year. We're determined to clinch all three titles this year – the drivers,' manufacturers' and teams' classifications. That's why we thought it made sense to unite two potential point scorers in a team.

**Are team orders necessary for clinching the drivers' title?**

Team orders are a legitimate element of race strategy in motorsport, but they shouldn't get out of hand in a way that distorts the competition, or overstep the bounds of good taste.

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