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Motorsport

Trois-Rivières, 2 August 2002

First pole position of the year for Audi driver Emanuele Pirro

Six races, six pole positions – in Trois-Rivières (Canada), last year's title holder Audi again captured the best place on the starting grid in the American Le Mans Series (ALMS). Reigning ALMS champion Emanuele Pirro recorded his first pole position of the year in Team Audi Sport North America's Infineon Audi R8. Thanks to Johnny Herbert in the 2001-spec R8 of Audi customer team Champion Racing, once again two Audi sportscars will start from the front row in Saturday's race.

Meanwhile, championship leader Tom Kristensen and his teammate Rinaldo Capello are only 20th on the grid facing a difficult race. Kristensen went on the track shortly before half-time of the 20-minute qualifying – exactly in the moment when the session was stopped because of an accident. In contrast to past ALMS procedures, the time was not added at the end of the session prohibiting Kristensen from recording a single fast lap. The Panoz of David Brabham and Jan Magnussen which had won the last race in Washington, was also affected by the unexpected decision of race control.

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By taking pole position, Emanuele Pirro gave a birthday present to his teammate Frank Biela: The triple Le Mans winner, leading this year's ALMS statistics with three pole positions, turned 38 on Friday.

Emanuele Pirro (#1) and Tom Kristensen (#2) are scheduled as start drivers in the two Infineon Audi R8 sportscars. The race starts at 2:45 pm local time and runs over a distance of three hours.

Quotes after qualifying

Frank Biela (Infineon Audi R8 #1): "We had very little practice time, but our car was very good from the beginning. Basically we just had to do some fine tuning. We were in front in both practice sessions and Emanuele took the pole. We don't know how fast Tom could have been. But we know that our car is good and will also be strong tomorrow."

Emanuele Pirro (Infineon Audi R8 #1): "I am very happy to start from the pole position. We were fastest in both practice sessions, so we were confident for qualifying. It would have been complete satisfaction if Tom also would have had the chance to do a fast lap. We run a slightly different setup and I was curious to see the difference. Now we'll see it only in the race."

Rinaldo Capello (Infineon Audi R8 #2): "I enjoy the track which is nice and challenging. It is very important to keep your concentration because it is even easier to make mistakes than

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in Washington. Some corners have a very special character which make it really interesting to drive. The only negative point is what happened in qualifying. The rules should be more precise.”

Tom Kristensen (Infineon Audi R8 #2): “I don’t know why race control made that decision. Normally when a qualifying session is red flagged, they stop the time. I am disappointed because the car is very good and we were running with a lot of fuel in the morning to prepare us for the race. So tomorrow we have to roll up our sleeves and race to the front.”

Johnny Herbert (ADT Champion Audi R8 #38): “We are at the front and found a good setup for the warm weather we are expecting for tomorrow. We are also anticipating more grip on the track with the cars in the other series laying down more rubber. Passing the slower cars will be the key to the race. You have to go by them as quickly and clean as possible.”

Stefan Johansson (ADT Champion Audi R8 #38): “It is a great bonus for us starting second. Johnny did a great job doing a fast lap at the very beginning. It is good to start from the front row at this circuit. You have to be aggressive and careful in traffic.”

Ralf Jüttner, Technical Director Team Audi Sport North America: “Emanuele in front, Tom in the back, so we sandwich the rest of the field and see what happens. This qualifying session was unlucky, normally the duration of the qualifying is extended, but today there was a different decision. Only one minute was left for Tom, not enough for a fast lap time. We learned that it is not worth it to wait to see if the track gets better because of the risk. Only six cars are behind Tom, he would not lose much if he would start from the very back of the grid and he’d have a free tire choice. This decision will depend on tomorrow’s temperatures.”

Dr Wolfgang Ullrich, Head of Audi Sport: “You can call this qualifying crazy: Tom did not have the chance to do one quick lap time, therefore tomorrow he will start from the back of the grid. The decision of the race control not to extend the qualifying time after the break was surprising for us, although we just have to accept it. Despite this it is very positive that there are two Audi R8 sportscars in the front row of the grid: Emanuele on pole and Johnny Herbert next to him. This makes me happy even though I am convinced that Tom would have been in front as well.”

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Starting grid at Trois-Rivières

1. Biela/Pirro (Infineon Audi R8)	58.698s
2. Herbert/Johansson (Audi R8)	59.620s
3. Herta/Auberlen (Panoz)	1m 00.274s
4. Weaver/Dyson (R&S-Lincoln)	1m 00.713s
5. Knight/Block (MG Lola)	1m 02.379s
6. Lally/Macaluso (Lola-Judd)	1m 02.414s
7. Magnussen/Brabham (Panoz)	1m 03.087s
8. Fellows/O'Connell (Chevrolet)	1m 03.496s
9. Devlin/Camirand (Lola)	1m 03.652s
10. Pilgrim/Collins (Chevrolet)	1m 03.779s
...	
20. Capello/Kristensen (Infineon Audi R8)	1m 08.637s

Photos and further information can be found on the internet:
www.audi-sportpress.com (accreditation required)

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