

Fourth Sebring victory for the Audi R8

ALMS: For the fourth time in succession an Audi R8 claimed victory in the Sebring 12 Hour race in the USA. Frank Biela, Philipp Peter and Marco Werner steered their Infineon Team Joest Audi R8 to a narrow victory after an exciting race long duel with the Team ADT Champion Racing Audi R8 driven by Stefan Johansson, JJ Lehto and Emanuele Pirro. It was also the fourth victory in succession in the American endurance classic for Reinhold Joest's team, equalling the Ferrari works team record set in the sixties.

During the entire twelve hours, both Audi customer teams battled fiercely for victory in front of over 100,000 spectators. Despite the incredibly fast pace, the Audi R8 once again proved its reliability. None of the two Audi R8 sportscars had even the smallest technical problem, on a track considered particularly demanding due to its bumpy surface.

Team ADT Champion Racing, which had strengthened its equipment and staff for the new season, led most of the race. The dream of taking its first ever ALMS victory, however, came to an end during the final stages of the thrilling race. A caution period cost the American team a 30-second lead. 90 minutes from the end of the race, an unscheduled driver change dropped the Champion outfit behind the Joest Team. Stefan Johansson tried everything possible with the Champion R8 to reduce the gap to Marco Werner's Joest Audi, but, on his Sebring debut, the German held his nerves crossing the finish line as the race winner by just 13.493 seconds.

"Both teams had the chance of winning the race," explained Head of Audi Sport Dr Wolfgang Ullrich. "The Joest Team was a little bit luckier. This 1-2 victory is a fantastic result for Audi."

Like Marco Werner, Philipp Peter also ended his first ever Sebring race in a sports prototype on the highest step of the podium. Frank Biela, who qualified on pole position for the race, scored his second Sebring victory after 2000.

Audi Sport UK finished its dress rehearsal for the Le Mans 24 Hour race with another Audi R8 in sixth position despite having to change the rear section of the car during the race.

Sebring (USA), Round 1 of the American Le Mans Series, March 15

1 Frank Biela/Philipp Peter/Marco Werner (Audi R8) 367 laps

2 Stefan Johansson/JJ Lehto/Emanuele Pirro (Audi R8) + 13.493s

3 Johnny Herbert/David Brabham/Mark Blundell (Bentley) - 4 laps

4 Tom Kristensen/Rinaldo Capello/Guy Smith (Bentley) - 5 laps

5 Olivier Beretta/Gunnar Jeannette/Max Papis (Panoz) - 15 laps

Championship positions after 1 of 9 rounds: 1 Biela, Peter and Werner, 26 points; 4 Johansson, Lehto and Pirro, 22.