

Ingolstadt, 10 March 2006

Motorsport

Le Mans dress rehearsal for Audi R10

- **Race debut in 12-hour race at Sebring**
- **Acid test for powerful 650 hp diesel sportscar**
- **Circuit in Florida considered very demanding**

As the world's first automobile manufacturer, AUDI AG aims to take overall victory at the legendary 24 Hours of Le Mans with a diesel sportscar. The next important milestone in this ambitious project is Saturday 18 March: Audi competes in the 12-hour race at Sebring (US state of Florida) with a pair of R10 sports prototypes.

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The long-distance classic, held since 1952, is the most important sportscar race in the USA, the opening race of the American Le Mans Series (ALMS) and, more importantly for Audi Sport, the dress rehearsal for the 24 Hours of Le Mans on 17/18 June: The Sebring circuit, a former airfield, is considered to be extremely demanding for both man and machine and, with Le Mans in mind, was the perfect test during the successful R8 project years. Technology proving itself in Sebring also functions, as experience has shown, over twice the distance at the faster race in Le Mans. The main reason for this are the bumps around the American track, but also the predominantly hot and humid weather in Florida tests the engines to the limit.

Audi Sport tested twice with the new R10 at Sebring at the end of January and the start of February and discovered in the process several "teething problems", which have since been sorted out. The high-calibre squads of Frank Biela/Emanuele Pirro/Marco Werner and Dindo Capello/Tom Kristensen/Allan McNish drive the two Audi Sport North America R10 prototypes at Sebring. With the exception of Tom Kristensen, every Audi driver has already tested the R10. The Le Mans record-winner will have ample opportunity to familiarise himself with the peculiarities of the diesel sportscar during the pre-race tests.

The Audi R10 is powered by a V12 TDI engine producing almost 650 hp and which has more than 1100 Newton metre torque available. It follows in the

wheeltracks of the Audi R8, which is the most successful Le Mans Prototype ever with 61 victories from 77 races to date.

Audi has won the 12-hour race at Sebring six times in succession with the R8 since 2000. The R8 is, as a result, the most successful sportscar ever to have competed in this race. The two Audi factory drivers Frank Biela and Tom Kristensen could also write Sebring history on 18 March: Both have already won three times here. One of them could become the first driver ever to win four times.

The Sebring week begins on Sunday, 12 March for the Audi team with technical scrutineering for the brace of new R10 prototypes. The cars can be seen on track from Monday. Qualifying is on the agenda for Thursday; the race starts on Saturday at 10:43 a.m. local time (4:43 p.m. in Germany) and finishes twelve hours later in darkness. At 10:43 p.m. it will be certain whether the R10 has survived its first acid test.

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Quotes before the Audi R10 race debut

Dr Wolfgang Ullrich (Head of Audi Motorsport): “It goes without saying that we want to get a good result for Audi on the R10 debut and ring in a new motorsport era with the diesel sportscar. However, I would like to stress that Sebring is first and foremost a dress rehearsal for the 24 Hours of Le Mans. Our tests in Sebring went well. We know exactly how risky the first race is for a completely new car.”

Frank Biela (Audi R10 #1): “We always have high expectations – the same goes for the R10 debut. The car and engine are new; however, I think that we are well prepared. In fact everything went well at the tests and we discovered its potential. From this point of view we are looking forward to the debut in Sebring and want to do a good job for Audi there.”

Emanuele Pirro (Audi R10 #1): “I’m really very proud to be a part of this project. It’s a completely new challenge, especially as nobody has ever attempted to build such a powerful diesel racing-engine. It seems like only yesterday that we started the R8 adventure, which actually finished up being much more successful than any of us ever dreamed. I hope that we’ll have just as much success with the R10. And as with the R8 I’d again like to be the first driver to win with this car...”

Marco Werner (Audi R10 #1): “We are obviously all a little excited as Sebring is the R10s first race. From the tests we know that the car is running well. The main priority in Sebring is to gather experience since our main target this year is Le Mans. However it would be fantastic if we could notch up the new R10s first win in Sebring...”

Dindo Capello (Audi R10 #2): “It’s great to be driving a sportscar again, and even better to be sitting in a new car. Driving the R8 became second nature over the last six years. The R10 is a new challenge for the drivers as well. The greatest task is to continue everything that the R8 achieved in its history. This certainly won’t be easy.”

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Tom Kristensen (Audi R10 #2): “I’ve been looking forward to the first race in Sebring since I drove the first few metres with the R10 at the presentation in Paris on 13 December. I haven’t tested the car yet but know from my team mates just how good it is. From where I’m standing it looks as if the engineers in Ingolstadt have once again done a great job. The lap times were competitive from the word go. Now it’s a question of working on the performance over the distance because the stress on the rear tyres is enormous. Sebring is a perfect test for Le Mans.”

Allan McNish (Audi R10 #2): “It’s a very special feeling to be involved from the beginning on the Audi R10 project, just as it was with the R8. We all know how successful the R8 was. I hope that we achieve the same with the R10. The first thing is to survive Sebring. We tested there, but the 12-hour race on this tough track is always very difficult. I can’t wait to get stuck in.”

Ralf Jüttner (Technical Director, Team Audi Sport North America): “At the first test in Sebring we had to tackle a few problems, which have since been solved. Nevertheless we don’t know whether the R10 is as reliable as the R8 was – and also whether the lap times we set at the test are worth anything. The Porsche was very fast at the tests, the new Dyson-Lola made people sit up and take note. I’m convinced that it will be a close battle. We’ve done our homework but are expecting a long, hard race.”

Sebring schedule**Sunday, 12 March**

9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. Technical scrutineering

Monday, 13 March

10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Test session

3:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. Test session

Tuesday, 14 March

2:30 p.m. – 4:15 p.m. Test session

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Wednesday, 15 March

10:20 a.m. – 11:20 a.m. Free Practice

1:45 p.m. – 2:45 p.m. Free Practice

Thursday, 16 March

09:50 a.m. – 10:50 a.m. Free Practice

3:15 p.m. – 3:40 p.m. Qualifying (Prototypes)

7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Night Practice

Friday, 17 March

10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Free Practice

2:30 p.m. Audi Press Conference

Saturday, 18 March

08:00 a.m. – 08:20 a.m. Warm-up

10:43 a.m. – 10:43 p.m. Race

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Photographs of the Audi R10, Sebring preview sound bites and additional information to download at: www.audi-motorsport.info (accreditation necessary)