

Le Mans, 13 October 2006

Motorsport

Le Mans round starts with Audi setting best time

- **Tom Kristensen quickest in first test**
- **“King of Le Mans” best Audi driver on Friday**
- **DTM newcomer Thed Björk causes surprise**

The “King of Le Mans“ has started the DTM’s first round at Le Mans (France) in a manner befitting his station: in the first test on the 4.180-kilometre Bugatti Circuit the Dane Tom Kristensen in the Siemens Audi A4 DTM set the best time on Friday morning. In the second test in the afternoon, as well, the seven-time winner of Le Mans, in second position, was the quickest Audi driver.

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In both of the 90-minute test sessions five Audi drivers were in the top ten. A surprise was caused by the young Swede Thed Björk, who stood in at short notice for the injured Dane Nicolas Kiesa with Audi customer team Futurecom TME. Without ever having moved a DTM car before, the new Swedish Touring Car Champion took third place in the morning session straight away. In the afternoon, the 25-year-old was the quickest driver of a 2004-spec car as well.

For the Audi drivers, the most important thing on Friday was to get to know the new DTM circuit and to gather as much data as possible for qualifying and the race. This task was aggravated by a change on the track made between the two test sessions: at some locations cones intended to prevent the drivers taking short-cuts were re-positioned at mid-day.

Things at Le Mans will really get serious for the first time in the three-part “shoot-out” qualifying on Saturday (live broadcast starting at 2:00 p.m. local time on “Das Erste”) which determines the grid positions for the race on Sunday.

Quotes after Friday’s tests

Dr Wolfgang Ullrich (Head of Audi Motorsport): “The comparison of the times between the two tests has to be taken with a pinch of salt. In between, the cones were changed, which permitted a different line. The field is very mixed. Our long-

runs we still need to analyse because in the beginning we weren't able to set any good times, while later our performance was decent. We're going through the data to consolidate the results of all cars in order to be well set for Saturday."

Tom Kristensen

Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline, Siemens Audi A4 DTM #7

1st place / 2nd place, 1m 32.304s

"It's simply great being back at Le Mans. Although I actually know the circuit only from the 24-hour race, I took the proper right-hand turn onto the Bugatti Circuit... The track fits the DTM pretty well. Although my lap times today were pretty good already, I'm not quite satisfied yet with the long-runs. So I'm assuming that our engineers won't be going to bed very early tonight, but will exploit even more of the Audi A4 DTM's potential."

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Timo Scheider

Audi Sport Team Rosberg, Gebrauchtwagen plus Audi A4 DTM #16

8th place / 5th place, 1m 32.499s

"I think the circuit is great. Elevations, banks and kerbs make some of the corners very interesting. This means you can quickly gain or lose a couple of tenths. The times are close together, but the first impression for this weekend is good."

Heinz-Harald Frentzen

Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline, Audi A4 DTM #6

14th place / 6th place, 1m 32.587s

"In the beginning we had some difficulties with the balance of our A4 but were able to clearly improve it later. Still, I'm anything but satisfied because particularly with the long-run – despite the fact that it felt pretty good – we've still got a lot of potential for further improvement."

Mattias Ekström

Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline, Red Bull Audi A4 DTM #5

4th place / 7th place, 1m 32.656s

"This is my first time at Le Mans. Driving on the circuit is great fun. If the kerbs were a bit bigger, life would be easier for us because there wouldn't be so much dirt thrown onto the track. Today we tried out a few things, and I'm basically satisfied. But tomorrow we'll definitely have be quite a bit better."

Frank Stippler**Audi Sport Team Rosberg, S line Audi A4 DTM #15****13th place / 9th place, 1m 32.796s**

“We tried out quite a few things and obtained some findings. Now we need to filter out the best for Saturday in our meetings. On account of yellow phases, gravel on the track, lots of traffic and turned over cones the tests were a bit chaotic.”

Thed Björk**Futurecom TME, Futurecom Audi A4 DTM #19****3rd place / 15th place, 1m 32.852s**

“It’s great competing in a DTM car. The Audi is really good fun. It’s interesting and a great experience. I like the circuit and its turns. I’m hoping for a nice weekend, want to show a good speed and familiarise myself with the car.”

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Pierre Kaffer**Audi Sport Team Phoenix, Castrol Audi A4 DTM #14****11th place / 12th place, 1m 33.010s**

“As always, Le Mans is good fun. It is nice with the sportscar, and so it is with DTM car – only the cones are something I do not like at all. Another thing I didn’t like was marshals continuously running around on the circuit. With today’s overall performance I’m satisfied even though we didn’t achieve any top times. For the qualifying, we still need to improve, and if we do, we should be okay for the race.”

Christian Abt**Audi Sport Team Phoenix, Playboy Audi A4 DTM #12****10th place / 13th place, 1m 33.062s**

“It’s good fun. The track would even be nicer, though, if the barriers were improved. There was a lot of dirt on the tarmac and the conditions were not always the same. I learned a lot today. Now we need to look at all the things we tried out. It’s a good thing we only used two sets of tyres. Considering this, our result is quite alright.”

Martin Tomczyk**Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline, Red Bull Audi A4 DTM #4****19th place / 16th place, 1m 33.322s**

“It’s been a difficult day for me. We don’t know exactly where we stand because my car simply didn’t give the feedback today that I’m used to. So we probably

won't have any choice but to almost start from scratch again tomorrow. Fortunately, all of us in the team are working together closely so that I can count on the information and experience of my team colleagues."

Vanina Ickx**Futurecom TME, Original Zubehör Audi A4 DTM #20****17th place / 19th place, 1m 33.741s**

"It was a good day – up to my last set of tyres. In the last few minutes I was on new tyres to improve my time. We experimented a bit with the tyre pressure but it didn't work out. Too bad because I'd been placing high hopes on this set of tyres."

Hans-Jürgen Abt (Team Director Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline): "Le Mans is definitely a fascinating circuit. All of us need to first get used to everything and are systematically but carefully working towards finding the optimum set-up. We tried out different approaches today. If we manage to translate all this into action I'm sure we'll be able to defy Mercedes again."

Ernst Moser (Team Director Audi Sport Team Phoenix): "For the race, we already found a good set-up. On new tyres we didn't gain any time. That's still a mystery for us. Up to the qualifying we need to find a solution in order to make it to the far front of the grid."

Arno Zensen (Team Director Audi Sport Team Rosberg): "Our first performance on this circuit isn't bad at all. We tried out different things and now need to see what has worked well and what wasn't quite as good. I'm not unhappy at all. If our drivers deliver these results in tomorrow's qualifying as well I'd be happy."

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