



Audi

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Motorsport

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New challenge for Audi at the street race in Washington

Five weeks after the triple victory at Le Mans and two weeks after the latest win in the American Le Mans Series (ALMS), the successful Audi team now faces the fifth round of the ALMS in Washington D.C. Not only is it the first race in 80 years to be contested in the US capital, it is also the first from a total of three street races in the 2002 ALMS.

The circuit in Washington has been set up in a parking area alongside the famous Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium (RFK) and measures 1.7 miles (2.736 kilometres) in length. Spectators can expect a unique show with all of the grandstands allowing a view of almost the entire length of the track.

The Audi Sport North America team, which this year has already won three ALMS races and leads the overall rankings, faces a special challenge in Washington: The 610 hp Infineon Audi R8 has been developed primarily for fast race tracks like Le Mans. Due to the circuit characteristics Panoz, with their front-engine sportscar, should prove to be a particularly tough competitor. Additionally, for the first time since the season-opener in Sebring, Cadillac starts again in the ALMS.

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Street races are not totally new for the R8 and Audi Sport North America: At the end of 2000 Audi won the "Race of the Millennium" in Adelaide, Australia – on a street circuit featuring, however, many quick sections.

Quotes before the race at Washington

Frank Biela (Infiniteon Audi R8 #1): "Washington is new for all of us and is the first car race to be held in the region – an important event for the ALMS. Street races are generally something special, the atmosphere is usually fantastic. The short circuit length concerns me a little. It'll be tight with so many cars. Still, I'm looking forward to Washington and hope that we can offer the spectators a good show and win the race in order to gain some ground on our team mates."

Emanuele Pirro (Infiniteon Audi R8 #2): "I particularly like street races and it's great to drive in a city as significant as Washington. However, I don't know if our cars are suited for this type of narrow circuit, because the R8 was developed for Le Mans. In contrast, Panoz is always strong on such tracks. And because it's going to be quite hot there we are very likely to face our most difficult race of the year."

Rinaldo Capello (Infiniteon Audi R8 #2): "We are all full of anticipation about the track in Washington. On paper it doesn't look as if we will have much fun with our powerful cars."

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There are so many corners on just 2.7 kilometres! But perhaps in reality the circuit is more flowing as it seems on the drawings. In any case, the spectators will experience a great show."

Tom Kristensen (Infineon Audi R8 #2): "I enjoy street races like Macau or the Norisring very much. I haven't driven on a city circuit for a long time and so I'm really looking forward to the race in Washington. For the ALMS it's a huge honour to hold a race in the capital of the USA."

Johnny Herbert (ADT Champion Audi R8 #38): "Everyone starts with the same conditions because none of the drivers or teams has experience there. I expect a close race. The two 'works' Audis will be strong as usual and I also believe that the Panoz car will be suited to the Washington track. I start the race third in the championship and another podium would keep me in contention."

Stefan Johansson (ADT Champion Audi R8 #38): "Washington will be a new venue for all the teams. It looks like it will be hard work for the driver as it is a short track, so traffic will probably be a big factor in the race. I always enjoyed street circuits in F1 and CART although I have never driven a sportscar on one. I'm convinced that it'll be a great challenge where you can't afford to make one mistake."

Ralf Jüttner, Technical Director Team Audi Sport North America: "After fast and twisty circuits we now face a new challenge. To date we've always managed to find a good set-up for the R8 on new tracks. In 2000 at Adelaide the R8 functioned very well. It's important that we calculate the gear ratio as exact as possible because we don't have more practice time than usual. The circuit layout looks very interesting. There are not only the 90 degree corners typical of a street circuit, the track will also offer very little grip and the car will need maximum downforce."

Dr Wolfgang Ullrich, Head of Audi Sport: "That the American Le Mans Series has managed to hold a race in Washington underlines the status of the ALMS in the USA. The race is a great thing in all respects, also because the Washington region is an important market for us. The track is quite short and new for all of us. We only know that it'll be set up in a parking area alongside the RFK Stadium – and that it's very hot in Washington at this time of the year. That shouldn't pose any problems to the R8, as the heat in Dallas in 2000 will be hard to exceed."

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The schedule in Washington

Friday, 19 July

09:50 – 10:50 hrs Free practice

15:00 – 16:00 hrs Free practice

Saturday, 20 July

09:00 – 10:00 hrs Free practice

12:35 – 12:55 hrs Qualifying (Prototypes)

Sunday, 21 July

09:00 – 09:25 hrs Warm-up

12:00 – 14:45 hrs Race (2:45 hours)

(local times)

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Drivers' championship

1. Tom Kristensen (Audi)	92 points
2. Rinaldo Capello (Audi)	90 points
3. Johnny Herbert (Audi)	84 points
4. Frank Biela (Audi)	81 points
5. Emanuele Pirro (Audi)	80 points
6. David Brabham (Panoz)	68 points
Bill Auberlen (Panoz)	68 points
8. Jan Magnussen (Panoz)	60 points
9. Stefan Johansson (Audi)	57 points
10. James Weaver (R&S-Lincoln)	56 points
Bryan Herta (Panoz)	56 points

Manufacturers' championship

1. Audi	101 points
2. Panoz	77 points
3. Riley & Scott	56 points
4. Lola	45 points
5. Ascari	19 points
6. Cadillac	16 points

Photos and further information on the internet:

www.audi-sportpress.com (accreditation required)

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