



Audi

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Motorsport

Sears Point, 19 May 2002

Precious points for Audi at Sears Point

Round two of the American Le Mans Series (ALMS) at Sears Point was a nerve-racking one: Torrential rain, spins, accidents, caution periods and a dramatic photo finish provided plenty to talk about even hours after the race in which Audi scored precious championship points. Johnny Herbert and Tom Kristensen finished second to the winning Panoz by just 0.482 seconds with their ADT Champion Audi R8. Frank Biela, Rinaldo Capello and Emanuele Pirro took twelve points for Audi Sport North America despite a spectacular incident.

Following torrential rain, the second ALMS race of the season started behind the safety car. While Team Audi Sport North America's Audi R8 dropped to the back of the field in the opening stages of the race following an early spin for Rinaldo Capello, Tom Kristensen fought an exciting duel for the lead with David Brabham's Panoz. On the drying track, Kristensen took the lead shortly before half distance handing over the R8 in first position to Johnny Herbert.

In the meantime, Frank Biela had climbed back from the end of the field to third spot in Audi Sport North America's Audi R8, before things got very eventful: A lapped back-marker failed to see Johnny Herbert causing a tyre change and a loss of one lap. Almost at the same time, Emanuele Pirro was touched by the Panoz of Jan Magnussen. Running over debris cut the right rear tyre of the Audi R8 making Pirro spin rearwards into a tyre wall. The reigning ALMS champion was able to bring the heavily damaged R8 back to the pits on three wheels. Audi Sport North America changed the complete rear end of the car within less than six minutes, earning the squad standing ovations by the spectators and eventually twelve championship points for 8th place in the prototype class.

Absolutely sensational was Johnny Herbert's drive back to the front of the field in the ADT Champion Audi R8: In the final hour of the race, the former Formula One driver was able to reduce a one-lap-gap to Jan Magnussen's Panoz getting within reach of the Dane on the final lap. When he tried to catch Magnussen on the finish straight, Herbert touched a lapped Panoz, ripping the rear wing from his car and crossed the finish line sideways in second position. Herbert's effort was rewarded with the lead in the American Le Mans Series.

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Quotes after the race

Johnny Herbert (ADT Champion Audi R8 #38): "Some people really don't look into their mirrors and should be punished for that because it can be dangerous. After all what happened I am happy with second place. But I could have lapped everybody today."

Tom Kristensen (ADT Champion Audi R8 #38): "I enjoyed very much my stint. I had a great fight with David Brabham in difficult conditions. Unfortunately I had no radio contact with the pits, so I stayed out a little bit longer than I should before changing tyres. Without Johnny's bad luck it would have been an easy win for us. But I am happy that I scored good points."

Frank Biela (Audi R8 #1): "Everything went well for me. On the drying track I was occasionally faster than the leading cars. I made good progress. The car ran perfectly, even if the rain tyres naturally lost grip very early on the drying line. It is a pity that we didn't get a better result."

Rinaldo Capello (Audi R8 #1): "I started with tyres which were perfect to avoid aquaplaning on the very wet track. This was the right decision, but when the track started to dry and there was no more standing water, the car was very difficult to drive – especially as we did not have the FSI engine in the old car. FSI is really a big advantage in conditions like this."

Emanuele Pirro (Audi R8 #1): "It is real pity. We could have done a good race. Unfortunately the right rear tyre was cut when I ran over debris and it deflated in the fastest corner of the track. Thank God I could bring the car back to the pits where we changed the rear end. So we were able to score some important points for the championship."

Reinhold Joest, Team Director Audi Sport North America: "We showed once more that you should never give up. Thanks to our effort we were able to score twelve points for 8th place in the class. These points could be decisive at the end of the season. The performance of the team was superb: We lost just six laps due to the accident and the repairs."

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Race results

1. Magnussen/Brabham (Panoz)	83 laps
2. Herbert/Kristensen (Audi R8)	+ 0.482s
3. Herta/Auberlen (Panoz)	- 1 lap
4. Weaver/Dyson (R&S-Lincoln)	- 2 laps
5. Fellows/O'Connell (Chevrolet)	- 2 laps
6. Luhr/Maassen (Porsche)	- 3 laps
7. Pilgrim/Collins (Chevrolet)	- 3 laps
8. Neuhaus/Field (Lola-Judd)	- 3 laps
9. Graham/de Radigues (Panoz-Mugen)	- 4 laps
10. Duno/Maxwell (Panoz-Mugen)	- 4 laps
...	
15. Biela/Capello/Pirro (Audi R8)	- 6 laps

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

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