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Motorsport

Audi driver Allan McNish about Road Atlanta

- **Circuit near Atlanta is the venue for “Petit Le Mans”**
- **Allan McNish holds track record since 2000**
- **New surface for tenth anniversary of race**

The tenth running of the “Petit Le Mans” endurance race is held at Road Atlanta (US state of Georgia) on the first weekend in October. Audi “factory” driver Allan McNish holds the track lap-record around the 4.088 kilometre (2.540 miles) circuit with a time of 1m 10.379s since the year 2000.

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Will your track lap-record last another year?

“I’m afraid that my qualifying record will be broken this time. The circuit was completely resurfaced and the surface changes that existed have now disappeared. The circuit is now much flatter, less bumpy and more consistent and faster as a result.”

Where on the circuit is the new surface most noticeable?

“Previously, the worst place was over the crest in Turn 5. On turn-in you had plenty of grip and in the corner itself absolutely none whatsoever. The grip only improved on the exit of the corner. This made the section very tricky.”

What’s your general opinion of Road Atlanta?

“Road Atlanta is one of my favourite circuits in America. The circuit is technically challenging and from the layout naturally fast, which you particularly notice in the first off-camber corner. A key point is the right-hand corner that leads onto the back straight where you have to get the power down well under acceleration so as not to lose too much time on the following straight.”

Can you compare “Petit Le Mans” with Le Mans?

“The atmosphere around the circuit and the speeds are quite similar. Road Atlanta, however, is much more intensive for the driver than Le Mans. The circuit is physically and mentally very demanding. You have to be concentrated all the time and in contrast to Le Mans, there isn’t really a long enough straight on which you can relax and take a breather.”

Do you still remember your first race at Road Atlanta?

“Yes, that was in 1998 for the first-running of the Petit Le Mans event. I drove a Porsche GT1 together with Yannick Dalmas. We were leading when the car took off over the crest on the straight and rolled. Luckily Yannick escaped completely unharmed.”

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Apart from this, you have quite a good record at Petit Le Mans...

“I won with Dindo Capello and Michele Alboreto when Audi competed in this race for the first time in 2000. Dindo and I were able to win again in 2006 with the R10 TDI. So, it’s a really good hunting ground for me. I like the track, Dindo likes the track and the Audi Sport team knows exactly what this race is all about.”

What are your chances of scoring another victory?

“Our Audi R10 TDI has a lot of torque and is fast on the straight, the LM P2 cars are more agile in the corners because of the lower weight allowed by the regulations. This will be particularly noticeable in the ‘S’ curves. There are both advantages and disadvantages. The fact is that you need experience to win such a long race and you must not take too many risks. It’ll be a hard fight over the entire distance.”

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**Photographs, sound bites and additional information available on the Internet:
www.audi-motorsport.info (accreditation required)**