

Brands Hatch, 30 June 2006

Motorsport

Audi driver Kristensen sets the pace

- **Clearly best time of the day at Brands Hatch**
- **Five Audi A4 DTM cars among top ten on Friday**
- **Pierre Kaffer quickest in the morning**

Audi factory driver Tom Kristensen is the man to be beaten in the British DTM round at Brands Hatch: After having clocked the best time in the tests prior to the start of the season, the leader in the Championship at the wheel of the Siemens Audi A4 DTM entered by Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline set the pace in Friday's tests as well. With 43.158 seconds, the Dane achieved the best time of the day in the second test in the afternoon, taking nearly two tenths away from the runner-up in the standings, Bernd Schneider, in the fastest Mercedes – almost a world of difference on the short “Indy Circuit” with its mere length of 1.929 kilometres.

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The quickest contender in the morning session was Pierre Kaffer in the Castrol Audi A4 DTM run by Audi Sport Team Phoenix. In the afternoon, five Audi drivers, Tom Kristensen, Mattias Ekström, Heinz-Harald Frentzen, Pierre Kaffer and Christian Abt, made it into the top ten. A strong impression on his first laps in the Audi A4 DTM was left by Jeroen Bleekemolen who is taking the place of his Dutch compatriot Olivier Tielemans in the Futurecom TME customer team. Bleekemolen claimed 15th place to finish as the second-best driver of a 2004-spec car.

The tests on Friday gave a foretaste of what the DTM fans can expect during the “shoot-out“ qualifying on Saturday: In the afternoon session, 19 cars were lying within one second of each other, the quickest eleven within 0.366 seconds.

The race on Sunday is likely to turn into a hot battle, literally speaking: 82 laps at roughly 30 degrees in the shade should put both men and material to a definite stress test in what may be expected to be the toughest race in the DTM's history. ARD will broadcast live from Brands Hatch on Sunday on “Das Erste”, starting at 12:50 pm.

Quotes after Friday's tests

Dr Wolfgang Ullrich (Head of Audi Motorsport): "First of all, I think it's very positive that we didn't see a single accident today because we were a little concerned after the test prior to the start of the season. The grip conditions on the track were difficult to judge because they kept changing a bit. My impression is that most of our drivers worked out good set-ups. I'm looking forward to Sunday with confidence."

Tom Kristensen

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

2nd place / 1st place, 43.158s

"Conditions are completely different from the tests during which we had rather cold weather. England now has a beautiful summer. The grip on the track is different. My Audi worked well. But, as always, Friday is a day on which you just gather information. Only tomorrow will show whether or not we've put the jigsaw puzzle together properly."

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Mattias Ekström

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

4th place / 3rd place, 43.407s

"We had a good day. We completed our testing programme and completed a long-run. In the end, I was very satisfied with the car. We saved a few sets of tyres for the remainder of the weekend and are well prepared for the qualifying and the race."

Heinz-Harald Frentzen

Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline, Veltins Audi A4 DTM #6

9th place / 5th place, 43.440s

"The car was running well even though we still had some difficulties with the set-up. We had a problem with a damper and had to make some changes, which cost us a lot of time. This went at the expense of our fine-tuning which will enable us to use more of the car's potential."

Pierre Kaffer

Audi Sport Team Phoenix, Castrol Audi A4 DTM #14

1st place / 9th place, 43.497s

“We can be satisfied with the way this Friday went. The team did a good job. For Audi Sport, this has been a great result which, unfortunately, doesn’t count. Considering how close the times are, tenths or even hundredths of a second will be crucial in the qualifying.”

Christian Abt

Audi Sport Team Phoenix, Playboy Audi A4 DTM #12

14th place / 10th place, 43.508s

“The field is very tight. Between third and tenth place, there’s merely a tenth of a second. We were able to sort quite a bit. Towards the end I tried to drive a fast lap with the racing set-up, which worked out quite well. All this gives me a pretty positive feeling.”

Martin Tomczyk

Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline, Red Bull Audi A4 DTM #4

5th place / 11th place, 43.524s

“The long-run was good. 40 laps were very strenuous, even though that wasn’t even half of a racing distance. If Sunday turns out to be as hot as today, this will be huge challenge. Some are able to handle this in a better way than others. The driver’s stamina will play a major role on Sunday.”

Frank Stippler

Audi Sport Team Rosberg, S line Audi A4 DTM #15

16th place / 14th place, 43.731s

“In the first test we had problems with a set of tyres that had picked up a lot of rubber off the track and which I never trusted completely. The set of tyres we used in the afternoon was better. Compared with the others, our long-run wasn’t bad. We improved from the first to the second test.”

Jeroen Bleekemolen

Futurecom TME, Futurecom Audi A4 DTM #19

18th place / 15th place, 43.732s

“The first day in the Audi A4 DTM was great. It didn’t take a long time for me to get used to the new car. In the second test I showed a decent performance on new

tyres. The whole field is very close. If we get everything right, we'll be able to stand our ground pretty well. I will try to produce a surprise."

Timo Scheider

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

10th place / 16th place, 43.749s

"The first test started with a decent performance on an old set of tyres from Oschersleben. In the second test, I reeled off a long distance on a set of used tyres, my team-mate Frank was running on new tyres. This produced no difference in terms of performance. On Saturday we're going to have even more new tyres in order to adapt to the conditions. Our true performance was not evident today."

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Vanina Ickx

Futurecom TME, Original Zubehör Audi A4 DTM #20

20th place / 20th place, 44.396s

"Unfortunately we had a few problems today. The engine misfired a couple of times, the power steering lost pressure – both cost us valuable time. But now everything's okay. We didn't work with new tyres because we didn't prepare for the qualifying yet."

Hans-Jürgen Abt (Team Director Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline): "The weather is outstanding, the atmosphere in England is great. We tried out everything and are now going to consolidate the data in order to be well prepared for the qualifying and the race."

Ernst Moser (Team Director Audi Sport Team Phoenix): "I watched part of the second session from the grandstands in order to judge how traffic might develop in the race. We worked on the race set-up but still drop too much in our performance across the whole distance. Yet for the qualifying, things are already looking pretty good."

Arno Zensen (Team Director Audi Sport Team Rosberg): "Both drivers completed long-runs which weren't bad. Timo had the misfortune of having to give up ground in traffic on a new set of tyres. A similar thing happened to Frank, who had to take his foot off the throttle twice because no one let him drive a free lap. In the end, Timo lost half an hour because of a problem with the air line of the jack. That's too bad, but there still some reserves left."

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