

Houston, 12 May 2006

Audi R8 makes a winning comeback in USA

- **FSI technology helps Audi achieve comprehensive victory**
- **Capello and McNish extend championship lead**
- **Five-year-old Audi R8 beats latest sports-prototypes**

Dindo Capello (Italy) and Allan McNish (Scotland) extended their American Le Mans Series lead when they steered their “factory” Audi R8 home to victory in the inaugural Grand Prix in Houston (US state of Texas) on Friday night. It was the 62nd victory for the most successful Le Mans prototype from 78 races.

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With the Audi R10 TDI currently being prepared in Europe for the 24 Hours of Le Mans (17/18 June), Capello and McNish successfully reverted to the Audi R8 featuring FSI petrol direct injection technology first pioneered in 2001. Having scored a historic win in the 12 Hours of Sebring with the diesel-powered Audi R10 TDI, the Anglo-Italian combination reminded its rivals about the efficiency of the Audi FSI technology.

Capello started the Audi Sport North America Audi R8 from fourth on the 23-car grid but quickly forced his way in to second place as dusk changed to full darkness in the race that began at 2000hr.

Excellent pit-strategy enabled McNish, who had taken over from Capello after 53mins, to “leapfrog” the LM P2 Porsche of Timo Bernhard and Romain Dumas and in to the lead following the opening scheduled pit-stops. McNish made a second and final pit-stop for fuel after 97mins, re-taking the lead with 40mins to run.

The five-year-old Audi R8 proved to be not only reliable and efficient. The Audi, which Capello had swept to a fastest race lap 0.234secs quicker than in qualifying, had set a searing pace around the 1.7-mile, 10-corner temporary “street” circuit constructed in Houston’s Reliant Park, eventually claiming a comprehensive five-lap victory.

The third round of the American Le Mans Series is at Mid-Ohio (US state Ohio) next weekend (19-21 May). McNish has never driven at this 2.25-mile road course while Capello knows the undulating course from 2001 and 2002.

Quotes after the race in Houston

Dr Wolfgang Ullrich (Head of Audi Motorsport): “We are very happy that the R8 can still win races despite being further handicapped by the regulations. Reliability and the FSI technology were yet again key factors. Congratulations to the team which had the right strategy and the drivers who did no mistakes on this difficult track.”

Dindo Capello (Audi R8 #2): “Our race speed was good from the start which gave me confidence. The R8 was amazing allowing me to even set a faster time than in qualifying! I quickly closed the gap on Sascha Maassen and was faster than him. But I was losing time behind him so our strategy to make a pit-stop early was correct.”

Allan McNish (Audi R8 #2): “Possibly one of the hardest races for the Audi R8 on a very demanding, bumpy and slippery circuit – not ideal for a car originally designed for Le Mans. Dindo was superb, the team very clever with its pit-stops in a very tough race. I’m proud to have achieved another win for the Audi R8.”

Dave Maraj (Team Director, Team Audi Sport North America): “It was a great all-round team performance. Dindo and Allan drove fast but cleanly while our pit-stop strategy worked to perfection. We forced the pace and our rivals ultimately broke. The Audi R8 remains a phenomenal machine and I’m proud to have achieved this latest victory as a ‘factory’ team.”

The results in Houston

- 1 Capello/McNish (Audi R8) 143 laps
- 2 Gavin/Beretta (Chevrolet) – 5 laps
- 3 Fellows/O’Connell (Chevrolet) – 5 laps
- 4 Enge/Turner (Aston Martin) – 6 laps
- 5 Lamy/Sarrazin (Aston Martin) – 6 laps
- 6 Weaver/Leitzinger (Lola-AER) – 9 laps

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