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Motorsport

Audi sets best time at last DTM test

- **Sebring winner Tom Kristensen quickest at Brands Hatch**
- **Three Audi A4 DTM cars in top four**
- **More than 5000 test kilometres over four days**

Audi edged clear at the last official test before the start of the new DTM season. Tom Kristensen set the fastest time at Brands Hatch (England) with his new Audi A4 DTM. On the 1.973 kilometre circuit, the shortest on the DTM calendar on which the most popular international touring car race series makes its race debut on 2 July, the Audi works driver set a best time of 41.587 seconds on Tuesday, which remained unbeaten over the course of the final two test days.

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Kristensen arrived directly from Florida, where he had won the 12 Hours of Sebring with the new Audi R10 TDI. The Dane had more problems reacclimatising himself to the English temperatures after arriving from the USA than jumping into the newly built Audi A4 DTM, which completed its roll-out on Tuesday.

The ten Audi drivers reeled off more than 5,000 test kilometres in ice-cold conditions at Brands Hatch. The busiest was Mattias Ekström who completed 425 laps and set the week's third fastest lap time. New Audi signing Heinz-Harald Frentzen was only 63 thousandths of a second slower, and once again proved that he gets to grips with Audi A4 DTM straight out of the box.

Olivier Tielemans sat for the first time in an Audi A4 DTM at Brands Hatch. The 21-year old Netherlander contests the forthcoming DTM season for the Audi customer team Futurecom TME.

The majority of the Audi DTM squad travels directly to Düsseldorf from Brands Hatch, where the 2006 DTM will be presented to the media and public this coming weekend. The season starts on 9 April in Hockenheim.

Quotes after the test at Brands Hatch

Tom Kristensen (Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline #7)

41.587s (391 laps)

“The circuit is short, but isn't really a single a slow corner. That's why you need a really good car here. My new A4 was fast and perfect straight out of the box, all I had to do was adjust the seat belts. The mechanics have once again done a fantastic job. The fastest time is a reward for their work and even more motivating for the new season.”

Mattias Ekström (Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline #5)

41.869s (425 laps)

“I'm satisfied with the test. We tested a huge amount of things and are not only well prepared for the race at Brands Hatch but also for the season opener at Hockenheim. The circuit is exciting even though it's so short. It'll be really close, especially in qualifying.”

Heinz-Harald Frentzen (Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline #6)

41.932s (276 laps)

“We collected a lot of data and made another positive step forward technically. I now know the characteristics of the Audi A4 much better and my team's way of working. I would obviously have liked to have tried a few more things before Hockenheim, unfortunately the information that we have gathered to date will have to suffice.”

Martin Tomczyk (Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline #4)

42.065s (340 laps)

“The Brands Hatch circuit is actually quite short, but apart from that it's really okay. After this test I can certainly say that I have once again learnt a great deal about this year's car. I hope I can put these results to good effect at Hockenheim.”

Frank Stippler (Audi Sport Team Rosberg #15)

42.108s (177 laps)

“Brands Hatch is like a tiny version of the Nordschleife. There is no room for error. As soon as you go off line the chances are high that you will hit something. Unfortunately I didn't get to drive as much as I'd hoped. What's good is that the times were nevertheless very good.”

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Pierre Kaffer (Audi Sport Team Phoenix #14)**42.238s (209 laps)**

“I like the Brands Hatch track – it’s really is from the old school. However, I also found out for myself just how small the run-off areas are. It’s a shame that we suffered a suspension failure; otherwise I could have done a few more fast laps. In generally I’m satisfied with the results of the test.”

Timo Scheider (Audi Sport Team Rosberg #16)**42.318s (197 laps)**

“I was a little more cautious after the Mercedes drivers’ accidents on the first day. That’s why the lap times don’t exactly reflect what we are capable of. But this is really okay if you know you have more to come. I was able to spend a-day-and-a-half getting to know the A4 even better and am now looking forward to the season opener at Hockenheim – that’s where I’ll also get my own race car.”

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Vanina Ickx (Futurecom TME #20)**42.400s (258 laps)**

“The test was shorter than expected because I had to share my car with my new team mate. I concentrated mainly on honing my driving style and much less on different set ups. I simulated qualifying on Wednesday with a fresh set of tyres and set a pretty respectable time. Qualifying in the DTM is very important – and on this short circuit at Brands Hatch it will be very busy...”

Christian Abt (Audi Sport Team Phoenix)**42.420s (134 laps)**

“The race engine for the first round was already installed in my car. That’s why I didn’t rack up so many laps, since it isn’t the test in Brands Hatch that counts but the season opener in Hockenheim. The lap times don’t mean a great deal. I’m satisfied with the test, we found out a lot of interesting things.”

Olivier Tielemans (Futurecom TME #19)**42.746s (234 laps)**

“The Audi A4 DTM is really cool. It’s almost as quick as the Formula 3000 car which I drove last year, but much professionally built. The A4 responds precisely to the steering and is a lot of fun to drive. It goes without saying that I have to learn a lot because I lack experience – but I pick things up very quickly.”

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