

Challenging Morocco Rally for Audi

- **Ups and downs for Audi at the Morocco Rally**
- **Three stage victories for innovative Audi RS Q e-tron**
- **All three Audi RS Q e-tron cars at the finish of the Morocco Rally**

Neuburg a. d. Donau, October 18, 2023 – Team Audi Sport received no reward for a strong recovery at the Morocco Rally: Stéphane Peterhansel and co-driver Edouard Boulanger had improved from sixth place to second position on the penultimate day. However, a failure of the water pump on the final day deprived the two French Audi Sport drivers of the chance of a top result. The two other Audi driver pairings Mattias Ekström/Emil Bergkvist and Carlos Sainz/Lucas Cruz also experienced ups and downs during the more than 2,200-kilometer desert rally.

At the Morocco Rally, the innovative Audi RS Q e-tron with electric drive, high-voltage battery and energy converter proved its competitiveness with three stage victories. Before the final day there was even a chance of a podium result: After Stéphane Peterhansel and his compatriot Edouard Boulanger had fallen behind in the first half of the rally due to two punctures, they started the penultimate stage in fourth place with a gap of almost 20 minutes. They won the stage and moved to within 3m 49s of the leaders after two rivals had fallen far behind on this, the longest stage at 343 kilometers. On the final day, however, damage to a water pump forced them to abandon the race for overall victory. They finished in 47th place.

“It’s a shame that Stéphane and Edouard weren’t rewarded for their good performances,” says Head of Audi Motorsport Rolf Michl. “We were aware from last year how tough and demanding the Morocco Rally is. We repeatedly experienced setbacks this year that thwarted a smooth rally for all three cars. That’s why Mattias Ekström/Emil Bergkvist and Carlos Sainz/Lucas Cruz didn’t advance any further in the final results. However, the development work and the individual performances of all three driver crews demand great respect. With a total of three stage victories Audi showed what is possible on the six rally days.”

The rally had started for Audi with a best time set by Mattias Ekström/Emil Bergkvist in the prologue. When the two Swedes got lost on the first special stage a day later and missed a mandatory waypoint, they received a penalty time of one hour. A puncture on the second stage and driving in the dust of competitors cost the number 206 Audi RS Q e-tron further time. With a best time on the third stage, former DTM Champion and Rallycross World Champion Ekström underlined his ambitions. From 55th place after the first stage, Ekström and Bergkvist still fought their way up to ninth place in the final result.

Carlos Sainz and Lucas Cruz systematically improved on the first three days of the desert rally. After finishing sixth in the prologue and fourth on the first stage, the two Spaniards set the second-best time the following day. However, a leak in a transmission oil circuit forced Sainz to

stop repeatedly on the third stage. As a result, more than two and a half hours were lost and Audi number 209 dropped from third to 30th place. Damage to a water pump cost the Spaniards further time on the final day. They reached the finish in 22nd position.

Sven Quandt, Team Principal of Q Motorsport, looks back with his team on an intensive time in Morocco: “We have once again experienced how close success and defeat can be in motorsport. Our drivers and co-drivers and the entire team deserve a big thank you for the three weeks of hard work we spent in the desert from the start of our test until today. We can now go at the pace that we lacked in the Dakar Rally. At the same time, we’ve seen where work still needs to be done. Everyone knows what still needs to be accomplished in the months leading up to the Dakar Rally.”

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