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Disappointing Petit Le Mans for Audi

- **Romain Dumas pushed off the track in battle for the lead**
- **Second Audi R18 TDI withdrawn after several collisions**
- **Strong performance by Audi Sport Team Joest goes unrewarded**

Ingolstadt/Road Atlanta, October 1, 2011 – The 1,000-mile “Petit Le Mans” race at Road Atlanta (U.S. state of Georgia) was extremely disappointing for Audi. In the battle for the lead Romain Dumas in the Audi R18 TDI #1 on lap 297 became faultlessly entangled in an accident that forced him to retire. After several collisions, Audi Sport Team Joest took the second Audi R18 TDI out of the race early for safety reasons.

For seven hours the Audi fans had reason to hope for the brand with the four rings clinching victory at the prestigious US endurance classic. Timo Bernhard, Romain Dumas and Marcel Fässler in the Audi R18 TDI designated as car number “1” fought some thrilling battles with the competition. It took Marcel Fässler only eight laps to bump the Peugeot that had started from the pole position from position one for the first time.

Although the Audi trio acted very cautiously in the extremely heavy traffic on the about 4.088-kilometer track and avoided body contact the three Audi drivers were able to achieve an advantage of a full lap over their immediate rivals some of the time. This advantage was destroyed when debris from another car lying on the track clogged one of the radiator ducts of the R18 TDI, which required an unscheduled pit stop. A 20-second stop-and-go penalty cost additional time.

Bernhard/Dumas/Fässler consistently stayed on the leading lap nevertheless and managed to close the gap to the leading Peugeot again with fast lap times. At the end of the seventh hour Romain Dumas launched a first attack against Franck Montagny during which there was some slight body contact in the chicane before the start and finish and the Audi driver lost five seconds. Only a few laps later Dumas caught up with the Peugeot again. When the Peugeot touched a GT vehicle Dumas at the start of the parallel straight was able to move alongside Montagny



but was squeezed out by the Peugeot driver in the acceleration phase. While trying to avoid a collision with the Peugeot, Dumas brushed a GT vehicle and heavily hit the wall. That put a disappointing end to the race of the number “1” Audi R18 TDI which had been outstanding up to that point.

The sister car – number “2” – lost all chances of victory as early as in the starting phase. Tom Kristensen had two incidents of body contact with slower cars right at the beginning. The first one led to a puncture and a damaged hood. Later on, Allan McNish was hit in the rear by a GT vehicle. In addition to suspension and body parts, the clutch had to be exchanged which caused car number “2” to lose over an hour and drop back to a hopeless position. Because the various body contacts had also caused problems with the steering, Audi Sport Team Joest decided to take the car driven by Dindo Capello, Tom Kristensen and Allan McNish out of the race after 302 laps for safety reasons.

Quotes after the race

Dr. Wolfgang Ullrich (Head of Audi Motorsport): “I’m very disappointed. We were battling for victory for seven hours and were leading several times. Our best car and the best Peugeot were always just separated by a few seconds. Unfortunately, Romain Dumas was barged off by the leading Peugeot while he was trying to overtake it. This resulted in contact with a GT vehicle that had to be lapped and an accident leading to retirement. This was an extreme shame because we had the performance to win this race. I think it wasn’t necessary to fend off Romain’s attack in such a brutal way – that’s not the way to act in endurance racing, especially at such high speeds. The second car became entangled in several minor collisions early on and was out of contention for victory after a longer repair despite driving the times of the front runners. We congratulate Peugeot on their victory and the ILMC title. Nevertheless, there is an aftertaste today which is not so pleasant.”

Dindo Capello (Audi R18 TDI #2): “Audi has generally delivered a strong performance yet again. We showed that we’ve got a fast car. But unpredictable incidents prevented us from reaping the fruits of our labor. As far as our car is concerned, we had a few collisions today that could have been avoided by the drivers of slower cars. That cost us our race early on. After a long repair I did a triple stint which in my opinion was a good comeback after the race at Le Mans. In that respect I’m satisfied by the disappointment for the whole team naturally outweighs things. Our ‘sister car’ had the chance to win the race. It’s a shame for Timo (Bernhard), Romain (Dumas) and Marcel (Fässler) who would have deserved better than this.”



Tom Kristensen (Audi R18 TDI #2): “I’m extremely disappointed. I feel particularly sorry for everyone in the Audi team who worked incredibly hard. We had several incidents with our car right in the beginning, which caused us to lose some ground. The clutch change hit us particularly hard. The mechanics did a great job in that case too that went unrewarded. I think it must have been fantastic watching these races – at least over longer stretches. But some of the incidents were a bit much from my perspective. We need to think about what can be improved in this respect in the future.”

Allan McNish (Audi R18 TDI #2): “There were many cars on track here and we knew that the traffic would cause problems. Tom (Kristensen) had slight body contact very early on which caused us to lose some ground. We had recovered pretty well when I overtook some GT cars and an LMP cut me a bit. I braked and was hit in the rear by one of the GT cars. I spun and the car was pretty heavily damaged. On the way to the pits the clutch broke too. We were ultimately forced to retire because after all these hits which the poor car had to take in this race we had problems with the steering. It was a bit disappointing for Tom (Kristensen), Dindo (Capello) and me. We had the feeling that we had a well-balanced car that we could have been in contention for victory with.”

Timo Bernhard (Audi R18 TDI #1): “I think that the whole team around car number ‘1’ did an exceptionally good job today. This particularly applies to the pit crew but also to us drivers – Romain (Dumas), Marcel (Fässler) and me. We didn’t make any mistakes, constantly stayed on the same lap with the race leader despite a stop-and-go penalty and were always within a striking distance to victory. The end unfortunately came very abruptly. We didn’t deserve that because we fought hard and always stayed fair in the process. We had a good rhythm and found the right, calculated risk. Unfortunately, Franck Montagny overdid it and barged off Romain (Dumas) who hit a slower car in the process. That was unfair. I’m very disappointed about Montagny.”

Romain Dumas (Audi R18 TDI #1): “Right from the start we had a well-balanced car. We knew that we had to avoid accidents despite the heavy traffic. That worked out well. All three of us did good stints although we drove cautiously. I caught the leading Peugeot and tried overtaking it for the first time. Even then we already had slight contact. The second time he had previously had contact with a GT Porsche and lost some speed. I wanted to take advantage of the opportunity. Franck Montagny knew that I was going to pass him and deliberately drove on my line. Maybe I was too nice because I steered to the left in order to avoid a collision and hit the slower Porsche in the process. A very stupid maneuver on Montagny’s part.”



Marcel Fässler (Audi R18 TDI #1): “I had a good start but had to let Sébastien Bourdais in the Peugeot pass. But afterward the car was so good that I was able to catch up with and even overtake him. All in all, we had a very competitive car that not only worked well for me but also for Timo (Bernhard) and Romain (Dumas). Even after minor problems we were always able to make up ground again. I think the whole team and also we, the drivers, did everything right in that respect. The maneuvers by Franck Montagny were clearly not fair. It’s not right to squeeze others out and you could see the result. That’s a shame because the spectators would have deserved a good finale. And we would have deserved staying in contention for victory all the way up to the end.”

Ralf Jüttner (Technical Director Audi Sport Team Joest): “That was no doubt one of the most disappointing races I’ve ever experienced. The number ‘2’ car was kind of getting in its own way a bit today and became entangled in collisions. That led to long repairs and the battle for front positions was over early on. Afterward we used it as the car to test the tires for car number ‘1’. They were always running at the front and battling for the lead, and also leading the race some of the time. Right at the time when Romain (Dumas) was about to recapture the lead, Franck Montagny in the Peugeot defended himself with a – in my opinion – questionable maneuver. That ended in the wall for Romain. After that we pulled number ‘2’ out of the race for safety reasons after the telemetry showed us that there were problems with the steering. It’s a shame because we clearly had the pace for winning today.”

– End –

The Audi Group delivered around 1,092,400 cars of the Audi brand to customers in 2010. The Company posted revenue of €35.4 billion and an operating profit of €3.3 billion in 2010. In the first half of 2011, the Audi Group sold 652,970 vehicles bearing the four rings worldwide and achieved record figures in terms of revenue (€21.5 billion) and operating profit (€2.5 billion). Audi produces vehicles in Ingolstadt and Neckarsulm (Germany), Győr (Hungary), Changchun (China) and Brussels (Belgium). Aurangabad in India saw the start of CKD production of the Audi A6 at the end of 2007, of the Audi A4 in early October 2008 and of the Audi Q5 in July 2010. Production of the new Audi A1 has been running at the Brussels plant since May 2010. The Audi Q3 has been built in Martorell (Spain) since June 2011. The Company is active in more than 100 markets worldwide. AUDI AG’s wholly owned subsidiaries include AUDI HUNGARIA MOTOR Kft., Automobili Lamborghini Holding S.p.A. in Sant’Agata Bolognese (Italy) and quattro GmbH in Neckarsulm. Audi currently employs around 60,000 people worldwide, including around 46,600 in Germany. Between 2011 and 2015 the brand with the four rings is planning to invest more than €11 billion, mainly in new products, in order to sustain the Company’s technological lead embodied in its “Vorsprung durch Technik” slogan. By 2015, Audi plans to increase the number of models in its portfolio to 42.

Audi has long been fulfilling its social responsibility on many levels – with the aim of making the future worth living for generations to come. The basis for Audi’s lasting success is therefore formed by environmental protection, the conservation of resources, international competitiveness and a forward-looking human resources policy. One example of AUDI AG’s commitment to environmental issues is the newly established Audi Environmental Foundation. Under the heading of “Audi balanced mobility,” the Company is directing its activities toward a major goal – comprehensive CO₂-neutral mobility.