



Press Information

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Three Audi R8 racers at season highlight in Le Mans

Le Mans: AUDI AG has won the 24 Hours of Le Mans, probably the world's hardest car race, three times in succession. This coming weekend, three Audi customer teams aim to benefit from the reliability of the Audi R8, which played such a decisive role in the three Audi victories in 2000, 2001 and 2002: Audi Sport Japan Team Goh, Audi Sport UK and Team ADT Champion Racing each enter an Audi R8 in the French endurance classic on 14-15 June 2003. The Audi importers in Japan, Great Britain and North America and the Audi Sport Customer Sport Department support the involvement during the sport car scene's season highlight.

The three Audi customer teams will compete with last year's proven Audi R8. Apart from the smaller engine air intake restrictors, which are stipulated by the 2003 season regulations and the subsequent drop in engine power to approximately 550 hp, the Audi R8, when compared with last year's car, are technically identical. "As no development work had to be carried out, the teams had sufficient time to prepare for the race and used the time available efficiently," explained Head of Audi Sport Dr Wolfgang Ullrich.

Audi Sport Japan Team Goh, Audi Sport UK and Team ADT Champion Racing use the basic data gathered by the works teams from the previous years. During the pre-test at the beginning of May, the single test opportunity on the 13.650 kilometre track that runs partly on roads normally used by the general public, the teams concentrated on suspension and aerodynamic fine-tuning and tyre choice. Important findings: The maximum speed on the legendary Hunaudières straight sank due to the reduction in engine power by approximately ten kilometres per hour to 315 kph, simultaneously the fuel consumption, in comparison to last year, of the already incredibly economical Audi R8 FSI engines is further reduced.

The Audi Sport Customer Sport Department provide the teams with spare parts and engineering know-how during the Le Mans week, which already begins on in the town centre on Monday with scrutineering. In addition to the engine engineers and engine technicians, Audi Sport has made available an experienced race engineer from the successful Audi works team. "He will contribute his experience collected from the successful works programme," said Head of Audi Sport Dr Wolfgang Ullrich.

The driver squads are also very experienced: Three Le Mans winners, Stefan Johansson, JJ Lehto and Emanuele Pirro share driving duties in the Champion R8. In the Audi Sport UK Audi R8, three time Le Mans winner Frank Biela is supported by the two former Formula 1 drivers Mika Salo and Perry McCarthy. Seiji Ara, Jan Magnussen and Marco Werner drive the "Japanese" R8. "I don't believe that we will have the quickest car this year," said JJ Lehto on behalf of his driving colleagues. "However, I think we have a good chance: The R8 is well developed, and the FSI engine incredibly economical and reliable. And this is of particular importance in Le Mans."

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