

Le Mans, 19 June 2005

Motorsport

Audi wins Le Mans in front of a record crowd

- **230,000 spectators watch fifth Le Mans victory of the Audi R8**
- **Tom Kristensen writes a new chapter in Le Mans history**
- **First triumph for an American team since 1967**

The last start of the Audi R8 in the Le Mans 24 Hour race could hardly have been more impressive: Tom Kristensen (Denmark), JJ Lehto (Finland) and Marco Werner (Germany) clinched the fifth victory of the Audi R8 in the French endurance classic in what will be remembered as one of the most fiercely contested races in the history of the event.

AUDI AG
Kommunikation
85045 Ingolstadt
www.audi.com

A record crowd of 230,000 spectators saw a stunning demonstration of Audi's corporate slogan "Vorsprung durch Technik". Whilst ambient temperatures of 35 degrees caused a high attrition rate amongst the 49 cars entered, the three Audi R8 sportscars of Audi's importer teams from the USA and France ran immaculately throughout the 24 hours. Thus, the Audi drivers were able to overcome the handicap imposed by the regulations. Although the three Audi R8 cars were not the fastest contenders in the field, they clinched first, third and fourth position thanks to their reliability and their constant run to the finish.

Tom Kristensen, JJ Lehto and Marco Werner didn't put a foot wrong, too, during the 24 hour race, thus helping Team ADT Champion Racing to celebrate its first victory at Le Mans – and the first one for an American team since 1967. In addition, Audi works driver Tom Kristensen opened a new chapter in Le Mans history: the Danish driver won arguably the toughest race in the world for a record seventh time thus surpassing previous record holder Jacky Ickx. JJ Lehto won the Le Mans 24 Hour race for the second time after his inaugural win in 1995. For Marco Werner, a dream came true when he scored his first Le Mans victory in only his fourth attempt.

The driver combination of Lehto/Kristensen/Werner which won the Sebring 12 Hour race in the USA at the beginning of the season led the race from the fourth

hour to the finish. Tom Kristensen performed miracles: as the advantage over the second-placed Pescarolo-Judd had come down to less than one lap on Sunday at noon, Kristensen stayed in the cockpit for a stint of three and a half hours so as to avoid one more driver change in order to save time.

Frank Biela (Germany), Allan McNish (Scotland) and Emanuele Pirro (Italy) finished third in the “American” Audi R8 sister car. Biela/McNish/Pirro lost their chance to fight for overall victory on Sunday morning due to a puncture, causing a run-off that necessitated a change of the front right suspension. Audi PlayStation Team ORECA from France had to change the right front suspension twice. Jean-Marc Gounon, Franck Montagny and Stéphane Ortelli who all hail from France still came home fourth.

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Out of a total of six starts since 2000, the Audi R8 has won the Le Mans 24 Hour race five times. “This is a fantastic result,” said Dr Martin Winterkorn, Chairman of the Board of AUDI AG, who had green-flagged the race at 16.00 hours the previous day as Honorary Starter. „There is no way for a more impressive demonstration of the slogan ‚Vorsprung durch Technik‘ in motorsport than at Le Mans. To clinch the fifth Le Mans victory in more difficult conditions than in previous years is a remarkable feat. It was only possible thanks to the unique reliability of the Audi R8. Congratulations to the members of Audi Sport, to the team of Audi USA and, of course, to Tom Kristensen who is now finally the ‘King of Le Mans’. This weekend, we have seen once more the excitement and the worldwide interest in the Le Mans race. Hence we want to continue meeting this challenge in the future. It is no secret that a new sports prototype is under development at Audi Sport for the 2006 season. However, we will define the details of our motorsport programme for next year delete in the autumn.”

Communication Motorsport
Telephone +49 (0)841 89 34200, Fax +49 (0)841 89 38617
E-Mail motorsport-media@audi.de

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