

Oschersleben, 25 June 2005

## Motorsport

### “I’m the happiest racer in the world”

- **Interview with Le Mans record winner Tom Kristensen**
- **More than 200 SMS messages after Le Mans victory**
- **The unique feeling of sitting in an Audi**

Last Saturday at 4:01 p.m. and 35 seconds, the triumph was accomplished: Tom Kristensen in his Audi R8 crosses the finish line at Le Mans as the victor, thus writing another chapter in the annals of motorsport history. No other driver before him has managed to win what is arguably the world’s most famous race seven times. Changing from the sportscar to the Audi A4 DTM was obviously not very difficult for the 37-year-old Dane. Merely a week after the victory at Le Mans, he will be starting from the pole position for the first time in his DTM career at Oschersleben. Tom Kristensen comments on his achievements, goals and very special congratulations in the following interview.

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### **Crossing the finish line in front of a crowd of 230,000 at Le Mans, your seventh victory, your new record – what were the thoughts that entered your mind?**

**Tom Kristensen:** “I was – and still am – the happiest racer in the world. For me, a dream has come true, and in a relatively short period of time at that: I contested Le Mans nine times, I finished seven times, and each time I won. Clearly, the major credit for these exploits goes to the Audi R8, the car in which I won five events together with different team-mates in each of these races.”

### **Has this triumph changed you?**

**Tom Kristensen:** “Never in my life have I been as relaxed as I am now, and I have a feeling as though I no longer need to prove anything to anybody. Of course, that’s not true because racing continues again as early as this weekend – nevertheless, I’d somehow like to hold on to this feeling for the rest of my life. I think that in future I’ll be able to relish exploits even more than before.”

## **What did you do the days after Le Mans?**

**Tom Kristensen:** “Audi Denmark and Jyske Bank – one of our sponsors – invited my entire family and myself to Copenhagen for two days. Together with my wife, Hanne, and my children, Carla and Oliver, I stayed at a suite in Denmark’s most expensive hotel and had a few PR appearances at the Tivoli.”

## **How was the response to your victory?**

**Tom Kristensen:** “Incredible, and much greater and warmer than I had imagined. I received roughly 150 e-mails and more than 200 SMS messages – and I still haven’t had the time to answer them all. On the website of one of Denmark’s leading newspapers, readers cast votes in favour of our victory as the greatest Danish sporting exploit – even ranking ahead of the European Championship win of our footballers in 1992. That made me very happy. By the way, I think our opponent in the final match at that time was Germany...”

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## **And who was the first person to express congratulations?**

**Tom Kristensen:** “That was Jacky Ickx. He left a voice mail message for me at 3.53 p.m., in other words, a few laps before the finish, saying: ‘I know that you’re sitting in the car, because I’m watching you on television right now.’ Then he congratulated me and, with a smile, said that at least he was now the only racer again with six Le Mans victories to his credit. Jacky Ickx is a great individual and ambassador of motor racing. He will always remain the true ‘Mr Le Mans’.”

## **How difficult is the change from the R8 to the Audi A4 DTM now?**

**Tom Kristensen:** “Of course, these are two completely different cars. But I’m not changing from sports to touring cars for the first time. And it’s being made very easy for me: when you grab the wheel and put your foot on the accelerator pedal, either car makes you realise immediately that you’re sitting in an Audi.”

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