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Motorsport

Audi fights for Le Mans victory with TDI Power

- **Le Mans début for the new Audi R10 TDI**
- **The chance for Audi to write motorsport history**
- **Six 'old-hands' drive a pair of Diesel sportscars**

After 30,000km of testing and approximately 1,500 hours on the engine dynamometers, things get serious: AUDI AG fights for overall victory at the legendary 24 Hours of Le Mans (France) as the first ever automobile manufacturer with a diesel engine.

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That this target is extremely ambitious but in no way unrealistic, was proven by Audi in March when the new R10 TDI won the 12-hour race at Sebring (USA) on its race début – an impressive demonstration of Audi TDI Power. And all this less than four months after the very first exploratory laps made by the revolutionary Diesel sportscar.

Audi has already won the 24 Hours of Le Mans five times with the R8. If one includes the Bentley victory during the 2003 season with the Speed 8, in which an Audi Sport developed TFSI engine propelled that car, then Audi technology is unbeaten in the world's most demanding car race since 2000.

Head of Audi Motorsport Dr Wolfgang Ullrich wants the team to continue this winning streak. However, the challenge this time around is bigger than ever before, since TDI Technology has never been pushed to its limits in motorsport. Audi is the first automobile manufacturer to face this challenge. In addition, the Audi R10 is the first sportscar with a Diesel engine to be developed in accordance with the new ACO (Automobile Club de l'Ouest) LM P1 regulations. Therefore, the Audi Sport technicians did not only have to prepare themselves for the peculiarities of TDI Technology, but also to exploit the specifications dictated by the new regulations in order to set new benchmarks with TDI Power in the most technologically interesting motorsport category found around the globe today.

The aluminium V12 power unit in the R10 TDI produces 650 hp. Even more remarkable is the maximum torque of over 1100 Newton metres. Tyres, clutch and gearbox must come to terms, just like the drivers, with these enormous forces – and all this over a 24 hour period.

With Frank Biela, Dindo Capello, Le Mans record winner Tom Kristensen, Allan McNish, Emanuele Pirro and Marco Werner, six seasoned campaigners compete for Audi who all know how to win at Le Mans. The same can be said of Audi Sport Team Joest which runs both the cars.

The brace of Audi R10 TDI prototypes reeled off their first laps around the 13.650 kilometre long “Circuit des 24 Heures” in Le Mans less than 14 days before the start of the race at the official test day on 4 June – the only opportunity to test on the circuit, which partly runs over public roads closed for the event.

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After the test day, the two R10 TDI prototypes were stripped, checked and reassembled. A short function-check was scheduled for Wednesday, 7 June on the “Circuit Bugatti” at Le Mans, in which the engines for qualifying and the race were fitted.

The grid positions will be decided on Wednesday and Thursday between 1900-2100 and 2200-2400 (local time). The start of the race follows on Saturday at 1700, an hour later than normal at Le Mans because of the World Cup football match between Portugal and Iran.

The Pan-European television station Motors TV, transmitted via satellite and cable in 32 European countries, broadcasts “live” from Le Mans for more than 48 hours and shows the race in full length. Furthermore, Premiere transmits a “live” signal in Germany. Numerous international TV stations are planning features about the Le Mans race. More than 220,000 spectators are expected on site during the event.

Audi has the chance to write motorsport history on 17/18 June 2006. “However, we also know just how ambitious this goal is and that you need ‘lady luck’ riding on your side especially at Le Mans,” stresses Head of Audi Motorsport Dr Wolfgang Ullrich.

Quotes before the Le Mans 24 Hours

Dr Wolfgang Ullrich (Head of Audi Motorsport): “For Audi, Le Mans is the most important race of the year. The R10 TDI is a completely new car with an all-new engine with which we would like to demonstrate the performance of Audi TDI Power, without, however, having Le Mans experience with this package. We have tested intensively and are well prepared. But we know that we can encounter many unexpected things and that a Le Mans victory depends on many factors.”

Frank Biela (Audi R10 TDI #8): “Le Mans is the greatest sportscar race in the world. It’s always something very special for me to drive at Le Mans – even more with special projects. The R8 was the first Audi sportscar. The R10 TDI is the first prototype with a TDI engine and again something extraordinary. The car was very good from the beginning, we had to address only some small issues. We’ve seen at Sebring that the car has the speed. It is also reliable. However, for such a long race you have always to keep your fingers crossed.”

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Dindo Capello (Audi R10 TDI #7): “I’ve been driving a TDI privately for ten years. Obviously the V12 TDI of the R10 is much more powerful, but there are some things in comparison to the road cars, especially with regard to the torque, how quiet the engine is and the way it starts. The R10 TDI is really beautiful to drive. It’s probably the race car I like most in my entire career. The power you get at low revs is something unique. We want to repeat our Sebring victory, but we know how difficult this will be and that it is impossible to make a forecast for such a long race.”

Tom Kristensen (Audi R10 TDI #7): “Le Mans is a new challenge every year. I have great respect for this race even though I’ve already won it seven times. Le Mans is even more special this year with the new Audi R10 TDI. The Diesel project is brand new, that’s why we all have butterflies in the stomach. Nobody has done anything similar before. The Audi technicians have worked hard and brilliantly. We need to have solutions for all the little niggles that definitely will come up during the race. We know we can rely on our team. Allan, Dindo and I will give our part and drive as fast and consistently as possible.”

Allan McNish (Audi R10 TDI #7): “I’ve won Le Mans before with another manufacturer and have finished second and third with Audi. So definitely there is one trophy missing: that’s first position with Audi. To do it at the first race at Le Mans for

the Audi R10 TDI would be a fantastic feeling. Driving a Diesel is different in the way you drive the car. But as a racing driver I'm only looking at the end result. The engine is very powerful and economical, and also a little bit quieter to drive – this gives us an advantage. Despite that I try not to have too many expectations for Le Mans. The one thing you learn when you are there is that you can always expect the unexpected. The race will be very difficult.”

Emanuele Pirro (Audi R10 TDI #8): “Without sounding arrogant, when you drive an Audi, your only target is the victory. When I heard about the Le Mans Diesel project for the first time, I was really hoping to be a part of it. Now the dream is coming true and it would be nice to score a victory. We have the chance to make history. But the R10 TDI is very complex and full of high-technology. You realise this when you see how many engineers are working on this project. At the beginning it was a little bit strange to drive a Diesel, but now I feel almost at home as with the R8.”

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Marco Werner (Audi R10 TDI #8): “I don't drive so many races this year, so obviously I hope that I will be able to achieve a good Le Mans result. But I have no different approach compared to the previous years. Le Mans is simply the most important race of the year. I've won many important races: the Formula 3 Grand Prix in Monaco when I was a young and upcoming driver, later the 24 Hours of Daytona and the 12 Hours of Sebring – to win Le Mans last year was still something very special. When you have been once at Le Mans you know that you can't compare this race to any other race.”

Ralf Jüttner (Technical Director Audi Sport Team Joest): “Expectations are clear: We don't come to Le Mans to finish second or third. We want to become the first ones to win the 24 Hours of Le Mans with a Diesel engine. This target is very ambitious. We have strong competition, the R10 TDI project is very complex and still at an early stage. It will be even more important than before this year to drive 24 hours without problems – technically, but also from the drivers' point of view. During the preparation for the race we've done everything that was possible.”

Notes to the editors:

Pictures of the Audi R10 TDI and its drivers, PDF versions of our comprehensive Le Mans press kit and our Le Mans booklet and sound bites of the Audi drivers and Head of Audi Motorsport Dr Wolfgang Ullrich can be downloaded from www.audi-motorsport.info. An Audi press conference regarding the Le Mans event is scheduled for Friday, 16 June, 1400 hrs in the Audi Racing Club at Le Mans.

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**Photographs, sound bites and additional information on the Internet:
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