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Motorsport

Audi triumphs with TDI Power at Le Mans

- **First victory of a diesel engine in 24 Hour race**
- **Historic triumph in front of record crowd**
- **Both Audi R10 TDI cars with podium finishes**

AUDI AG has written an important chapter in the history of motor racing with its historic triumph in the Le Mans 24 Hour race. The new Audi R10 TDI was the first diesel car to win arguably the toughest car race in the world. In front of a record crowd of 235,000 spectators, Frank Biela (Germany), Emanuele Pirro (Italy) and Marco Werner (Germany) clinched the sixth and most important Le Mans win for Audi so far. Dindo Capello (Italy), Tom Kristensen (Denmark) and Allan McNish (Scotland) also achieved a podium in finishing third overall.

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The fans on the race track and a worldwide audience of millions of TV viewers saw an impressive demonstration of Audi TDI Power and the performance of modern diesel engines. The brace of Audi R10 TDI cars, powered by a 650 hp V12 TDI engine, were by far the fastest and most economical cars. During the entire race, one of the new diesel sportscars from Ingolstadt was at the head of the field. Le Mans record winner Tom Kristensen drove the fastest lap of the race, setting a 3m 31.211s time, and he was the first driver at the wheel of an LM P1 sportscar to cover 16 laps with one fuel load. Completing 380 laps, Audi also set a new distance record.

In the race, the advantage in fuel consumption of the Audi TDI Power was visible for the spectators too: on average, the Audi drivers only pitted every 14 laps to refuel 90 litres of Shell V-Power Diesel. The opposition, who relies on petrol engines, had to pit considerably more often. The fans were also impressed just how quiet an environmentally friendly 650-hp sportscar can be.

Although the roll-out of the new Audi R10 TDI took place only 200 days before the race, the victorious Diesel sportscar ran as reliably for 24 hours as its predecessor, the R8 that scored five Le Mans victories. The only unscheduled pit stop was carried out at 3:47 am when Audi Sport Team Joest decided to replace the gear cluster after trouble

with fifth gear. In spite of the fact that the change of the entire rear end – as it had been done with the R8 – is no longer allowed by the rules, the team needed less than ten minutes for this exercise thanks to an innovative gearbox design. One more minute was lost for Frank Biela, Emanuele Pirro and Marco Werner on Sunday morning when one headlight of their R10 TDI was broken so the front bodywork had to be replaced. Apart from that, their Audi run like a clockwork.

Biela and Pirro celebrated their respective fourth Le Mans victory after 2000, 2001 and 2002. Thus, they rank in fourth position in the historic record charts behind Tom Kristensen, Jacky Ickx and Derek Bell. For Audi, it was the sixth Le Mans triumph and the third in succession. The success of the Bentley Speed 8 from 2003 included, a car that was powered by an FSI engine developed by Audi Sport, Audi technology is unbeaten at Le Mans in seven years.

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Audi's triumph was completed by Dindo Capello, Tom Kristensen and Allan McNish who finished third. The #7 R10 TDI was in the lead in the early phase of the race when the injectors of the right-hand cylinder bank of the V12 TDI engine had to be replaced in the fourth hour. Having dropped back to 16th position, Capello, Kristensen and McNish fought back with the fastest lap times in the field to third place in spite of further setbacks at night and in the early morning hours. Following a collision with a GT1 car, the undertray was loosened, and also the left-hand turbocharger had to be changed. Number 7 lost almost a full hour in the pits. Thanks to the mechanics who carried out all the repairs they still made it to the podium.

After its victories in the Sebring 12 Hour race and in the Le Mans 24 Hour race, the new Audi R10 TDI remains unbeaten. The next challenge is waiting for the revolutionary diesel sportscar already: from the 15th July onwards, Team Audi Sport North America will fight for the championship title in the American Le Mans Series with a pair of R10 TDI cars.

Quotes after the race

Prof Dr Martin Winterkorn (Chairman of the Board of AUDI AG): "This historic Le Mans triumph is doubtlessly the greatest in the successful motorsport history of AUDI AG. It is stunning evidence of 'Vorsprung durch Technik'. The aim to win the Le Mans 24 Hour race as the first manufacturer in the world with a diesel engine was extraordinarily ambitious. We had the courage and we succeeded at the first attempt.

Today, the Diesel has finally made its mark in motor racing. This was only possible because, as the inventors of the TDI, we have the most comprehensive know-how at our disposal which our customers also benefit from. Every second Audi is a TDI already today. Thanks to this stunning showing at Le Mans, we will succeed in persuading even more customers of the advantages of Audi TDI Power. I congratulate Audi Sport Team Joest, Audi Sport, the colleagues of the Technical Development, our partners who gave us excellent support in this project right from the beginning and of course our six drivers. For Frank Biela and Emanuele Pirro, this was their fourth Le Mans victory, for Marco Werner the second in succession. They have clinched all those victories with Audi.”

Dr Wolfgang Ullrich (Head of Audi Motorsport): “This was already the sixth Le Mans victory for Audi, but by far the most difficult and important one. Only 200 days, the most intensive ones in the history of Audi Sport, separated the roll-out of the R10 TDI and the start of the Le Mans race. I want to thank every single member of Audi Sport, of Audi Sport Team Joest, the colleagues of the TE (department of development) and our technical partners. We have started this project from a blank sheet of paper and we tried something that nobody has ever done before in this form. We knew how big the challenge was to win Le Mans with such a high-performance diesel engine. We have seen in the past 24 hours and before that so many things can happen in this race. Le Mans always harbours some surprises that cannot be simulated on a test bed or a test track. So we are all the more happy to have succeeded in writing another chapter in the history of motorsport. The team has worked immaculately and has always reacted correctly to everything that has occurred. The winning car ran almost faultlessly for 24 hours. Unfortunately, the other car dropped back due to an accident. But the fact that this team made the podium at the end, too, shows that it was a fantastic performance from the team.”

Frank Biela (Audi R10 TDI #8): “We are very proud of the first victory with a diesel engine, that is to say with Audi TDI Power. For Audi, this victory is of particular importance, but for us drivers it is of equal importance. We have been involved in the development right from the beginning. To get this new race car to this venue, to win the most important sportscar race in the world and to be the first to win Le Mans with a diesel engine is a stunning feeling. We were lucky that our car had a good run to the finish. We only encountered a minor gearbox problem, everything else worked perfectly. This is the only way to win at Le Mans.”

Emanuele Pirro (Audi R10 TDI #8): “Today it’s an Audi day, it’s a diesel day and it’s the day of ‘Vorsprung durch Technik’. With the first victory of a diesel engine something extraordinary has happened which we all still don’t completely realize. It’s a great reward for all the people who have been working for this project in front and behind the scenes. I think this weekend we saw the beginning of a new era in motorsport. And it was a confirmation that Audi is the leader of any new technology in the automobile industry.”

Marco Werner (Audi R10 TDI #8): “Of course, it is exciting that we wrote history with the new diesel car in its first Le Mans entry. For me, it is the second victory in succession, so I am absolutely overwhelmed. You’ve got to take your hat off to Audi again and again. The decision to enter the R10 TDI this year was ambitious but correct. There are other manufacturers who allow themselves one more year for such a project. Audi has done a tremendous job to get the car ready to race and ready to win in such a short time span. It is simply incredible: 200 days ago, the car stood on its wheels for the first time and now it has won the Le Mans 24 Hour race. This is more than history – it is a great story!”

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Dindo Capello (Audi R10 TDI #7): “It’s a great result for Audi and we’re all part of this victorious brand. Our car suffered some problems through the race but each time my engineer and the mechanics on #7 worked very hard and did a good job to solve them so that we lost as little time as possible. They all deserve a big thank you. I’m so happy to be a part of this race which now has new history.”

Tom Kristensen (Audi R10 TDI #7): “I’m feeling very, very emotional. Now everybody will know what TDI Power means. This project started not so long ago as a clean sheet of paper and has already triumphed. Audi’s dream has come true so quickly thanks to the efforts of many people in this massive motorsport programme. I’m proud to be apart of this success. I would have loved to be on the top step of the winners’ rostrum with Dindo and Allan but on this occasion, we had to face many challenges in the race. But we overcame these and still finished on the podium.”

Allan McNish (Audi R10 TDI #7): “The TDI project was always a very ambitious one. Audi never takes these things lightly and came perfectly prepared to this race. But coming to Le Mans you have to expect everything including problems – and that’s what happened to our car this weekend as it happened to the Audi R8 on its debut in

2000. But again we overcame them in the true style of Le Mans and Audi, and fought our way to the podium. That was a fantastic effort for the whole team.”

Ralf Jüttner (Technical Director Audi Sport Team Joest): “I am simply happy. This was a hard race with plenty of work, but somehow, it was typical for the whole project that everybody has put so much work into. The latest 24 Hours were no exception. We had our fair share of problems. But then again, this is what you would expect if so much new technology is used for the first time. It is mega that in spite of those circumstances, both cars finished, both made it to the podium and one car has even won. The team has worked incredibly well. The regular pit stops, the unscheduled repairs – everything has worked fine. The result is the justified reward for that.”

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Race results

- 1 Biela/Pirro/Werner (Audi R10 TDI) 380 laps in 24h 04m 47.325s
- 2 Helary/Montagny/Loeb (Pescarolo-Judd) - 4 laps
- 3 Capello/Kristensen/McNish (Audi R10 TDI) - 13 laps
- 4 Gavin/Beretta/Magnussen (Chevrolet) - 25 laps
- 5 Minassian/Collard/Comas (Pescarolo-Judd) - 28 laps
- 6 Enge/Piccini/Turner (Aston Martin) - 30 laps

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Photographs, sound bites and additional information available on the Internet:
www.audi-motorsport.info (accreditation necessary)