

14 Le Mans, 18 June 2000, 18:00hrs

Audi 1-2-3 at Le Mans

The 2000 Le Mans 24 Hours has produced a dream result for Audi. A dominant victory was achieved in arguably the most difficult and demanding race in the world in front of a 200,000 plus crowd. After triumphs in world rallying and in touring car racing, Audi wrote a further chapter in to its already successful and illustrious motorsport history.

In extremely hot weather conditions, Audi proved once more that the slogan, „Vorsprung durch Technik“, the three Audi R8s for 24 hours were not only the fastest cars in 48-car field but also the most reliable.

Dr. Franz-Josef Paefgen, Chairman of the Board, Audi AG, remarked: „The foundations for victory were laid during the conception of this fascinating race car. Everyone who has contributed and worked on this project can really be proud, of course the team from Audi Sport, who have developed the R8, and Audi Sport Team Joest, who have done a perfect preparation of the race cars.“

The three Audi R8s dictated the pace from the outset. In all practice sessions and almost during the entire race, Audi held the top three positions. With 368-laps, the winning car completed three more laps than last year's winner. „We could not have done any better, confirmed a delighted Dr. Wolfgang Ullrich, Audi's Head of Sport. „We had no technical problems at all.“

Rear sections on two of the Audi R8s had to be changed but only for safety reasons. „We did not want to take any risks“, added Dr. Ullrich. „Before this, Audi no. 9 had a spin while no. 7 had a puncture.“

The ultimate winner, the no. 8 Audi R8 driven by Frank Biela (Germany), Tom Kristensen (Denmark) and Emanuele Pirro (Italy), was delayed during the first half of the race by two punctures. Apart from that, the car was running like clockwork and was on top of the field from the 11th hour to the finish.

Frank Biela said: „The car was a dream especially considering that we did 24 hours at high speed and that we were fighting between ourselves.“

Despite Audi enjoying a big advantage, there were no team orders.

Dr Ullrich explained: „We wanted to have a sporting fight. Our drivers had no team orders and they all showed during the race that they were true professionals and that they can handle a high-pressure situation. Everyone was clear that the success should be for Audi and because of that, to me, all of the drivers are winners.“

Behind Biela/Kristensen/Pirro, who had already won the Sebring 12 Hour race in America three months ago, Laurent Aiello (France), Allan McNish

(Britain) and Stéphane Ortelli (France), were second with the similar Audi R8 of Christian Abt (Germany), Michele Alboreto (Italy) and Rinaldo Capello (Italy) coming home third.

Reinhold Joest, Director of Audi Sport Team Joest, confirmed: "This is an outstanding achievement which makes history for Audi. Before us, only three other works teams achieved a 1-2-3 clean sweep at Le Mans."

The next event for the Le Mans winners is in just three weeks. The Audi R8s race at the Nurburgring in Germany in the fourth round of the American Le Mans Series on July 9.

Quotes after the race

Frank Biela (no.8): „I have fulfilled a dream. You do not often have the chance to fight for victory with a fantastic car. You have to make the most of these rare opportunities. I was thinking about Bob Wollek sometimes during the race, a driver who has often competed at Le Mans but has never won this classic race.“

Tom Kristensen (no.8): „1-2-3 for Audi is simply fantastic. The car is unbelievably fast and reliable. We had no problems apart from the punctures but this is Le Mans. I have done three races so far for Joest and won three times. Le Mans 1997, Sebring 2000 and Le Mans 2000. There must be something magic about his team.“

Emanuele Pirro (no.8): „Dr. Ullrich believed in all of his drivers and had faith in us that we would behave professionally despite fighting for the lead with the other Audis. Nevertheless, at the end of the race there were no hard fights and I was not on the limit because we all knew that we needed to bring the cars home to the finish safely.“

Laurent Aiello (no.9): „Naturally I'm a little disappointed. We had an excellent car and three very good drivers and knew that in the end, the car that had less problems would win. We were fastest on the track but lost too much time in the pits.“

Allan McNish (no.9): „It was a sensational effort from the mechanics to change the back of car in such a short time. We never gave up but even without a team order, it was clear to me that we could not make up that time. Near the end, it was pointless taking further risks.“

Stéphane Ortelli (no.9): „For me the race was perfect. My car was the fastest during the whole night but unfortunately we had some bad luck and you have to accept this – it was important that we brought our car home, and second to another Audi, made it a great team effort. The Audi R8 was the best car I have ever driven at Le Mans.“

Christian Abt (no.7): „The important thing for the team is the overall result but of course I'm a little sad that I did not win because we led the race for a

long time. But last year I only did 20 laps at Le Mans therefore third place for me has fulfilled a dream - I think that this is my greatest success so far.“

Michele Alboreto (no.7): „Since the beginning of the Audi project two years ago, we were dreaming of this moment and now it has come true. We had a fast and absolutely reliable car but despite that, I'm very relieved that we survived the pressure of Le Mans which is there right up until the end.“

Rinaldo Capello (no.7): „I'm very happy for the entire team. We worked so hard and tested so much. Every single person has helped with this success - the Audi R8 was simply perfect. We had some small problems at the beginning but after this we were without problems to the finish.“

Dr. Wolfgang Ullrich, Audi's Head of Sport: „I'm absolutely overwhelmed. You cannot have a better car for victory than that. I want to pay a compliment to the entire team. We were all pulling together for this target. It went almost perfectly for 24 hours. The little incidents which occurred are typical of Le Mans.“

Reinhold Joest, Team Director Audi Sport Team Joest: „I'm really happy to have achieved this success together with Audi. It is a result of a good collaboration between Audi Sport and Joest. The pit crews did perfect work, the drivers did a perfect job. The cars were fast and reliable. Three cars in the top-three is an outstanding success!“

Results

1. Biela/Kristensen/Pirro (Audi R8)	368 laps
2. Aiello/McNish/Ortelli (Audi R8)	- 1 lap
3. Abt/Alboreto/Capello (Audi R8)	- 3 laps
4. Bourdais/Grouillard/Clerico (Courage)	- 24 laps
5. Katoh/O'Connell/Raphanel (Panoz)	- 26 laps
6. Suzuki/Kageyama/Kageyama (Panoz)	- 28 laps
7. Beretta/Wendlinger/Dupuy (Chrysler)	- 35 laps
8. Tsuchiya/Kondo/Iida (Panoz)	- 38 laps
9. Donohue/Amorim/Beltoise (Chrysler)	- 40 laps
10. Pilgrim/Collins/Freon (Chevrolet)	- 41 laps

Updated photos on the internet:

www.audi-press.com (password required)

Audi motorsport on the internet: www.audi.com/motorsport