

Audi and the sportscar prototypes in 2005

Farewell tour for the Audi R8

The 2005 season is sixth and, at the same time, the last for the Audi R8 the most successful Le Mans Prototype of all time. 52 victories from 62 races so far, and counting. New regulations are valid for the Le Mans 24 Hours, and the sportscar race series in America (ALMS) and Europe (LMES) derived from the French long-distance classic.

New sportscar prototype for 2006

Therefore, a new prototype sportscar is being planned, which should replace the R8 prototype in 2006. The first tests are planned for the end of 2005, and the 12-hour race in Sebring held during March 2006 is seen as test event. "This extremely hard race has already proven its worth during the R8 project as an excellent dress rehearsal for Le Mans," states Audi Motorsport Head Dr Wolfgang Ullrich.

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Audi R8 with handicaps

The last season for the Audi R8 will probably be its toughest. After 13 wins in 14 races during 2004, the R8 must probably compete with a higher minimum weight and further reduced engine power. "Already last season we mainly owed our success to the enviable reliability, consistency and low fuel consumption of the Turbo FSI engine," explains Dr Ullrich. "These advantages can't be snatched from us. The fifth Le Mans victory and the successful title defence in the ALMS and LMES are our targets in spite of the additional handicaps. We will adapt the R8 as well as possible to the new demands of the regulations."

ALMS, LMES and Le Mans

Works supported importer teams assume responsibility for the race logistic of the Audi R8 during the 2005 season. Audi USA and Audi France plan campaigns in the American Le Mans Series, at the Le Mans 24 Hours and in the Le Mans Endurance Series. "The importers will announce their programmes over the course of the next few weeks as soon as all the details are fixed."

Importers supported with works drivers

As usual Audi supports the involvement of customer and importer teams with its works drivers. During the 2005 season they are the seasoned campaigners Frank Biela (40), Emanuele Pirro (42) and Marco Werner (38). Biela and Pirro won the endurance classic in France three times in succession together with the R8 and each of them won the American Le Mans Series (ALMS) once. Marco Werner is the first driver to have successfully defended his title in the top ALMS prototype category.