

Ingolstadt/Le Mans, 16 June 2006

Motorsport

Audi claims pole with TDI Power at Le Mans

- **Both Audi R10 TDI cars on the front row at Le Mans**
- **Dindo Capello fastest in final qualifying**
- **Superb performance of Audi Sport Team Joest**

In qualifying for the Le Mans 24 Hour race, Audi yet again demonstrated in a stunning way the performance of TDI Power. The brace of new Audi R10 TDI cars were by far the quickest in final qualifying. The two sportscars powered by 650-hp diesel engines will start from the front row on Saturday at 1700 hrs.

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After rain had affected the first qualifying on Wednesday, the conditions on Thursday evening were dry and perfect. In the first part of the final qualifying session, the Audi drivers concentrated on fine-tuning their R10 TDI cars before Audi Sport Team Joest headed for the top of the time sheets at the beginning of the last section. Shortly after 2200 hrs, Dindo Capello and Marco Werner set lap times beyond the reach of the opposition powered by petrol engines.

Setting a time of 3m 30.466s, Dindo Capello scored his third Le Mans pole position following 2001 and 2002. A mere 0.118 seconds behind, Marco Werner completed an all Audi R10 TDI front row.

Capello, who turns 42 on Saturday, did not only present himself with an early birthday present. He also rewarded the work of his mechanics who completely dismantled and re-assembled the Audi R10 TDI with start number 7 for safety reasons after an accident on Wednesday. Just in time for final qualifying, the R10 TDI was ready again.

Dindo Capello starts at Le Mans together with record winner Tom Kristensen and Allan McNish. Frank Biela shares driving duties in the "sister car" with Emanuele Pirro and Marco Werner. All six drivers have won the Le Mans 24 Hour race at least once. However, a diesel-powered car has never won in the history of the Le Mans endurance classic. For the first time, Audi accepts this challenge this weekend.

Quotes after qualifying

Dr Wolfgang Ullrich (Head of Audi Motorsport): “This result is an incredibly good base to build on for the race as we have consequently used both qualifying sessions to develop the cars for the race. We have achieved the times with a race set-up – and with a soft tyre compound for the race. We’ve seen on the test day already that we can achieve good lap times with these tyres for three or four consecutive laps. With a set of ‘qualifiers’, there is only one fast lap possible. We didn’t want to risk running into traffic with them. This strategy paid off. Both teams have displayed a strong performance and did excellent work as we had a damaged car last night. Everybody maintained a good team spirit and worked hard, so the front row is the reward for the whole team. However, we still have to tackle the more important part of the weekend.”

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Dindo Capello (Audi R10 TDI #7): “This is my present for the team which made a great job after my mistake yesterday. I felt so sorry for them that I struggled to sleep in the night. We know this is racing and part of our job, but I really felt bad. I wanted to give them something back. And fortunately it happened. This is my third pole position at Le Mans – and something I’m proud of. Thanks to the Audi R10 TDI! We did only 20 percent of our job here being on pole. The rest we have to do on Saturday and Sunday.”

Tom Kristensen (Audi R10 TDI #7): “An all Audi front row at our first time at Le Mans with a TDI engine – now the world knows that diesel is very sporty. With quick lap times, Dindo (Capello) and Marco (Werner) did great jobs in qualifying without taking too much risk. Allan (McNish) and I concentrated on the race setup and now we are going into the 24 hours as confident as we can. You can’t predict anything at Le Mans because you always have to expect the un-expected. But we did our job and now we are ready.”

Allan McNish (Audi R10 TDI #7): “Everyone at Audi Sport Team Joest can be proud that we’ve secured the first diesel front row at Le Mans – both Dindo and Marco were great. A lot of hard work and effort has gone into this achievement. I’m a little surprised by the lack of pace shown by the Pescarolos tonight but I’m certain that their challenge has not disappeared. The car balance is good and the tyres are working well. We have good options for wet or dry race conditions.”

Frank Biela (Audi R10 TDI #8): “This is a fantastic result for Audi. Both cars qualified on the front row. Our car with number 8 is just one tenth behind the pole. The performance is there, the car felt really good. We found a good balance, especially for the race. Everybody was happy. Now we have to keep fingers crossed for the race.”

Emanuele Pirro (Audi R10 TDI #8): “It’s just fantastic and I am absolutely thrilled. We had two trouble-free qualifying sessions, our Audi R10 TDI feels good and we did fast lap times. Personally I don’t like so much being on pole position for some superstitious reasons, so the result is simply perfect. So far we proved that TDI technology can be fast. Now it’s our job in the race to show that it is long lasting as well.”

Marco Werner (Audi R10 TDI #8): “Congratulations to Audi and to Dindo. We both drove good laps. There is nothing left to be desired. Both Audi R10 TDI cars qualified for the front row. We have achieved our goals. Now I hope that we will have the luck on our side in the race.”

Ralf Jüttner (Technical Director Audi Sport Team Joest): “The Le Mans 24 Hour race is the competition that counts this year – and we start from pole position. Again, we were able to show that the Audi R10 TDI is a car that is on a level playing field with the ‘normal’ race cars. We didn’t do qualifying set-ups. Again, it turned out to be true that a good race car can achieve a fast qualifying lap. Both Dindo and Marco used this to show good performances. If you look at how evenly both cars were matched, both drivers and teams exploited the potential perfectly. It is important that the drivers feel comfortable in the car. Hence we should have a good chance in the race as well. The first step has been done, even if this is only a very small step at Le Mans. Nonetheless, it is a good motivation for the whole project. This is a good mood to start the race on Saturday.”

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.

The starting grid at Le Mans

- 1 Capello/Kristensen/McNish (Audi R10 TDI) 3m 30.466s
- 2 Biela/Pirro/Werner (Audi R10 TDI) 3m 30.584s
- 3 Minassian/Collard/Comas (Pescarolo-Judd) 3m 32.584s
- 4 Helary/Montagny/Loeb (Pescarolo-Judd) 3m 32.990s
- 5 Gounon/Kurosawa/Nakano (Courage-Mugen) 3m 34.120s
- 6 Lammers/Yoong/Johansson (Dome-Judd) 3m 34.864s

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www.audi-motorsport.info (Accreditation necessary)