

08 / EuroSpeedway, 29 April 2006

## Motorsport

### Audi driver Ekström on grid position three

- **Qualifying thriller in DTM at EuroSpeedway**
- **Tom Kristensen on third row**
- **Christian Abt best driver of a 2005-spec A4**

Ex-Champion Mattias Ekström in his Red Bull Audi A4 DTM will start from the second row in the second round of the DTM at the EuroSpeedway Lausitz. In a thrilling qualifying practice the Swede from Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline clinched third place on the grid. His Danish team-mate Tom Kristensen in his Siemens Audi A4 DTM will start the race from fifth position. The race will be broadcast live on “Das Erste” on Sunday starting at 1:45 p.m. (local time).

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The crucial third segment of the qualifying practice took place on Saturday on a drying track following a shower and resembled a thriller. Each lap saw the positions at the top change. Ekström and Kristensen kept setting best times until dropping to places three and five when the chequered flag was lowered.

Best driver of an Audi from last year was Christian Abt who, at the wheel of the Playboy A4 of Audi Sport Team Phoenix, barely missed making it into the final eight by a mere 0.123 seconds to finish ninth. Heinz-Harald Frentzen, coming three thousandths behind Abt, completed the top ten.

### Quotes after qualifying

**Dr Wolfgang Ullrich (Head of Audi Motorsport):** “Unfortunately, we weren’t able to put the speed we’ve got here at the EuroSpeedway on the track in the qualifying. Only two cars in the shoot-out of the final eight are a disappointment: in the last few minutes the times kept getting a wee bit quicker from one lap to the next, and the positions at the top constantly changed. If – like at Hockenheim – we manage to improve in the race and our two boys at the front pull off a good start everything is still possible in the race.”

## **Mattias Ekström**

**Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline, Red Bull Audi A4 DTM #5**

**3rd place, 1m17.413s / 1m16.729s / 1m19.968s**

“This was a very interesting qualifying with the ‘red flagging’ and the constantly changing conditions. Even during the qualifying, the team made some changes to my A4, which were very positive. Unfortunately, at the end I may have missed another lap, which might have been the crucial one, by a hair’s breadth. Of course that was a shame but on the other hand third place isn’t all that bad, really. I’m now concentrating fully on my start. This is one of my strengths and would make the race look completely different... ”

## **Tom Kristensen**

**Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline, Siemens Audi A4 DTM #7**

**5th place, - / 1m16.514s / 1m21.396s**

“We knew that rain was coming but had expected it a little earlier. On the first lap I wasn’t even out before the session was stopped, afterwards I drove the third-fastest time. In the final shoot-out, as well, we opted for new tyres. The line dried off, and the times kept getting faster from lap to lap. Unfortunately, I didn’t have enough fuel left at that point for driving a fast time at the very end. We’ve been lucky many times before – well, today we just weren’t.”

## **Christian Abt**

**Audi Sport Team Phoenix, Playboy Audi A4 DTM #12**

**9th place, 1m44.807s / 1m17.120s**

“I’m satisfied because we were lacking important kilometres and still managed to do well. The team did a super job. If it hadn’t rained we might have been able to clinch a place among the top eight. The entire weekend has been crazy, and so was the qualifying. That’s why the result is okay. I’m looking forward to the race already.”

## **Heinz-Harald Frentzen**

**Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline, Veltins Audi A4 DTM #6**

**10th place, - / 1m17.123s**

“The first run-up we’d planned we weren’t able to drive because the practice was stopped. So we didn’t know how the car behaves. We had a bit too much oversteer which we weren’t able to correct in the time that was left.”

**Pierre Kaffer**

**Audi Sport Team Phoenix, Castrol Audi A4 DTM #14**

**11th place, 1m18.469s / 1m17.193s**

“Again, the time gaps are extremely small, which speaks for the DTM. Because of the aborted session we immediately competed for the top eight places after the re-start, a fact I wasn’t even aware of. The spectators can look forward to a very thrilling race, in which I’m hoping for rain.”

**Martin Tomczyk**

**Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline, Red Bull Audi A4 DTM #4**

**12th place, 1m17.426s / 1m17.193s**

“That was a really close call and the time gaps are incredibly narrow. In my last run the track was already damp in the first sector which cost my three tenths. In the last sector Mathias Lauda obstructed me. Mercedes is very fast here – these times I couldn’t have driven. But for the group of the quickest eight it should have been enough. Too bad.”

**Timo Scheider**

**Audi Sport Team Rosberg, Gebrauchtwagen plus Audi A4 DTM #16**

**13th place, 1m20.024s / 1m17.242s**

“I’m disappointed because in the qualifying the car was better than before. My second run started very well. Up to the middle sector I was as much as two-and-a-half tenths quicker than on my best lap so far. But then Bruno Spengler pulled onto my line, slower than I. I wasn’t able to get past him and lost seven tenths. On the third run the rain got heavier. A place among the top eight would have been possible for me today.”

**Frank Stippler**

**Audi Sport Team Rosberg, S line Audi A4 DTM #15**

**14th place, 1m18.523s / 1m17.529s**

“Of course 14th place isn’t what we were shooting for. The front axle with the first set of tyres was building up very good grip, the rear didn’t. For my next two runs we adjusted the front axle to the grip level of the rear but we were no longer able to make efficient use of the two sets of tyres.”

## **Olivier Tielemans**

**Futurecom TME, Futurecom Audi A4 DTM #19**

**19th place, 1m41.382s / 1m18.774s**

“My qualifying didn’t start all that well because I didn’t warm up the brakes enough when I was driving amidst the other cars. So I made a braking mistake on the first run-up. On new tyres, things got better. My learning curve keeps improving each weekend, I have just experienced my second qualifying with the car and am now improving step by step.”

## **Vanina Ickx**

**Futurecom TME, Original Zubehör Audi A4 DTM #20**

**20th place, 1m19.685s / 1m19.634s**

“After my weekend had started well in the free practice, the qualifying, unfortunately, was not to my liking at all so that I’ll be starting the race from the very back of the grid. I’m going to try to make up the gap on Saturday.”

**Hans-Jürgen Abt (Team Director Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline):** “During the whole qualifying we were among the front runners but were lacking that little bit of luck to be out on the track at the best possible moment. Conditions were very difficult, and we were the ones that were hit by them today.”

**Ernst Moser (Team Director Audi Sport Team Phoenix):** “Actually, we’re quite satisfied. Of course we’d have liked to have gotten a least one of our boys into the final lap. But the field in the DTM is so tight that it just wasn’t possible today. At the end the track got a bit damp as well so that we didn’t have a real shot any more.”

**Arno Zensen (Team Director Audi Sport Team Rosberg):** “Because of the qualifying being stopped things did get a bit chaotic. Strategically, we didn’t make any major mistakes but of course I’m not satisfied with 13th and 14th place. Timo Scheider was unfortunate with his second set of tyres when he was slowed by a rival. Frank Stippler complained that the car on the second and third sets of tyres was only sliding any more. Why that happened is something we now need to analyse.”

## The starting grid at the EuroSpeedway

1. Jamie Green (Mercedes), 1m19.390s
2. Mika Häkkinen (Mercedes), 1m19.630s
3. Mattias Ekström (Red Bull Audi A4 DTM), 1m19.968s
4. Bernd Schneider (Mercedes), 1m20.940s
5. Tom Kristensen (Siemens Audi A4 DTM), 1m21.396s
6. Jean Alesi (Mercedes), 1m21.519s
7. Bruno Spengler (Mercedes), 1m22.152s
8. Alexandros Margaritis (Mercedes), 1m23.446s
9. Christian Abt (Playboy Audi A4 DTM), 1m17.120s
10. Heinz-Harald Frentzen (Veltins Audi A4 DTM), 1m17.123s
11. Pierre Kaffer (Castrol Audi A4 DTM), 1m17.142s
12. Martin Tomczyk (Red Bull Audi A4 DTM), 1m17.193s
13. Timo Scheider (Gebrauchtwagen:plus Audi A4 DTM), 1m17.242s
14. Frank Stippler (S line Audi A4 DTM), 1m17.529s
15. Mathias Lauda (Mercedes), 1m17.642s
16. Sefan Mücke (Mercedes), 1m17.661s
17. Daniel La Rosa (Mercedes), 1m17.937s
18. Susie Stoddart (Mercedes), 1m18.271s
19. Olivier Tielemans (Futurecom Audi A4 DTM), 1m18.774s
20. Vanina Ickx (Original Zubehör Audi A4 DTM), 1m19.634s

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