



**Communications Motorsport**

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## **Audi driver Mattias Ekström ends DTM career**

- **Swede to concentrate on FIA World RX commitment in 2018**
- **Dutchman Robin Frijns promoted from GT program**
- **Remainder of driver squad unchanged for DTM 2018**

**Neuburg a. d. Donau, January 29, 2018 – It marks the end of an era: After 17 years, 195 races, 23 victories and two championship titles, factory driver Mattias Ekström ends his DTM career, which means that Audi’s most successful DTM campaigner to date is leaving this racing series. In 2018, Ekström will concentrate on the factory-backed commitment of his team, EKS, in the World Rallycross Championship. The new member of Audi’s DTM driver squad is Dutchman Robin Frijns.**

“This was one of the most difficult decisions I’ve ever had to make,” says Ekström. “The DTM was my life for a long time and my heart will always continue to beat for the DTM in the future too. However, I’ve also invested a lot of time and energy in my rallycross team in recent years. Without the dual program I’m now able to fully concentrate on one series again and have more freedom again for my family and my children. I’ll continue to compete for my own team and am clearing the way in the DTM for a promising youngster.”

Mattias Ekström began his DTM career in 2001 at the age of 22 in the Audi customer team of ABT Sportsline. In 2004, he raced for the first time as a factory driver and instantly clinched his first DTM title. In 2007, title number two followed and last season he just barely missed another overall victory. Always at his side: Audi Sport, ABT Sportsline and partner Red Bull in whose HANGAR-7 at the Salzburg airport Ekström now announced his decision as well.

Alongside the DTM, Ekström has been competing in the World Rallycross Championship with his own team, EKS, since 2014. As early as in his third year, he secured the world championship title and, as in the DTM, finished last season as runner-up champion. Ekström describes his most recent years as a major dual effort which the 39-year-old no longer wants to shoulder. “Mattias informed us early of his wish to contest only one series in the 2018 season,” says Head of Audi Motorsport Dieter Gass. “Obviously, Mattias is extremely valuable and important for both projects. That’s why this decision was not an easy one for either of us.”

Ekström leaves a gap in the DTM squad which makes it possible for 26-year-old Robin Frijns to be promoted to the ranks of an Audi factory driver. The Dutchman has been active in customer



racing for Audi since 2015 and comes from single-seater racing. In a junior driver evaluation in Spain, he gathered initial experience at the wheel of an Audi DTM race car in 2013. “Robin left a strong impression with us even back then and we haven’t lost sight of him ever since,” says Head of Audi Motorsport Dieter Gass. “At the wheel of the Audi R8 LMS, he showed his abilities and is doing a very good job in our Formula E simulator as well. That it’s possible to battle for the title in the DTM even as a rookie was demonstrated by René Rast last year. Robin has great potential and Audi is in a very good position in terms of its driver lineup for the 2018 DTM. We’re convinced of this.”

The remainder of Audi’s DTM driver line-up will be the same as last year’s: Loïc Duval (F), Jamie Green (GB), Nico Müller (CH), René Rast (D) and Mike Rockenfeller (D) have been confirmed as drivers by the automobile manufacturer. This is the team Audi won all three titles (drivers’, manufacturers’ and teams’) with in the 2017 season.

The new DTM season will open at the Hockenheimring on May 5/6. The first race of the 2018 FIA World RX 2018 will be held at Barcelona on April 14/15.

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The Audi Group, with its brands Audi, Ducati and Lamborghini, is one of the most successful manufacturers of automobiles and motorcycles in the premium segment. It is present in more than 100 markets worldwide and produces at 16 locations in twelve countries. 100 percent subsidiaries of AUDI AG include Audi Sport GmbH (Neckarsulm), Automobili Lamborghini S.p.A. (Sant’Agata Bolognese, Italy) and Ducati Motor Holding S.p.A. (Bologna, Italy).

In 2017, the Audi Group delivered to customers about 1.878 million automobiles of the Audi brand, 3,815 sports cars of the Lamborghini brand and 55,900 motorcycles of the Ducati brand. In the 2016 fiscal year, AUDI AG achieved total revenue of €59.3 billion and an operating profit of €3.1 billion. At present, approximately 90,000 people work for the company all over the world, more than 60,000 of them in Germany. Audi focuses on sustainable products and technologies for the future of mobility.



Profile

## Mattias Ekström (S)

**Date of birth:** July 14, 1978

**Place of birth:** Falun (S)

**Residence:** Munich (D))

**Marital status:** single (partner Heidi), one son (Mats), one daughter (Hanna)

**Motorsport since:** 1993 (Audi driver since 1999)

### Sporting career

**1993** Kart

**1994** Kart, Swedish Renault 5 Cup

**1995** 2nd Swedish Renault 5 Cup

**1996** 1st Swedish Renault 5 Cup, “Young Driver of the Year”

**1997** 2nd Swedish Touring Car Championship, “Rookie of the Year“

**1998** 8th Swedish Touring Car Championship

**1999** 1st Swedish Touring Car Championship (Audi A4 quattro)

**2000** 3rd Swedish Touring Car Championship

**2001** 8th DTM (Abt-Audi TT-R), 6th Nürburgring 24 Hours

**2002** 3rd DTM (Abt-Audi TT-R), 1 victory

**2003** 4th DTM (Abt-Audi TT-R), 3rd Group N Rally Sweden

**2004** 1st DTM (Audi A4 DTM), 4 victories, 1st Group N Rally Sweden and Catalunya

**2005** 2nd DTM (Audi A4 DTM), 3 victories, 1st Nations Cup Race of Champions

**2006** 8th DTM (Audi A4 DTM), 1 victory, 1st Race of Champions

**2007** 1st DTM (Audi A4 DTM), 1 victory, 1st Race of Champions

**2008** 3rd DTM (Audi A4 DTM), 3 victories

**2009** 5th DTM (Audi A4 DTM), 1st Race of Champions

**2010** 5th DTM (Audi A4 DTM), 1 victory

**2011** 2nd DTM (Audi A4 DTM), 3 victories, 1st Spa 24 Hours (Audi R8 LMS)

**2012** 6th DTM (Audi A5 DTM)

**2013** 7th DTM (Audi RS 5 DTM)

**2014** 2nd DTM (Audi RS 5 DTM), 2 victories, 10th World RX (Audi S1 EKS RX quattro), 1 victory

**2015** 3rd DTM (Audi RS 5 DTM), 2 victories, 6th World RX (Audi S1 EKS RX quattro), 1 victory

**2016** 7th DTM (Audi RS 5 DTM), 1 victory, 1st World RX (Audi S1 EKS RX quattro), 4 victories

**2017** 2nd DTM (Audi RS 5 DTM), 1 victory, World RX (Audi S1 EKS RX quattro), 4 victories

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Profile

## Robin Frijns (NL)

**Date of birth:** August 7, 1991

**Place of birth:** Maastricht (NL)

**Residence:** Maastricht (NL)

**Marital status:** single

**Motorsport since:** 1999 (Audi driver since 2015)

### Sporting career

**1999–2008** Kart, Belgian Cadet Champion 2004, French Junior Champion 2006

**2009** 3rd Formula BMW Europe, Rookie of the Year

**2010** 1st Formula BMW Europe, 14th Formula Renault Northern Europe

**2011** 1st Formula Renault 2.0 Eurocup

**2012** 1st Formula Renault 3.5, Young Driver Test Formula 1 (Red Bull)

**2013** Formula 1 test driver (Sauber), 15th GP2 Series

**2014** Formula 1 test driver (Caterham)

**2015** 1st Blancpain GT Series (Audi R8 LMS), 2nd Blancpain Sprint Series (Audi R8 LMS), 6th Blancpain Endurance Series Pro Cup (Audi R8 LMS)

**2016** 12th Formula E, 7th Intercontinental GT Challenge (Audi R8 LMS), 10th Blancpain GT Series Sprint Cup (Audi R8 LMS)

**2017** 13th Formula E, 1st Blancpain GT Series Sprint Cup (Audi R8 LMS), 4th Blancpain GT Series (Audi R8 LMS)

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