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Motorsport

Audi driver Tom Kristensen to start at Le Mans

- **Doctors give green light for the Dane's comeback**
- **First time in race car again 48 days after accident**
- **Successful test at Brands Hatch with Audi A4 DTM**

The doctors supervising Tom Kristensen's (Denmark) recuperation and Audi Sport have given the go-ahead for his comeback following his successful test at the wheel of an Audi A4 DTM at Brands Hatch (England). As result, nothing else stands in the way of his competing for Audi Sport Team Joest in the 24 Hours of Le Mans on 16/17 June. The seven-time Le Mans winner will be racing alongside Dindo Capello (Italy) and Allan McNish (Scotland) as originally planned. As a result, Mattias Ekström, who was designated as reserve driver for Tom Kristensen, can now concentrate solely on the title fight in the DTM.

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"I'm very happy that Tom Kristensen is fit again and can compete for us as planned at Le Mans," explained Head of Audi Motorsport Dr Wolfgang Ullrich. "Le Mans is an extremely important race for Audi and Tom, with all his experience, is an important component of our Le Mans squad. We gave him the time he needed to recover in peace and quiet from his severe accident. After the successful test at Brands Hatch and consultation with the doctors we were able to make the decision to allow him to compete at Le Mans."

The Dane is also delighted to be able to make his comeback at the race that he has made his own by claiming seven victories. "It's a fantastic feeling," says the record Le Mans winner. "It was a long break without motorsport, and, on occasion, I really had to fight very hard with the effects of my accident. However, over the last few weeks my recovery really accelerated. I feel fit again. The doctors checked me from head-to-toe and gave their approval. I'm delighted to be able to compete with Dindo (Capello) and

Allan (McNish) at Le Mans. We are a closely knit team and have already driven many fantastic races together.”

After intensifying his fitness training over the last few weeks, Tom Kristensen sat for the first time in a race car exactly 48 days after his accident at the DTM opener on 22 April at Hockenheim, in which he suffered severe whiplash. The Dane drove an Audi A4 DTM Race Taxi for almost an hour on Saturday afternoon within the programme of the DTM race at Brands Hatch.

“The idea behind this test was for Tom to assess whether he felt comfortable in a race car again and could also withstand the loads,” explains Dr Wolfgang Ullrich. “He was quick from the word go – just as we would expect from him – and set constantly quick lap times. He felt comfortable in the car and good after the test, which is why, after consulting him and the doctors, we gave the green light for his comeback.”

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Tom Kristensen will continue his rehabilitation programme in the next few days at Le Mans under the supervision of Audi team doctor Dr Christian John. The Dane is set to complete his first laps at the wheel of the Audi R10 TDI with the start number two on Wednesday evening during the first qualifying session.

The Audi factory driver is also scheduled to make his DTM comeback one week after the 24 Hours of Le Mans at the Norisring in Nuremberg.

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www.audi-motorsport.info (accreditation necessary)