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Motorsport

Audi factory drivers put to the test

- **Winter training at the Sonnenalp resort in Bavaria**
- **Physical fitness monitored medically**
- **Focus of attention was mental preparation for the season**

How do you react to the heat in the DTM cockpit? Wouldn't you also like to race at Le Mans once? What do you think of the new Audi R8? Questions like this were heard frequently in and around the "Sonnenalp" resort in Ofterschwang during the last few days. The Audi "factory" drivers underwent a week of intensive preparation for the 2007 motorsport season together with their team bosses and Head of Audi Motorsport Dr Wolfgang Ullrich. During the joint "Winter Training" session for both Audi DTM and sportscar stars it was not only about assessing physical fitness but, more importantly, about making mental preparations for the forthcoming objectives.

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"Team building" was the motto. "On this occasion we spent much more time than we did last year getting to know each other personally - to build even more confidence in one another so as to be in a position to deliver an even better performance for Audi," explains Head of Audi Motorsport Dr Wolfgang Ullrich. "Because we've added several new drivers to our ranks and had to form a new group, this aspect was of particular importance", adds Audi team physician Dr Christian John, who once again managed the routine operations.

The Audi drivers got to know and understand one another even better during the sports programme and intensive discussions held over the eight day period. "Even though the majority of us have been with Audi for years, you always discover something new about the others," says Audi "factory" driver Mattias Ekström, DTM Champion in 2004. "And of course, it's important to get to know the new drivers."

The new team members felt at home immediately in the Audi squad. “We were welcomed like old friends and equals in the team from the start, the atmosphere was excellent,” declared Lucas Luhr and Mike Rockenfeller, two of the Audi newcomers for the 2007 season. Audi team physician Dr Christian John was impressed by the newcomers’ fitness. “In the past we often had to start from scratch with young drivers,” he remembers. “Today they arrive at our Winter Training in excellent condition.”

Every Audi driver underwent a thorough medical examination and was put to the test at the Sonnenalp resort. “Just like the technology found in the race cars, the development in this area also hasn’t stood still over the years,” says Dr John. “We can test the muscle power in individual areas of the body using modern machines and see from the data what has improved or possibly deteriorated over time.”

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Stamina is of particular importance – in both sportscar races and the DTM alike. “A sportscar driver needs even more physical strength in the shoulder area because he must withstand very high g-forces,” says Dr Christian John. “In addition, he must drive for long periods of time. In the DTM the high cockpit temperatures are more of an issue. We’ve measured up to 60 degrees Celsius. This really is a considerable strain. Fortunately the DTM races are relatively short.”

Whether aqua jogging, Nordic walking, cross country skiing or team games like basketball – in addition to the physical fitness aspect, the subject of “team spirit” was always the focus of attention during the sporting programme at Sonnenalp resort. Both sportscar racing and the DTM are team sports. “Of course I'd also like to win races and be champion but I will do everything possible to make sure that an Audi is at the front at the chequered flag,” says Audi “factory” driver Timo Scheider. This is exactly the attitude that Head of Audi Motorsport Dr Wolfgang Ullrich expects from his drivers.”

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**Photographs from the Winter Training and additional information to download at:
www.audi-motorsport.info (accreditation necessary)**