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Audi in DTM – the former challenger will be chased

For three years, Team Abt Sportsline has been contesting the DTM (Deutsche Tourenwagen Masters) series with the Abt-Audi TT-R, and it added another chapter to Audi's successful tradition in touring car racing when the outfit won five races and Laurent Aiello was crowned champion. In 1990 and in 1991, Hans-Joachim Stuck and Frank Biela won the German Touring Car Championship in the Audi V8 quattro before Audi added more titles to its tally in various Super Touring Car series around the globe.

The DTM is Europe's most important touring car series, one whose tradition has its roots in the 1984 season. This is also the biggest market of AUDI AG. The success of Team Abt Sportsline with the TT-R emphasizes the sportiness of the Audi brand. Millions of viewers appreciate these properties: German public TV broadcasters ARD and ZDF alternate in their live coverage of every round of Germany's most popular motorsport series.

“As a German company, we naturally feel very close to the DTM,” states Head of Audi Sport Dr Wolfgang Ullrich. “Audi Sport supports Team Abt Sportsline as part of the Customer Sports Programme. The team has achieved remarkable results in the past years against the strong opposition from both Mercedes and Opel in the DTM.”

In 1999, Abt Sportsline won the title in the German Super Touring Car Championship (STW) with the Audi A4 quattro before graduating to the leading class in touring cars, the DTM. The Abt-Audi TT-R has been developed in record time, with the 2000 season being a learning year for the outfit.

In 2001, Audi works driver Laurent Aiello took the first victories for the Abt-Audi TT-R in the DTM. In 2002, the team completed its apprenticeship: in a season characterized by suspense, Aiello clinched the title. His team-mate Mattias Ekström completed Audi's triumph in the DTM with third place overall.

In 2003, Abt Sportsline will contest the DTM as number one, the former challenger now being chased by the rest. No fewer than six Abt-Audi TT-R cars will be entered by the Kempten-based team, supported by the Danish outfit First Choice Racing. “Entering five cars was already a big achievement by the team last season,” says team principal Hans-Jürgen Abt. “To get six TT-R cars to the grid is an even bigger challenge.”

The line-up of Christian Abt, Laurent Aiello, Mattias Ekström, Martin Tomczyk and Karl Wendlinger who were part of the squad's DTM triumph already last year will be flying the team's colours again in 2003. The line-up will be completed by 19-year-old Peter Terting.

Signing Terting means the support schemes for junior driver established by the Volkswagen group paid off once more: the driver from the Allgäu region in

Germany won the 2002 ADAC VW Lupo Cup and now directly graduates to the DTM.