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Motorsport

Audi names drivers for US programme

- **Capello/McNish contest American Le Mans Series**
- **Defending champions Biela/Pirro also in action from July**
- **Audi R10 TDI test programme for Marco Werner**

Following the Audi R10 TDI prototype's victorious debut in the 12-hour race at Sebring (USA), which wrote headlines all over the world, AUDI AG has also defined its programme for the remaining races of the 2006 American Le Mans Series. From the fifth round at Salt Lake City on 15 July, two Audi R10 TDI prototypes will compete in the world's most important sportscar racing series. The driver pairings will be Dindo Capello/Allan McNish and Frank Biela/Emanuele Pirro.

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Since an intensive test programme is scheduled for the two Audi R10 TDI prototypes before the season's highpoint at Le Mans on 17/18 June, the cars will be prepared for the US programme after Le Mans. The Audi Sport North America team will thus rely on the proven Audi R8 for the races in Houston (12/05), at Mid-Ohio (21/05) and at Lime Rock (01/07). Dindo Capello and Allan McNish will share the R8, which has claimed 61 wins from 77 races to date, and must race with 35 kilograms extra ballast (935 instead of 900 kilograms) as stipulated by the 2006 regulations.

All four Audi "factory" drivers are among the most successful drivers in the American Le Mans Series. German Frank Biela and Italian Emanuele Pirro both have already won the championship twice (Pirro in 2001 and 2005, Biela in 2003 and 2005), and last year together for the first time. Allan McNish (Scotland) won the title during the 2000 season, the Audi R8 prototype's debut year. Dindo Capello (Italy) was runner-up twice and third overall once, and with his 15 race wins, is one of the most successful drivers in the 'top-flight' LM P1. Capello and McNish formed a strong driver squad in the 2000 season and are now reunited.

"It wasn't easy to decide which of our six Le Mans drivers should compete in the American Le Mans Series," explains Head of Audi Motorsport Dr Wolfgang

Ullrich. "All six have already proven just how good they are at the wheel of the Audi R8 and also the R10 TDI. Because Tom Kristensen also starts in the DTM, and there are several clashing dates, he was not an option. It was obvious that Frank Biela and Emanuele Pirro would compete again as defending champions. With Dindo Capello and Allan McNish we chose the two drivers who won at Sebring and who have already collected valuable championship points. Bearing in mind the strong competition, every point counts."

Marco Werner, who won the title in 2003 and 2004, will not compete in the American Le Mans Series for the time being. In 2006, the German contests the 24 Hours of Le Mans with Frank Biela and Emanuele Pirro and is especially involved in the new Audi R10 TDI development programme. "Furthermore, Marco is first choice if we should compete in any additional races with the R10 TDI," stresses Dr Ullrich.

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The second round of the American Le Mans Series is held on 12 May around the street circuit in Houston (US state of Texas). The race starts on Friday evening at 8:00 p.m. local time and finishes 2 hours 45 minutes later in the dark.

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