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Motorsport

Road America, 7 July 2002

Audi wins US endurance classic

With a triple victory in the 500-mile-race at Road America, Audi has added its name to a prestigious list of winners in another classic US endurance event following the Sebring 12 Hour race and the "Petit Le Mans". While the competitors paid tribute to the enormous heat of up to 90 degrees Fahrenheit (34 degrees Celsius) in the shade on the fast and demanding track, the two Infineon Audi R8 sportscars ran without any problems over the 4:15-hour distance – despite the Audi drivers running an incredibly fast pace from the first to the last lap.

Team Audi Sport North America's two "works" R8 cars showed an impressive battle for the lead taking the breath away from the specators and the whole Audi squad. More than once the two Infineon Audi R8 sportscars exchanged the lead. Two stop-and-go-penalties against Rinaldo Capello seemed to decide the race for Emanuele Pirro and Frank Biela. But a puncture on the no. 1 Infineon Audi R8 brought the race back into the hands of Rinaldo Capello and Tom Kristensen. Thanks to the electronic tire monitoring system developed by Audi and Michelin, the loss of pressure in the right rear tire was detected just in time, but the unscheduled pitstop dropped Biela/Pirro clearly behind the sister car into second position.

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Audi's customer team Champion Racing made the Audi 1-2-3 victory complete by finishing third despite Stefan Johansson spinning off into the gravel.

Rinaldo Capello celebrated the victory at the "Road America 500" which was run for the first time in 1957 and has a big tradition in the USA, turning his Infineon Audi R8 around in circles after the finish line. The "donuts" were a present for teammate Tom Kristensen who celebrated his birthday on raceday and continues to lead the overall classification of the American Le Mans Series (ALMS).

Quotes after the race

Rinaldo Capello (Infineon Audi R8 #2): "I completely disagree with the second stop-and-go. I am sure I did not overtake under a yellow flag. But we won and the victory is very satisfying. I pushed until the end because the car was perfect. Our mechanics did a great job enabling us to take the lead twice thanks to their fast pit stops."

Tom Kristensen (Infineon Audi R8 #2): "To win with Dindo on my birthday was great and he gave me a nice present after the race by doing donuts for me in Turn 5. I am very proud of the crew, they worked very well at the pit stops. Dindo drove perfectly in the end and I had a great fight with Emanuele in the beginning."

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Frank Biela (Infineon Audi R8 #1): "We were having a good race. Despite of a slight understeer the performance of the car was really good. Unfortunately we got a puncture. During a caution period, somebody threw many stones on the track. I think this cut the tire and cost us the race."

Emanuele Pirro (Infineon Audi R8 #1): "I was very happy about my race. Everything was looking very good. We had bad luck. We were quicker, I passed Tom two times on the track. We did not deserve to be second – but this is racing."

Johnny Herbert (ADT Champion Audi R8 #38): "It went okay today. We had some trouble getting by the Panoz in the opening laps and that put us behind. Later on we encountered traffic problems and Stefan's off hurt a little bit more. We should have been closer to the front."

Stefan Johansson (ADT Champion Audi R8 #38): "I made a mistake going into turn eight. My foot slid off the brake and onto the throttle. The next thing I know I was in the gravel. After that we were turning consistent laps times and I am happy to be third."

Ralf Jüttner, Technical Director Team Audi Sport North America: "What a hot race! The fight between Tom and Emanuele in the beginning was really racing at its best. Later, the caution periods tore the race in pieces. Dindo was lucky that his two stop-and-go penalties did not cost him more. Frank and Emanuele were unlucky with their puncture, I think otherwise it would have been their race. When the tire was going down, fortunately we were able to realize the loss of pressure immediately thanks to our monitoring system. This 1-2 victory is a dream result. I am proud of the team and really happy because Road America is a very demanding race track."

Dr Wolfgang Ullrich, Head of Audi Sport: "Most of the race we did lap times which usually are only possible in qualifying. Today our drivers obviously had a lot of fun during the race and our cars were the only ones which could go that speed for longer than four hours. Especially Emanuele and Tom were fighting a tight battle in the beginning of the race, but I was never seriously worried. I know them both very well and I know how professional they are. Although there were a few tight situations, but only with other cars. The team did a great job and showed once more that they are able to find the right setup for our Audi R8 for each race track."

Race results

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| 1. Capello/Kristensen (Infineon Audi R8) | 118 laps |
| 2. Pirro/Biela (Infineon Audi R8) | + 32.172s |
| 3. Herbert/Johansson (Audi R8) | + 1m 34.666s |
| 4. Field/Field (Lola-Judd) | - 7 laps |
| 5. Pilgrim/Collins/Freon (Chevrolet) | - 9 laps |
| 6. Fellows/O'Connell/Gavin (Chevrolet) | - 10 laps |
| 7. Naspetti/Schiattarella (Ferrari) | - 12 laps |
| 8. Bernhard/Bergmeister (Porsche) | - 14 laps |

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9. Luhr/Maassen (Porsche) - 14 laps
10. Devlin/Oberto/MacLeod (Lola-Ford) - 15 laps

Photos and further information can be found on the internet:
www.audi-sportpress.com (accreditation required)

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