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Motorsport / 17 days until the start of the 2006 DTM Brothers in spirit – Ekström and Röhrl

- **Racing and rally sport unite both champions**

Does a DTM Champion have any idols, and is he willing to admit who they are in public? Audi factory driver Mattias Ekström does not even hesitate for a second to name Walter Röhrl as his role model. One of them was the DTM Champion in 2004, the other the World Rally Champion in 1980 and 1982 – separated by 31 years of age, united by the affinity each has with the motorsport discipline of the other, disciplines in which both of them have shown a strong talent.

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As such, Walter Röhrl in the Audi quattro not only caused a sensation in 1984 when he participated in the Manufacturers' World Championship. In the 1988 TransAm racing series, the 1989 IMSA-GTO series and in the 1990 DTM, the native of Regensburg, Bavaria, celebrated a victory in one round of each of these circuit racing series as well. Similar talent is displayed by Mattias Ekström whenever he engages in his "extracurricular activities": In Sweden and in Spain the professional racer, who is now 27, won the Group N classification of the two respective World Rally Championship rounds in the 2004 season. In the meantime he has even gathered experience at the wheel of a World Rally Car in the highest category of the sport. The fact that his partner Tina Thörner, a professional rally co-driver, was at his side in these stints was probably not a disadvantage.

While Ekström hardly had the chance to ever see Walter Röhrl "in action" (when Röhrl won his first WRC title, the Swede was merely two years old), Germany's only World Rally Champion took advantage of the opportunity to pay a visit during last year's DTM race at the Norisring – much to Mattias Ekström's delight.

Tomorrow: From Auto Union to the A4 DTM

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