



Communications Motorsport

Eva-Maria Veith

Tel: +49 173 9393522

E-mail: eva-maria.veith@audi.de

www.audi-motorsport.info

Flashback: Le Mans 2000 and the Audi idea of changing the rear end

- **Audi's Le Mans wins in the rearview mirror: victory no. 1**

Ingolstadt, March 12, 2015 – At the Geneva Motor Show in early March, the second generation of the Audi R8 celebrated its world debut – a high-performance sports car the genes and name of which have their origins in motorsport: in Le Mans, strictly speaking.

Following titles in the World Rally Championship (1982, 1984), victories in the famous Pikes Peak hill climb race (1985-1987), wins of the DTM (1990, 1991) and a string of success in super touring car racing (seven worldwide titles in 1996 alone), Audi, in 1999, ventured the step into the world's most famous endurance race. A third place in its debut race was followed in 2000 by the first of 13 triumphs Audi has clinched at Le Mans to date.

“The Audi R8 marked a milestone in 2000,” says Head of Audi Motorsport Dr. Wolfgang Ullrich in reminiscing about the pioneering Le Mans prototype (LMP). “Compared with the R8R from the previous year, the car had made an enormous step forward in terms of technology.”

On making its debut at Sebring in Florida, the new R8 clinched another immediate victory. “But we also saw at the time that there was still quite a bit left to be done before the big race, the Le Mans 24 Hours. We had a few issues that we were seeking to resolve almost up to the race. So it was a great relief to win straight off at Le Mans with a completely new car.”

Audi had installed numerous innovations in the Audi R8 of the (then) LMP900 class – today's LMP1. For instance, the technical crew was able to exchange the entire rear end in a matter of minutes. “Before our entry at Le Mans, we were looking at the most frequent reasons for retirements,” says Dr. Ullrich. “And the transmission proved the most prominent one in this analysis. During our preparation, we soon saw that developing a reliable transmission for Le Mans posed a major challenge.



That's why we said to ourselves: if that's so difficult, then we need to find a way to change the transmission as quickly as possible."

On two of the three Audi R8 cars the entire rear ends were in fact changed during the night of the 2000 race, albeit only as a precaution. "We didn't want to take any risk," says Dr. Ullrich. "And changing a rear end in more or less four minutes was often quicker than a complex check of the technology." The third R8, except for two punctures at the beginning of the race, ran like clockwork.

Not least thanks to this innovation, which was subsequently banned, Audi celebrated a one-two-three success at Le Mans in 2000. It marked the beginning of a unique string of success that by now includes 13 victories.

- End -

In 2014, the Audi Group delivered approximately 1,741,100 cars of the Audi brand to its customers. The company achieved revenue of €53.8 billion and an operating profit of €5.15 billion in 2014. Audi operates globally in more than 100 markets and has production facilities in Ingolstadt and Neckarsulm (Germany), Győr (Hungary), Brussels (Belgium), Bratislava (Slovakia), Martorell (Spain), Kaluga (Russia), Aurangabad (India), Changchun and Foshan (China) as well as Jakarta (Indonesia). The brand with the Four Rings will start producing cars in Curitiba (Brazil) this year and in San José Chiapa (Mexico) in 2016. Wholly owned subsidiaries of AUDI AG include quattro GmbH (Neckarsulm), Automobili Lamborghini S.p.A. (Sant'Agata Bolognese, Italy) and sports motorcycle manufacturer Ducati Motor Holding S.p.A. (Bologna, Italy). The company currently employs approximately 80,000 people worldwide, thereof around 58,000 in Germany. Total investment of about €24 billion is planned from 2015 to 2019 – primarily in new products and sustainable technologies. Audi is committed to its corporate responsibility and has anchored the principle of sustainability for its products and processes in its strategy. The long-term goal is CO₂-neutral mobility.