



Press Information

14 May, 1999

Le Mans entries close:

Audi announces driver line-up

Audi Sport has signed a new driver for the Le Mans 24 hour race on 12/13 June, 1999. Christian Abt will pilot one of the two closed version R8C racing cars run by the Audi Sport UK team. The 32-year-old driver from the German town of Kempten was involved in testing the R8 from the very start. When entries close on Sunday, 16 May 1999, at the Automobile Club d'Ouest, the following drivers will be entered:

Audi Sport Team Joest (R8R):

Laurent Aiello / Michele Alboreto / Rinaldo Capello (number 7)

Frank Biela / Emanuele Pirro / Didier Theys (number 8)

Audi Sport UK (R8C):

Christian Abt / Stefan Johansson / Stéphane Ortelli (number 9)

Perry McCarthy / Andy Wallace / James Weaver (number 10)

Yvan Muller from Alsace (F) turned down a drive in this challenging endurance race due to family reasons, which have left him little time to prepare sufficiently over the past few months. Audi's Head of Sport Dr. Wolfgang Ullrich said: "We're sorry that Yvan can't be with us, but his decision seems sensible. For such a tough and important race like Le Mans you've got to be perfectly prepared, both mentally and physically."

Belgian Didier Theys, winner of last year's Daytona 24 hour race and the Sebring 12 hour race, will take Muller's seat in Audi Sport Team Joest's R8R. Theys brings his wealth of experience with open sports prototypes into the R8R team.

Christian Abt is a familiar face at Audi Sport. "We've known Christian for many years, and we're confident that his work is excellent. Moreover, he contributed to the development of the R8 as a test driver. We're convinced we made a top choice with Christian for Le Mans," comments Dr. Ullrich. Christian Abt is very familiar with the R8-concept, and is optimistic in making full use of the R8C's potential: "Le Mans is a great challenge for me. I'm especially delighted and honoured by the trust Dr. Ullrich and the whole team have placed in me."

With the signing of Christian Abt alongside Frank Biela at Audi Sport Team Joest, a second German pilot will compete in Audi's Le Mans début.

