

Spain as an important stage for Audi on the way to the 2024 Dakar Rally

- **Productive test in Spain with all three driver pairings**
- **Start at the Baja Aragón outside the classification**
- **Long-term goal Dakar: Preparation for January 2024**

Neuburg a. d. Donau, July 19, 2023 – Audi Sport is switching to competition mode in preparation for the 2024 Dakar Rally: After a test in Saudi Arabia in May, the squad is currently combining another test in Spain with a subsequent competition, the Baja Aragón. Three Audi RS Q e-tron cars will compete in the tradition-steeped event with the driver pairings Mattias Ekström/Emil Bergkvist, Stéphane Peterhansel/Edouard Boulanger and Carlos Sainz/Lucas Cruz.

Team Audi Sport has been testing on the Iberian Peninsula for seven days since July 11, covering more than 1,500 kilometers. “Based on our findings from Saudi Arabia, our engineers have tackled and worked through detailed further steps,” says Head of Audi Motorsport Rolf Michl. “The feedback from our drivers to the team was valuable and shows us that we are working in the right direction. Our next step will be to contest the Baja Aragón.” This rally is on the schedule of Team Audi Sport and Q Motorsport led by Team Principal Sven Quandt from July 21-22 around the eastern Spanish city of Teruel. Audi has developed a prototype for the T1 U category with the innovative RS Q e-tron featuring an electric drive, energy converter and reFuel. This class for low-emission race cars does not exist at the Baja Aragón. Nevertheless, Audi Sport is allowed to compete with an exemption. “Even though we’re not racing within the overall classification, we’re expecting participation to provide thorough preparation under competition conditions for drivers and co-drivers as well as further insights for our vehicles,” says Sven Quandt.

Testing of suspension and tires, improved details

The work of Technical Director Leonardo Pascali and his development team focused on the suspension and tires. “We prepared various shock absorber configurations to represent a range of possibilities,” Pascali elaborates. “And, of course, we worked with the new tires from BF Goodrich to optimally match the Audi RS Q e-tron.” Other details include bodywork optimization, thanks to which the windshield should no longer get dirty as quickly. “I’ve significantly expanded my knowledge of the dampers here in two days,” commented Mattias Ekström. Carlos Sainz supported this view: “This was a good and productive step forward since our test last time in Saudi Arabia.” Team Audi Sport used the days at Zaragoza to prepare for the strict service conditions at the Baja Aragón at Teruel as well. For example, according to the regulations only a 30-minute service is allowed between the two partial stages on Saturday and after the end of the stage. Then only three workers plus the driver and co-driver are allowed to

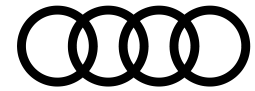
work on the car.

Baja Aragón as an addition to the preparation program

“A Baja is something completely different from the Dakar Rally in almost every respect,” says Stéphane Peterhansel. “The routes are more twisty like in the World Rally Championship, but much longer. And you basically can’t get lost because the route is well signposted. With these different requirements, the Baja is a good addition to our off-road program in the desert.” The 14-time Dakar winner looks back on three victories at the competition in Spain between 2007 and 2012, while Sven Quandt has won there ten times with his team. This year’s program includes a prologue and a first stage on July 21, with two further stages completing the 500-kilometer course on July 22. With 271 teams spread across all vehicle categories, the event is registering a record number of starters in its 39th edition. For the first time since his accident in January at the Dakar Rally, co-driver Edouard Boulanger is back in the cockpit next to Peterhansel. “Of course I’m paying very close attention to my health, but I’m happy to be able to navigate Stéphane again,” Boulanger said after the test.

Long-term goal Dakar: Spain marks the start

Team Audi Sport has less than six months to prepare for its third participation in the Dakar Rally. The roughly two-week stay in Spain marks the start of an intensive phase. “Testing is nice but it’s important to get back into competition mode,” stresses Peterhansel. This by no means applies only to the drivers and co-drivers. Various new team members are also familiarizing themselves with their environment. They have to remain flawless in their interaction under time pressure. After the Baja Aragón, the Rally du Maroc is another competition on the schedule in October. The increase: Then the conditions of the desert will apply to the route and navigation, and the rally will be significantly longer than the Baja Aragón. Additional planned tests complete the team’s preparation phase for the world’s toughest off-road competition next January.



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