

Team Audi Sport remains motivated for second half of Dakar Rally

- Strong contrast of competitiveness and severe disappointments
- High motivation in the team despite setbacks for all driver teams
- Tough second half of rally expected after rest day

Neuburg a. d. Donau, January 9, 2023 – For Team Audi Sport, the first half of the 2023 Dakar Rally was an emotionally intense mix: Two stage victories and the Audi RS Q e-tron’s first three days in the lead at the world’s toughest rally were offset by setbacks for all three driver teams. Mattias Ekström/Emil Bergkvist were leading in Saudi Arabia after the prologue, Carlos Sainz/Lucas Cruz on the two following days. However, different damage on the hard stages threw them far back. Stéphane Peterhansel/Edouard Boulanger were in second place after the fourth special stage but dropped out two days later due to an accident.

The 2023 Dakar Rally surprised the participants with great hardship and caused a lot of turbulence in the classification. Stony tracks after the prologue led to 14 punctures on four consecutive legs starting on New Year’s Day in Team Audi Sport, spread across all three Audi RS Q e-tron cars. Sections with camel grass imposed heavy compressions and thus high loads on the rally cars and their crews on the fifth stage. And finally, rain not only caused unexpectedly hard sand but forced a route change. Due to a flooded bivouac site, the organizers inserted a half-marathon stage with a modified route and limited service before the rest day on January 9.

At this point, start number 204 was already no longer in the race. Dakar record winner Stéphane Peterhansel crashed on a dune on the sixth stage, where he landed extremely hard after a jump. His co-driver Edouard Boulanger subsequently complained of back pain. A helicopter took him to a hospital where doctors diagnosed a vertebral injury. Audi later had him flown out to specialists in Germany. “In this way, we are enabling Edouard to receive optimal care. Fortunately, no permanent damage is expected,” said Rolf Michl, Head of Motorsport at Audi. “The entire Team Audi Sport wishes him a speedy recovery.” Stéphane Peterhansel: “I have no more memories of the accident, so hard was the landing. I’m glad that Edouard doesn’t have any more serious injuries.”

Carlos Sainz/Lucas Cruz tore off their left front wheel on landing at the same spot. The repair plus 18 hours of penalty time dropped the three-time Dakar winners far behind. The following day, Sainz stopped and lost further hours to help teammate Ekström with suspension damage. Before the rest day, the two Spaniards are 116th overall. “We were lucky that nothing worse happened to us in the accident at that treacherous spot,” Sainz said. “It was natural that in our position we helped Mattias with the repairs the day after.” Mattias Ekström/Emil Bergkvist lost 15 minutes due to a missed waypoint at the start. A stone that could not be spotted in a fast passage caused a broken rear left suspension on the seventh stage, followed the next day by

damage to the cooling system. As a result, the two Scandinavians are currently the best-placed Audi team in position 39. “When we didn’t always trust the information in the roadbook, like on the sixth stage, we adjusted our pace,” Mattias Ekström looks back. “After seven days of rallying, we were in fifth place but the invisible stone and the broken suspension set us back significantly.”

“This is obviously not the race we had hoped for,” says Rolf Michl. “However, with nine top-3 stage results over more than 3,000 stage kilometers, we showed that the Audi RS Q e-tron with its low-emission powertrain is absolutely competitive. Our goal therefore continues to be first-class stage results.” Uwe Breuling, Head of Vehicle Operations, refers to the united team performance: “Even though the setbacks dampened the mood, nobody got discouraged. Team Audi Sport continues to work with Q Motorsport in a concentrated manner to optimally prepare our two cars every day, to utilize all learning effects and to finish the rally.” Sven Quandt, Team Director of Q Motorsport, looks back on a particularly tough edition of the rally in his interim assessment: “When teams as experienced as Stéphane Peterhansel/Edouard Boulanger and Carlos Sainz/Lucas Cruz experience such setbacks, this says a lot about the level of difficulty. Mattias Ekström/Emil Bergkvist also had to put up with a lot. But we weren’t the only ones to suffer disappointments. Day by day, many positions in the top field shifted, which shows how tough this edition is. Now we have to stay focused because we still have several tough desert stages in the Empty Quarter and a total of another 1,300 stage kilometers ahead of us.”

Motorsport Communications

Stefan Moser

Head of Motorsport Communications

Tel.: +49 152 57713467

E-mail: stefan1.moser@audi.de

www.audi-mediacycenter.com/en

Motorsport Communications

Virginia Brusch

Spokeswoman Rally Dakar

Tel.: +49 841 89-41753

E-mail: virginia.brusch@audi.de



The Audi Group is one of the most successful manufacturers of automobiles and motorcycles in the premium and luxury segments. The brands Audi, Ducati, Lamborghini and Bentley produce automobiles and motorcycles at 21 locations in 13 countries. Audi and its partners are present in more than 100 markets worldwide.

In 2021, the Audi Group delivered around 1.681 million cars from the Audi brand, 8,405 sports cars from the Lamborghini brand and 59,447 motorcycles from the Ducati brand to customers. In the 2021 fiscal year, AUDI AG achieved a total revenue of €53.1 billion and an operating profit before special items of €5.5 billion. More than 89,000 people all over the world work for the Audi Group, around 58,000 of them in Germany. With its attractive brands, new models, innovative mobility offerings and groundbreaking services, the group is systematically pursuing its path toward becoming a provider of sustainable, individual, premium mobility.
