

First endurance test for the Audi RS Q e-tron E2

- Testing the second evolution on rough terrain in Morocco
- All six drivers and co-drivers help to develop the car
- 4,218 test kilometers in nine days

Neuburg a. d. Donau, September 21, 2022 – Audi Sport prepared for the first rally of the new Audi RS Q e-tron E2 at an extensive test in Morocco in September 2022. With Mattias Ekström/Emil Bergkvist, Stéphane Peterhansel/Edouard Boulanger and Carlos Sainz/Lucas Cruz, all six drivers and co-drivers got to know and appreciate the second evolution stage in tough conditions.

„Our plan was to have nine days of testing so that each driver/co-driver pairing could work with the test vehicle for three days,“ says Arnau Niubó Bosch, Project Leader Track Operations. “There were two main objectives: to develop the second evolution for the Dakar Rally and to familiarize the driver teams with the new developments. The weight reduction creates new opportunities for suspension set-up, which we want to exploit. We are moving in a good direction. The electric drive with all its systems is also working more smoothly than at the test a year ago.”

In Morocco, Uwe Breuling, Head of Vehicle Operations Audi Sport, encountered unusually tough conditions with his squad. “At almost 40 degrees Celsius, the temperatures are extreme and push the car, but also the crews, to their limits,“ he reports. “Likewise, the test tracks are very brittle this year, which visibly puts an enormous strain on the technology. But there’s nothing that will stop the car, just minor damage that we need to repair.”

All Audi Sport drivers and co-drivers are positively surprised by the lower weight of the prototype with an electric drive. “Not only the weight, but also its distribution is more favorable now,“ reports Carlos Sainz. “As a result, the car drifts less, it feels more agile and it’s easier to control.” An impression confirmed by Stéphane Peterhansel: “When we drive through long, fast corners, there are fewer centrifugal forces. So it’s much easier to stay on the inside of the corner. Likewise, our seating position is better than before.” Mattias Ekström, who is still a newcomer to off-road rallying after a successful career on the circuit and in rallycross, contributes his knowledge while benefiting from the knowledge edge of the two Dakar winners in the team. “Carlos’ and Stéphane’s experience helps us enormously with the set-up,“ says Mattias Ekström. “It’s not about lap times as on asphalt courses, but about having a predictable car. In addition to the lower weight, the improved aerodynamics are also clearly noticeable. It has a positive effect especially at higher speeds.”

The engineers at Audi Sport by no means only had the conditions for the drivers in mind during their work. The three co-drivers also benefit from an optimized working environment. “We wanted to be able to operate the complex systems more easily,“ says Emil Bergkvist. “This has been achieved well with the latest evolution. In some cases, the systems now respond to

warnings without manual intervention.” Lucas Cruz adds: “The ergonomics in the cockpit are now better and various controls have been logically regrouped, which definitely helps us. This allows us to concentrate better and gives us more time for our core task: navigation.” For Edouard Boulanger, another aspect was paramount: “The car feels very different from before. The lower weight means we can move a little more toward comfort in terms of damper set-up. That’s important when you spend as much time in the cockpit as we do and have to stay focused for hours.”

Audi Sport completed a total of 4,218 kilometers in Morocco. Together with the previous tests in Europe, this already results in a total distance of 6,424 kilometers for the Audi RS Q e-tron E2. However, the team has no time for a break: In less than two weeks, the second evolution of the rally prototype will experience its baptism of fire. Mattias Ekström/Emil Bergkvist, Stéphane Peterhansel/Edouard Boulanger and Carlos Sainz/Lucas Cruz contest the Morocco Rally in the southwest of the country from October 1 to 6. With its varied terrain, it is considered the ideal event to prepare for the Dakar Rally.

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