



Communications Motorsport

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Mattias Ekström is FIA World Rallycross Champion

- **Audi factory driver celebrates early title win at the Estering**
- **First World Championship title another highlight in an exceptional career**
- **Ekström: “Rallycross used to be too dirty for me”**

Ingolstadt/Buxtehude, October 16, 2016 – Mattias Ekström, on finishing fifth at the Estering, secured an early title win in the FIA World Rallycross Championship. To compete in the penultimate round of the 2016 season, the Swede had opted not to run in the DTM finale at Hockenheim, marking the first time for him to miss a race in his 16-year DTM career.

“This may be the best day in my motorsport career,” says Ekström. “I’ve had so many sweet moments with Audi Sport in the DTM, but this here is really, really special. We started from scratch three years ago. In October 2013, there was nothing. Only few people can imagine what my team and I have built since then. Obviously, I owe a big debt of gratitude to my employer, Audi Sport. My bosses gave me permission to compete at the Estering in order to maximize my chances of winning the title. That couldn’t be taken for granted, and I’m very, very thankful for this. I hope that by clinching the big trophy, I was able to put a smile on their faces.”

On clinching the title, Ekström proved once more that he is one of the world’s most complete race drivers. Since 2001, he has contested 177 DTM races for Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline, celebrating 22 victories and two titles (2004, 2007). This makes Ekström the most successful Audi DTM driver in history. His career has also seen the 38-year-old triumph in the Race of Champions on four occasions – once in the teams’ classification with Tom Kristensen (2005) and three times in the single classification (2006, 2007, 2009), which included beating the seven-time Formula 1 World Champion Michael Schumacher and others. In addition, his track record includes successes in the Swedish Touring Car Championship (STCC), in the World Rally Championship as well as in the NASCAR and the Australian V8 Supercars series.

The World Championship title win is a very special occasion for Audi Sport as well, as besides Formula 1, the WRC, WEC and WTCC, the title in the World Rallycross Championship is only one of five FIA World Championship titles. Most recently, in 2012 and 2013, the Audi teams in the FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) were able to celebrate victories in the drivers’ classification. The last title of an individual Audi driver dates back 32 years. In 1984, Ekström’s compatriot Stig Blomqvist won the World Rally Championship. “Stig clinched the title with quattro drive. In the WEC, the Audi R18 e-tron quattro was successful and now I’ve been able to contribute a chapter to this success story with my Audi S1 EKS RX quattro,” says Ekström.



Rallycross is a discipline to which the Swede was practically born. His father, Bengt, raced in the European Championship in the 1980s and 1990s, and finished the 1990 European Championship in third place. “As a young boy, I was always at the events, but wasn’t able to develop any enthusiasm for this sport,” says Ekström. “Rallycross was always too dirty for me. I prefer things being neat and clean.” This attitude changed when he was running as a guest entrant in the 2013 European Rallycross Championship at Höljes. “I finished runner-up and was taken with the atmosphere. On my way home, I thought that I’d return in 2014 and would like to win. I then started putting my idea into action with friends, partners and long-standing companions.”

The birth of EKS dates to June 14, 2014. Exactly 857 days ago, Ekström contested the World Rallycross Championship for the first time in his 560-hp Audi S1 EKS RX quattro. Only three weeks later, the Swede was standing on the top step of the podium in his home round at Höljes – his plan from the previous year having panned out. In 2015, he repeated this success at Höljes and at the end of the season occupied position six in the drivers’ standings. This year, Ekström got off to a perfect start. Three successive victories at the beginning of the season, including the much-celebrated win together with his teammate Toomas Heikkinen as part of the DTM supporting program at Hockenheim, laid the foundation on his road toward the title. They were followed by another victory at Barcelona and podium finishes at Hell and Riga.

Following his fifth place at the Estering, Ekström can no longer be bumped from the top spot before the final round at Rosario, Argentina. However, on November 26 and 27, he and Heikkinen will still be battling for the title in the teams’ classification. EKS currently has an advantage of 17 points over the runners-up, the Peugeot Hansen factory team.

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