



Communications Motorsport

Stefan Moser

Tel: +49 841 89-32260

E-mail: stefan1.moser@audi.de

www.audi-mediacyber.com/en

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- **Successful baptism of fire for the new Audi RS 3 LMS**
- **Audi customer teams celebrate victories and a vice-championship title win**
- **Joonas Lappalainen about his triumph in the Audi Sport TT Cup**

Ingolstadt, October 23, 2016 – With a strong performance the Audi RS 3 LMS debuted in the VLN season finale as the best car in the TCR touring car category. Audi customer teams clinched victories and a vice-championship title win in Europe, Asia and South America. In an interview, Joonas Lappalainen talks about his approach to becoming the titleholder in the 2016 Audi Sport TT Cup.

Impressive debut of the Audi RS 3 LMS

The new Audi RS 3 LMS has left a strong impression in its first race. In the finale of the VLN Endurance Championship at the Nürburgring, Jordi Gené/Kelvin van der Linde and Rahel Frey/Christopher Haase finished in positions 17 and 22 overall in a field of 140 entrants. Consequently, the two Audi RS 3 LMS were the best cars in the TCR touring car category. “The results were of secondary importance in this test run,” says Chris Reinke, Head of Audi Sport customer racing. “Far more important was the fact that both cars finished without any technical issues and that our drivers felt comfortable in difficult conditions. The successful test run on the Nordschleife was an important milestone in the development of the new Audi RS 3 LMS, with deliveries of the car beginning before the year is out.” The test run in the VLN finale had been preceded by several days of testing on the Italian race tracks at Adria and Vallelunga.

Win and vice-championship title in GT Asia Series

Phoenix Racing Asia made an impressive debut in the 2016 season. This year, Ernst Moser’s outfit contested the GT Asia Series, the most important Asian sports car championship, for the first time. In the finale at Shanghai, Alex Yoong and his teammate Alex Au in their Audi R8 LMS clinched a win from pole position in the first heat of the finale. In the second and last round, their teammates Marchy Lee and Shaun Thong finished runners-up. With that result Lee and Thong, the two drivers from Hong Kong, became the new vice-champions in the drivers’ classification. Overall victory went to Edoardo Liberati and Andrea Amici. In addition, Audi driver Shaun Thong clinched the Pro Am Cup win.

Victory in VLN season finale

Christopher Mies and Connor de Phillippi have won the season finale of the VLN Endurance Championship Nürburgring. The two drivers of Team Montaplast by Land-Motorsport claimed



overall victory with a clear advantage of 2m 44.418s. In their Audi R8 LMS, they initially started the four-hour race on a wet track on rain tires. When the clouds broke up after 1.5 hours and the sun dried off the track, their competitors switched to slicks too early. The racing team from Niederdreisbach continued to rely on profile tires and achieved lap times that were up to four seconds faster. That was the key to victory. With a tactically clever tire strategy Mies/de Phillippi in the end celebrated their third win in the 2016 season. In addition, they won the VLN Speed Trophy awarded to the best team.

Audi customer team triumphs in South America

AC Racing celebrated overall victory in the Lima 200-km race (“Los 200 km de Lima”). Enrique Arriola and Ricardo Dasso drove their Audi R8 LMS ultra to an outright win after 83 laps. The race was held at the Autódromo La Chutana situated in impressive mountain scenery 50 kilometers south of the Peruvian capital Lima.

A word from ... Joonas Lappalainen

He is the new 2016 Audi Sport TT Cup titleholder. Joonas Lappalainen stood on the podium 11 times in 14 races, and celebrated four wins. The 18-year-old race driver from Helsinki was the dominant driver in the second season of the Audi one-make cup.

Joonas Lappalainen, the youngest driver on the grid and an overall fourth in 2015. The 2016 Audi Sport TT Cup title triumph followed just one year later. What was the key to success?

When I started in the inaugural year of the Audi Sport TT Cup in 2015, everything was obviously very new for me. In the first half of the season, I had to get used to it all and get a feel for the car and the race tracks. I steadily got better, and four podium spots as well as two victories set me up well for the 2016 season. This season the hard work paid off. In 14 races, I stood on the podium 11 times. I was the most consistent driver – in the end that was clearly the key to my success.

You were also one of only three drivers to finish every race. Could it be said that you are tactically superior to your competition?

I have been cleverer in some situations. You can't just go flat out all the way to victory, but rather you must be able to calculate. Take, for example, the first race in the second visit to the Nürburgring. Until the final laps Dennis Marschall and Sheldon van der Linde fought each other for victory. In the end, a wheel-to-wheel duel cost them a podium spot. I profited from this and won the race. Sometimes you just have to err on the side of caution and make the right decisions to become champion. Ultimately, it's the overall tally of points that counts.

Before the season showdown at Hockenheim, the title had not yet been decided. Yet you stayed cool. How did you approach the final weekend at the Hockenheimring?

Dennis Marschall's double victory in Budapest made the season finale exciting once more. But I knew that I had the opportunity to get a nice result in qualifying. In 2015, I started on the front



row twice and that gave me confidence. When I won the first race and thus only had to reach the finish line on Sunday to win the title, I was sure that the crown was not going to be taken from me.

Are there still things that you want to improve on?

Of course. There will always be things that you can do better. I didn't always have the pace that I would have hoped for. On the car setup, we didn't take any risks and so in some instances I was a few tenths slower than the competition. I would like to have even better demonstrated my potential speed.

What are your plans for 2017 and your next steps in motorsport?

It's still difficult to say at the moment. First, I want to enjoy my triumph in the 2016 Audi Sport TT Cup. My wish would be to gain a foothold in Audi Sport customer racing. Whether in the new RS 3 LMS or the Audi R8 LMS, I would like to be given the chance to do the tests for both cars.

Coming up next week

26/10 René Rast's 30th birthday

28-30/10 Hampton Downs (NZ), round 3, Australian Endurance Championship

29-30/10 Zhuhai (CN), round 1, Asian Le Mans Series

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