

Hockenheim, 23 October 2005

## Motorsport

### Audi fights for DTM title to the very end

- **Mattias Ekström vice champion after fierce fight**
- **Tom Kristensen best Audi driver in DTM finale**
- **Frank Stippler in last year's A4 finishes fifth**

In front of a record turnout of 147,000 spectators, Audi kept its word of fighting for the title in Europe's most popular touring car series to the very end. A strategy employed by Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline that was as surprising as it was clever almost made it possible for Audi driver Mattias Ekström to defend the title successfully after all: having started from position 15 on the grid, the Swede completed the two tyre changes prescribed by the regulations in immediate succession – a novelty in DTM history.

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Despite this clever move, Ekström had to settle for the vice champion's title. After rain had set in just before the start, his team put all the stakes on one card and changed the set-up of his Audi A4 DTM from dry to rain as late as on the starting grid – a gamble that went unrewarded: halfway through the race the racing line had dried off completely, and there were no more rain showers. In the second half of the race, the Audi driver was fighting with his back against the wall, coming under fierce attacks by Mercedes driver Jean Alesi during which his Audi A4 DTM lost crucial aerodynamic components, and ultimately finished in seventh place.

Best Audi driver in the final race – yet again - was Tom Kristensen. The Le Mans record winner started with a dry set-up and at times was clocking the fastest lap times by far in the field. At the finish, Kristensen in the fight for third place had to admit defeat to the new DTM champion, Gary Paffett (Mercedes-Benz), by merely 0.607 seconds.

The best race so far in his young DTM career was driven by Frank Stippler in last year's A4 of Audi Sport Team Joest. Over a distance of 21 laps Stippler managed to keep Gary Paffett at bay before having to give way to the Brit. With a fifth-place finish, the German achieved his best DTM result so far.

The other Audi drivers were less fortunate: Allan McNish and Christian Abt became victims of the same Mercedes driver. Martin Tomczyk drove across carbon fibre components which Jean Alesi's Mercedes had lost, causing him to go off the track with a front wheel lock. Dindo Capello's Audi was brushed several times by rivals as early as on the turbulent opening lap, resulting in front end damage to his car.

In the drivers' classification, Audi claimed second and third place, achieved by Mattias Ekström and Tom Kristensen, respectively. Audi clinched the vice champion's title in the manufacturers' classification, and Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline second place in the teams' standings.

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## Quotes after the race

### **Tom Kristensen (Audi Sport Team Abt #5)**

**4th place, + 16.593s**

"I started on used rain tyres, that was a good decision. As the track began to dry off, I kept getting quicker. On slicks, though, I had heavy oversteer, it was impossible to defend second place. I wanted to finish this season in a better position than last year and qualify for each Super Pole – and thanks to my fantastic mechanics I managed to do this. The work with my engineer consistently improved as well. I want to thank him very much, too."

### **Frank Stippler (Audi Sport Team Joest #19)**

**5th place, + 26.818s**

"I'm extremely satisfied. Today was like Christmas and New Year's Eve combined. As the season progressed, it was getting more and more difficult to shine with a car from last year. That I was able to be successful here at Hockenheim once more is simply a dream. Even the qualifying was perfect. Today another rewarding experience has been added to all the previous ones I've had here at Hockenheim."

**Mattias Ekström (Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline #1)**

**7th place, + 44.491s**

“This was an exciting race. Although I wasn’t able to compete for victory up front I did have a few great fights where I was running in the race. This weekend we weren’t as well sorted with the set-up as usual, but looking at the whole year, we can be satisfied. Finishing the season as the runner-up is nothing to be ashamed of because the fighting in the DTM is very fierce. We have to accept that Gary (Paffett) and Mercedes were very strong this year, and I want to congratulate them on this.”

**Pierre Kaffer (Audi Sport Team Joest Racing #15)**

**10th place, + 50.028s**

“I’m very satisfied with the race. I had a lot of fun driving and this was arguably my best performance this season. I want to thank my boys with Audi Sport Team Joest, who did a super job of working with me all year. Spending a season with Christian (Abt) as my team-mate has been a great experience. I’m proud of my five points even though I might have been able to do a bit better here and there. I think I’ll be able to put the things I learned to very good use in 2006. Now I’m looking forward to next year.”

**Christian Abt (Audi Sport Team Joest Racing #14)**

**14th place, + 1m 02.629s**

“At the beginning, the race was going well for me. I had seen the collision with Alex Margaritis coming, he was quicker on the straight and apparently he doesn’t know such a thing as normal overtaking. He spun me and then I had to try and make up ground again. In the rain I clocked good times, much faster ones than in the qualifying. In the dry, things went well, too. As far as the season as a whole is concerned, I’m satisfied.”

**Dindo Capello (Audi Sport Team Joest #18)**

**16th place, + 1m 23.435s**

“Of course I’d been hoping for a better result in the final race. But as early as in the first two corners I was hit so many times that several parts of the car were damaged, particularly the front splitter. After that, I was lacking speed. I learned a lot this year, there was a possibility here to finish in the points. But there was a bit of luck missing. In some of the races, I was among the quickest at times. “

## **Allan McNish (Audi Sport Team Abt #6)**

**17th place, + 1m 24.293s**

“This was the second race in a row in which Alex Margaritis crashed into the side of my car. A stupid manoeuvre. It damaged the suspension and the body and I had to pit. As a result, the right-hand door came off later, but this didn’t make the driving any more difficult. I then pushed hard but a better result just wasn’t achievable. That’s a shame because the set-up from the warm-up session was very good. The last few races were a reflection of the whole season: we weren’t always able to make full use of our potential and of course that was a bit frustrating for everybody. But coming to grips with that is part of the DTM.”

## **Martin Tomczyk (Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline #2)**

**Retired (accident)**

“The start was good, but in the first turn I spun. The slip later in the race ‘befits’ my season. A carbon fibre part of Jean Alesi’s car got caught in my front end. When I hit the brakes it broke and caused my right front wheel to lock – so I slid forwards in a straight line. On balance, my season looks rather poor. I must say that this hasn’t been one of my better years. That’s a shame after my good 2004 season. Now I’m going to try and make it back into the DTM’s top three next year.”

## **Hans-Jürgen Abt (Team Director Audi Sport Team Abt Sportsline):**

“Finishing second and third in a fiercely contested championship like the DTM is a great result. Of course we would have preferred defending the title. We gave everything and fought to the very end. Still, we didn’t quite make it. Congratulations to Gary (Paffett). He drove a fantastic season. This motivates us to beat him again in 2006.”

**Ralf Jüttner (Technical Director Audi Sport Team Joest):** “Frank (Stippler) drove a sensational race. He showed strong nerves, and we had the right strategy. The way he kept Gary Paffett from passing was a class act. Pierre, too, drove a great race. With Christian (Abt), the speed was right as well and we performed eight good pit stops. I’m very satisfied with the season: we scored lots of points and have the best driver of a car from last year, Christian Abt. I’m proud of our squad.”

**Dr Wolfgang Ullrich (Head of Audi Motorsport):** “Unfortunately, we didn’t manage to achieve our goal of clinching another great result in the final race of the season. Still, we fought fairly to the very end and truly gave everything. We knew that defending the title would be more difficult than winning it. In nine races we fought for the title. Only in the last two races things didn’t go according to schedule any more. We’re going to analyse this carefully and learn our lessons. The results will inspire us to do everything within our means to bring the title back to Ingolstadt next year.”

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