

2003 season – high level customer racing programme

Following three consecutive triumphs in the 24 Le Mans 24 Hour race and the American Le Mans Series (ALMS), AUDI AG have re-structured their motorsport commitment for the 2003 season. Although Audi are not planning to participate with a works team this season, they will be supporting top-level customer sports.

By fielding the Audi R8, the company has set new benchmarks in sportscar racing in recent years. The R8 continues to be the hardest car to beat in its class. But the days of this successful racing sportscar are numbered: 2004 will see a set of new worldwide regulations for sportscar prototypes developed with intensive participation by Audi. "Of course, my objective now is to see Audi demonstrating 'Vorsprung durch Technik', the claim, in this new high-calibre series as well," says Head of Audi Sport Dr Wolfgang Ullrich. For the 130 members of Audi Sport in Ingolstadt and Neckarsulm, the 2003 season will mean that they will be fully focusing their forces on future projects. The continued development of the successful Audi R8 will cease.

However, in the hands of high-calibre customer teams, supported by Audi importers in North America, the United Kingdom and Japan, the car will also be a contender in the American Le Mans Series (ALMS) and the Le Mans 24 Hour race this year. "Teams Arena, Champion, Goh and Joest, which are deploying the R8, have been time-tested partners for many years, who we know very well. They will exploit the potential of the R8," insists Dr Ullrich. "Our goal is to win the ALMS again and to reach the podium at Le Mans." Audi Sport will be contributing their know-how to this effort via their Customer Sports Department.

The same also applies to Audi's highly diverse customer and engineering team commitment to touring car racing. This year, Audi teams will be defending the title in no less than three different series. In Germany, Audi will be continuing their successful cooperation with Team Abt Sportsline in the DTM (German Touring Car Masters). The team based in Kempten, Germany, will be entering a total of six Abt-Audi TT-Rs. The car that won the DTM title last year was revised in every detail last winter.

For the particularly competitive Swedish Touring Car Championship (STCC), the Swedish KMS Team have developed a racing version of the new Audi A4. KMS will initially be fielding two Audi A4s in Sweden.

Another car to see its debut in the 2003 season will be the Audi RS6. The production version of this car already delivers 450 hp of engine power. Team Champion Racing in Florida has created two RS6 models for the GT class in the North American SPEED World Challenge, in which Champion Racing clinched two consecutive title victories with the Audi S4.

To sum up Audi's sporting commitment, Dr Ullrich adds: "Although 2003 will be a year of transition for Audi racing, we're well positioned, thanks to our strong customer teams."