

# CLASSIC DRIVER



## "British" Audi heads team's 1, 2, 3 in America's biggest sports car race

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**Fifty years after Sir Stirling Moss won America's most prestigious sports car race, a two-car squad from Audi UK has secured an historic victory in the gruelling 12-hour Sebring marathon in Florida (20 March), led by Briton Allan McNish. Britain's Johnny Herbert brought home the second UK Audi racer in third place assisted by fellow countrymen Guy Smith and Jamie Davies.**

"Flying Scotsman" McNish and German co-drivers Frank Biela and Pierre Kaffer earned the Audi UK supported team a fifth consecutive win in America's oldest, biggest and most famous sports car race. Audi chalked up a dominant 1-2-3 result in front of a 150,000-strong crowd and millions of television viewers throughout America and Europe.

This year's marathon, run in scorching 80 degree temperatures, and at an average speed in excess of 110mph, notched up a number of "firsts". AUDI AG's British importer, Audi UK, has been a multiple race and rally winner in Britain thanks to various quattro four-wheel-drive derivatives but Sebring earned the Milton Keynes-based importer its first international motorsport success. The Audi R8 also became the first car in Sebring's 52-year history to win five consecutive races.

Audi UK's new motorsport partner, Veloqx Motorsport, also scored its first prototype class sportscar win while McNish, a sportscar "veteran", claimed his maiden Sebring win. Sportscar "rookie" Kaffer, driving on his Audi and Sebring debut and in his first sportscar race, quickly adapted to the powerful

twin-turbocharged 550-bhp Audi to earn himself a memorable motorsport "landmark".



Following home an American-entered Audi R8, British trio Johnny Herbert, Guy Smith and Audi "rookie" Jamie Davies added to the Audi Sport UK Team Veloqx's elation with third place - the Northamptonshire-based team achieving first and third places in its first race with Audi.

For Frank Biela, too, it was an historic occasion. The triple Le Mans 24 Hour race winner joins Olivier Gendebien, Phil Hill, Mario Andretti and Hans-Joachim Stuck as only the fifth driver ever to achieve three Sebring wins.

Victory in the 1,295-mile marathon came courtesy of the Audi R8, which made its race début at Sebring in 2000 and has gone on to become the most successful "open top" sportscar of the modern day era. For the past five years, an Audi has started from pole-position and finished at least first and second in the Sebring race, complementing Audi's three Le Mans victories.

The R8 is also notable for its advanced V8 engine and FSI engine technology - both of which are already available in the road-going Audi range. The UK line-up offers the performance and economy benefits of FSI direct petrol injection for A2, A3, A4 and forthcoming A6 models on sale from June 12, and also features more V8-engined versions than any other maker.

In all, 12 models feature eight-cylinder power. These include not only the A8 luxury saloon, equipped with 3.7-litre and 4.2-litre V8 petrol units and the exceptional 4.0-litre V8 TDI, but also the allroad quattro and S4 quattro - unique in its class in using an ultra compact 4.2-litre V8. The all-new A6 executive saloon, on sale from June 12 2004, also features V8 power, as does the most extreme interpretation so far of the high performance Audi road car - the 450PS bi-turbo RS 6 Avant quattro.

Text/Photos: Audi SportPress

**Editor's note** - Regular readers of *Classic Driver* will remember our coverage last year of the Veloqx Racing Team's campaign in the FIA N/GT Championship with Ferrari 360 NGTs running under the **Team Maranello Concessionaires** banner. Our congratulations go therefore to everyone at Brackley for a superb effort at the very pinnacle of sports car racing.

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