

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Triple victory for Audi at start of LMES season](#)



With a clear triple victory Audi made a dream start into the opening round of the newly founded Le Mans Endurance Series (LMES). At the season opener in the royal parc of Monza Jamie Davies and Johnny Herbert beat their Audi Sport UK Team Veloqx team mates Pierre Kaffer and Allan McNish. The margin after more than five hours of racing was only 0.663 seconds. Seiji Ara, Rinaldo Capello and Tom Kristensen, starting for the Audi Sport Japan Team Goh, finished third and so completed an Audi triumph in the 38 car strong field.

The drivers of the Audi R8 sports cars, who are entered by different importer teams this year, settled on their first three positions in the first hour of the 1000 kilometre race. Fighting against the competitors who had shown a strong performance during qualifying and the advantages of the Audi FSI engine paid off: Due to the lower fuel consumption the R8 sports cars were able to stay out on the track longer and saved worthwhile time in the pits.

The internal fight of the Audi drivers delivered tension and excitement during the race which was also broadcasted live in Great Britain and France. During the first hours of racing it was Jamie Davies and Allan McNish who fought for the lead for several laps. In the second half former Formula 1-driver Johnny Herbert and Pierre Kaffer enjoyed a thrilling but fair duel. Rain, which set the track under water only 30 minutes before the finish mixed the field once more and so brought additional tension to the Monza race.

The four-race Le Mans Endurance Series continues at the Nurburgring on 4 July although the British-based Audi Sport UK Team Veloqx squad will be focussed on the Le Mans 24 hours next month (12-13 June) before the German race.

Quotes after the race at Monza

Jamie Davies (Audi Sport UK Team Veloqx Audi R8 #88): "A perfect weekend. For me to start from pole-position in my second race for Audi and for Johnny and I to score this victory is a dream result. I locked-up under braking for the first chicane at the start which allowed Allan to slip through but thereafter I got in to a good rhythm and was pleased with my performance. Third at Sebring, second fastest in the Le Mans Pre-Tests and now first - life is good."

Johnny Herbert (Audi Sport UK Team Veloqx Audi R8 #88): "The Audi never missed a beat - it was perfect all day. Going on to the grass to overtake Pierre was worth the risk and the close finish ultimately proved that I needed to push and build up a small cushion. Victory today was very important for our championship title hopes. The team has done a lot of hard work in testing at Paul Ricard and at Le Mans and it's paying off with Veloqx scoring a 1-2 finish at Monza. Team moral will be high heading to Le Mans which is vital."

Pierre Kaffer (Audi Sport UK Team Veloqx Audi R8 #8): "Second place gives me a nice feeling, after all, this was only my second ever sports prototype race and having won at Sebring, to be on the podium again is good for me. I am always learning, every time I sit in the R8. On Friday, I drove it for the first time in rain and I also need to gain experience in traffic. I could do little about Johnny taking the lead from me - I tried to follow him closely but traffic held me up."

Allan McNish (Audi Sport UK Team Veloqx Audi R8 #8): "We had a strong race with the 'sister' Veloqx Audi throughout which I believe was one of the best sportscar races I've ever been involved with, so I can't be too disappointed with the result. The closing stages were exciting - I was pushing hard and another lap would have been mighty interesting. We've got points on the board in terms of the championship which was important and sets us up nicely for Le Mans."

Sam Li (Head of Audi Sport UK Team Veloqx): "A fantastic result but probably not good for my heart!"

By starting this race from pole-position and ultimately finishing first and second, we successfully delivered a strong message that we're ready for the Le Mans 24 Hours. To win our first two races at Sebring and Monza with Audi, and to have topped the Pre-Test at Le Mans, is magnificent. But we are under no illusion the 24 Hours will be very tough and we will take absolutely nothing for granted."

Seiji Ara (Audi Sport Team Goh Audi R8 #5): "I was trying to catch the UK car the whole time. But our R8 was a little bit difficult to control so I couldn't push as hard as I would have liked to. For now third place is okay. But next time we will definitely improve and get better."

Rinaldo Capello (Audi Sport Team Goh Audi R8 #5): "Of course three Audi on the podium is a dream result and the best you can achieve. But I would have liked to be much closer to the two companion R8 cars. We are going to work on that and give them a good fight next time."

Tom Kristensen (Audi Sport Team Goh Audi R8 #5): "We did the 1000 kilometres without any problems - concerning Le Mans, this is the most important thing. We are definitely missing some speed so there is still a lot of work to do. At the end of the race we gambled a little bit when we put on rain tyres very early. But unfortunately the heavy rain came a little to late."

Kazumichi Goh (Head of Audi Sport Japan Team Goh): "The Monza race was our dress rehearsal for Le Mans so our target was to get prepared as best as possible. Our three drivers are working together perfectly but we have to sort out some other things before June. Like here at Monza, the competition in Le Mans will be very tough. We were well prepared for the rain, because when Seiji Ara hits a race track for the first time, it always rains. And he never drove before at Monza..."

Dr Wolfgang Ullrich (Head of Audi Motorsport): "I'm very happy with this result. Our drivers have delivered a great fight and a good show until the very last lap. At the beginning our competitors also showed a strong performance. But then our teamwork, seven drivers without a single mistake and the reliability of our Audi R8 paid off and led us to this triple victory."



Text/Photos - Audi Sportpresse

Gallery

Hide gallery

Hide gallery

Source URL: <https://www.classicdriver.com/en/article/triple-victory-audi-start-lmes-season>

© Classic Driver. All rights reserved.