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Jet fighter beats diesel Audi...



The actual Le Mans race winning Audi R10 TDI with Scotsman Allan McNish at the wheel went toe-to-toe with a Harrier jump-jet fighter yesterday. The contest, staged at the annual Family & Friends Day at the RAF base near Peterborough in front of a 5,000 crowd, ended in a close victory for the Harrier - by one-tenth of a second.

The Audi, the first diesel-engined sportscar to win the famous Le Mans race, was quicker off the line - despite the R10 TDI being designed to start races from a "rolling" as opposed a "standing" start and faster to 150mph than the aircraft.

But the Harrier, piloted by Flight Lieutenant Pete Keenlyside, the 2006 Harrier display pilot, ultimately just beat the Audi to the 1km by literally a "nose" before the jet took off in a spectacular vertical climb.

"I had a practice run against the Harrier moments before the race 'proper' and I came very close to beating it - it was a very close run contest, confirmed Dumfries-born McNish.

"It was essentially a 'fun' race but when a racing driver and a pilot get together it quickly becomes serious. For our diesel-powered Audi, which we didn't modify or prepare specifically for this event in any way, to come so close to beating a Harrier jet-fighter I believe was a tremendous achievement once again for TDI power."

Frank Biela/Emanuele Pirro/Marco Werner scored Audi's sixth Le Mans 24 Hour race win last month (17-18 Jun) - the first with the turbo diesel-powered R10 TDI making its début in the annual French race. Allan McNish/Dindo Capello/Tom Kristensen finished third in their Audi R10 TDI. McNish demonstrates the Audi R10 TDI and a 1936 Auto Union C-Type at the Goodwood Festival of Speed in West Sussex this weekend (7-9 Jul).

British Harriers are presently in active service over Afghanistan, assisting the efforts of British troops on the ground by supplying close air support. FL Keenlyside will be displaying the Harrier at Blackpool this weekend.

Text: Classic Driver

Photos: Audi

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