

## Audi and Allan McNish win 2008 Le Man

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Allan McNish became the first Briton to drive a diesel engined sportscar to victory in the Le Mans 24 Hours today (15 June) when the Scotsman's Audi scored an emotional and hugely popular win.

The victory earned the 38-year-old Scotsman his second Le Mans career win – 10 years after his previous triumph in the French classic – and the German manufacturer's eighth victory since their début in 1999.

McNish, co-driven by Italian Dindo Capello and Tom Kristensen, the Dane chalking up a record eighth Le Mans win, swept their weather-stained Audi R10 TDI home over four minutes ahead of the second-placed car having completed 381-laps, 3,227 miles at an average speed of 149.34mph.

"I'm overjoyed to have finally won the Le Mans 24 Hours for Audi," said an ecstatic McNish. "I've come very close on numerous occasions in the past but despite fierce opposition from start to finish, some of the most demanding and difficult track conditions I've ever raced in, and totally unpredictable weather, I've finally done it".

Their success, in front of a record crowd of 258,000 – including an estimated 70,000 British fans – came despite a late scare when Kristensen was hit causing a spin with two hours remaining and changeable weather conditions causing a slippery track surface in the last hour which combined to make it a classic event.

The 76th Le Mans 24 Hours featured 55-cars battling for honours around the 8.47-mile circuit comprising of closed public roads and unfolded, as predicted by McNish, in to a twice-around-the-clock dogfight.

Dumfries-born McNish started his Audi fourth on the grid but grabbed the lead after 2½ hours when the leading Peugeots were delayed with problems. Capello slipped to second on four hours then to third an hour later but Kristensen was back up to second place on seven hours.

A rain shower after 13 hours handed the initiative back to Audi with Kristensen sweeping into the lead an hour later, the Dane handing over to McNish just after 6am with a lead of 30secs over the Marc Gene/Nick Minassian/Jacques Villeneuve Peugeot, with light rain still falling.

With six hours to run and the rain falling harder, McNish led by two minutes, further stints by Capello and Kristensen enabled the Briton to chalk up a deserved win in arguably the world's toughest motor race.

Allan added: "I decided not to take risks at the start and was happy to follow the Peugeots. But

after just over two hours, they encountered problems of varying degrees.

“The track was treacherous in the rain – greasy and slippery – like driving on ice. Thankfully the car was very sure-footed but driving in those conditions for over three hours required 100% concentration because if you made the slightest mistake, you just didn’t go wide, you went off the track and out of the race.

“I then had to endure a nail biting three hours watching in the pits as Tom not only battled to keep the Peugeot behind but the weather elements too. My heart missed a beat when he was turned around by a backmarker which thankfully didn’t cause any damage.”

Youngsters Lucas Luhr (D), Alexandre Prémat (F) and Mike Rockenfeller (D) were in contention for a podium finish until shortly before the end having occupied third place. In the penultimate hour of the race, however, the oil filter of their V12 TDI engine had to be changed and ultimately they finished fourth.

The Audi R10 TDI of 2006 & ‘07 Le Mans winners Frank Biela (D), Emanuele Pirro (I) and Marco Werner (D) started seventh and finished sixth despite a clutch change following a spin on Sunday morning – the subsequent re-start in second gear causing the damage.

All three Audi R10 TDI prototypes were racing for the first time with the next generation of Biofuel. Biomass to Liquids (BTL) has now been blended into the Shell V-Power Diesel race fuel that Audi has used to win the annual French endurance race for the past two years (2006 & ‘07). This year’s race marks the first time a second-generation biofuel has been used in the Le Mans race. Shell V-Power Diesel also includes synthetic GTL (Gas to Liquids) Fuel made by Shell from natural gas, which provides very clean and efficient combustion.

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