



Cheng Congfu dazzles in Japan

- Round 4 victory propels Chinese star into title contention
- Alessio Picariello and Mitch Gilbert complete podium in Suzuka
- David Chen grabs Am+ win on debut weekend; Bhurit Bhirombhakdi triumphs again to lead Am class

Suzuka, June 11, 2017 – Cheng Congfu put in a wheel-perfect performance on Japan’s legendary Suzuka Circuit today, sweeping to victory in Round 4 of the Audi R8 LMS Cup. The FAW-VW Audi Racing Team driver, who had been fast all weekend on the technical 5.807km track, took his first victory of the season from pole.

Crossing the finish line just behind him were overall championship leader Alessio Picariello of MGT by Absolute and Mitch Gilbert of OD Racing Team, who was third. It was a clean sweep of the podium for Cup service provider, Absolute Racing.

“It’s great to see Cheng Congfu back to his best, throwing down a strong marker for the remaining Cup races,” said Martin Kuehl, Director of Audi Sport customer racing Asia. “Alessio Picariello is clearly the man to beat. We have just seen an extraordinary debut for the Cup in Suzuka.”

With two victories and two second places, Picariello maintains his grip at the top of the overall standings (89 points), but Cheng’s superb Round 4 result propels him into second on the leaderboard (58 points). Just 10 points covers the next four drivers in the title chase: 22-year-old Gilbert (48 points), Champion Racing Team’s Martin Rump of Estonia (42 points), 21-year-old Shaun Thong of Audi TEDA Racing Team (41 points), and 2012 Cup champion Marchy Lee of Audi Hong Kong (38 points).

The famously unforgiving Suzuka Circuit won praise from the drivers as the Audi R8 LMS Cup made its debut this weekend, but it also lived up to its punishing reputation with several drivers dealt unlucky hands. A coming together involving Team Audi R8 LMS Cup’s Alex Yoong, Anthony Liu of Absolute Racing and Castrol Racing Team’s Stephane Richelmi meant none could collect Round 4 points.

New Cup driver David Chen rounded out an impressive series debut with his Tianshi Racing Team by taking the Am+ win ahead of class points leader, Team Audi Volkswagen Taiwan’s Jeffrey Lee and another cup newcomer, Kane Jiang of KCMG. Thailand’s Bhurit Bhirombhakdi took his second Am victory of the weekend for Singha Plan-B Motorsport from KCMG’s Rick Yoon and Milestone Racing’s Sun Jingzu of China. Bhirombhakdi’s double gives him the Am lead, with a three point advantage over Yoon.

Round 4

As the chorus of revs reached a crescendo, the lights went out for the standing start of the 12-lap race. Cheng made a near-perfect getaway from pole, moving across and shutting the door on Gilbert, who had started in second. Despite being weighed down with the full 50kg of success ballast, Picariello took advantage of





Cheng's move to steal the march on the OD Racing Team driver, squeezing past to gain a position and storming after the Chinese race leader.

Starting from the fourth row of the grid, Yoong and Liu came together at turn three, ending Liu's race, putting the defending champion, Yoong, into the pits and out of points contention, and damaging Richelmi's car.

As it had in Round 3, the chicane proved a game changer. As Marchy Lee dived down the inside of Richelmi, the Castrol Racing Team driver was forced wide and lost four positions, eventually ending his race in the pits. Chen, Thong and Team Audi Korea's Kyong-Ouk You all benefited from the drama.

Marchy Lee and Thong meanwhile were both flying, with the latter setting the fastest lap of the race on lap six, but the pair weren't able to make any real headway on the supremely confident race leader Cheng, who had gradually increased his gap from Picariello, Gilbert and Rump. In the closing stages, You closed right up to Chen, but was unable to find a way past on the narrow circuit, while Jeffrey Lee faced a barrage of attacks from Jiang all the way to the flag.

Having staged a superb weekend of motorsport on its Suzuka debut, the Audi R8 LMS Cup is back in action next month at the Korea International Circuit for Rounds 5 and 6 on July 15 and 16. As the 2017 season reaches its crucial midway point, Cheng will carry the full 50kg of success ballast for the start of the first race of the weekend. Will his new-found confidence help Cheng repeat his success in Japan, will Picariello continue his march towards the title, or will any number of talented drivers amongst this year's field claim the Korean double-header for themselves? The race is on as the championship battle heats up next month.

The Audi R8 LMS Cup is operated by Audi Sport customer racing Asia. The championship is run with support from FAW-Volkswagen Audi, Audi Hong Kong, Audi Korea, Audi Taiwan and Audi Malaysia.

The series is supported by TEDA, Castrol Edge, Pirelli, PPTV, CTVS and sportauto.

For additional details, visit www.audir8lmscup.com.

Quotes after Round 4:

Cheng Congfu (FAW-VW Audi Racing Team)

"Coming to Suzuka circuit has been very emotional for me. My first overseas race outside Mainland China was here when I was karting. Coming back here after 20 years, I feel old! The team (Absolute Racing) has done a great job for all three of us; all weekend we have been very strong but also very close. I could have got a better start, but Alessio was very impressive throughout the race, especially as he was carrying ballast. It's been a long time since I didn't have any cars in front of me, so I had to regroup and focus on keeping my head down and not making any mistakes. I wasn't really looking for a single qualifying lap. I was just focusing on keeping my gap from Alessio. All weekend has been great for me and I hope to bring this performance to Korea."

Alessio Picariello (MGT by Absolute)





“I was starting P3 and managed to gain a position even with 50kg. One-two-three finishes is an outstanding performance for the Absolute Racing team. I knew the start would be difficult and it would be key. Luckily, at this track the straight is a bit downhill so it’s not as bad as some tracks if you have weight on. I had a better start than my two team mates in front and could manage to pass Mitch. I knew it would be hard to pass Cheng as he’s been strong all weekend, but I could manage to stay right behind him. My plan was to put him under pressure to make a mistake, but he drove really well and I’m happy for him. It’s good to see him back where he belongs again.”

Mitch Gilbert (OD Racing Team)

“This weekend was good, but a bit frustrating. Today’s race was a lot better. My pace was a lot closer to the lead guys, especially in the first half of the race where I managed to stay in touch. Second and third, I can’t really ask for a better weekend. I’ve got to keep working to catch these two guys in front of me!”

David Chen Weian (Tianshi Racing Team)

“I’d only driven the new version of the Audi R8 LMS for one day before Suzuka, which is world-famous but very demanding. I think we did very well as it was a new car, a new track and we had a lot of difficulties to overcome. I’m very happy with the result. Especially today, I think I’m more comfortable with the car and I’m getting the feeling of the level of competition the Cup creates. I really like it and I can feel the improvement even from yesterday to today. I got a good start today, so I think I want to keep this up and make it an even better race next time.”

Round 4 Results

1. 31/CHENG Congfu(CHN)/FAW-VW Audi Racing Team/24:54.960
2. 15/Alessio PICARIELLO(BEL)/MGT by Absolute/+1.762
3. 86/Mitch GILBERT(MAS)/OD Racing Team/+5.257
4. 18/Martin RUMP(EST)/Champion Racing Team/+5.582
5. 88/Marchy LEE(HKG)/Audi Hong Kong/+7.487
6. 8/Shawn THONG Wei Fung(HKG)/Audi TEDA Racing Team/+8.955
7. 99/David CHEN Weian/(CHN)/Am+/Tianshi Racing Team/+15.232
8. 13/Kyong-Ouk YOU(KOR)/Team Audi Korea/+15.704
9. 7/Jeffrey LEE(TWN)/Am+/Team Audi Volkswagen Taiwan/+47.309
10. 39/Kane JIANG Xin/(CHN)/Am+/KCMG/+52.972
11. 59/Bhurit BHIROMBHAKDI/THA/Am/Singha Plan-B Motorsport/+56.001
12. 77/Rick YOON(HKG)/Am/KCMG/1:04.500
13. 3/SUN Jing Zu/(CHN)/Am/Milestone Racing/+1:06.551
14. 1/Alex YOONG(MAS)/Audi R8 LMS Cup/+2 Laps
- DNF. 11/Stéphane RICHELMI(MCO)/Castrol Racing Team/5 Laps
- DNF. Anthony LIU(CHN)/Am+/Absolute Racing/1 Lap

**Fastest Lap: Shaun Thong/Audi TEDA Racing Team/2:03.797/Lap
6/168.87km/h**

Am = Amateur Cup competitor





Am+ = Amateur + Cup Competitor

Overall classification after Round 4 – Top 10

1. Alessio PICARIELLO – 89
2. CHENG Congfu – 58
3. Mitch GILBERT – 48
4. Martin RUMP – 42
5. Shaun THONG – 41
6. Marchy LEE – 38
7. Alex YOONG – 37
8. Stéphane RICHELMI – 15
9. Akash NANDY – 12
10. Kyong-Ouk YOU – 9

Am+ Classification after Round 4

1. Jeffrey LEE – 60
2. David CHEN Weian – 44
3. Kane JIANG Xin – 27
4. Anthony LIU – 26

Am Classification after Round 4

1. Bhurit BHIROMBHAKDI – 50
2. Rick YOON – 47
3. SUN Jing Zu – 33

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