



**01** Rahel Frey's personal maxim is "Go fast and never ever give up!" In 2011 and 2012, the Swiss-born driver took the wheel for Audi in the DTM. As of 2011, her favorite set of wheels is the Audi R8 LMS. **02** The cover ensures that during transportation and before races, the paintwork and elaborate decals on the Audi R8 LMS are not damaged.

## Racing Rahel



The Chinese love their motorsport—a little bit more with every passing year. And their drivers are enjoying ever greater success, too. But it was a female Swiss driver who took the top spot on the winners' podium after the tenth round of the Audi R8 LMS Cup in Shanghai.

*By Mark Andrews (copy) & Jan van Endert & Rouven Steinke (photos)*



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01 + 02 In a time of 29:28.661 minutes, Rahel Frey representing Castrol Racing Team claimed a lead of just under a second over her competitors. 03 The Shanghai International Circuit lies about 25 kilometers northwest of the city center. Since 2004, this track has been the venue for the annual Formula One Chinese Grand Prix, among other events.





### 2014 Audi R8 LMS Cup

When it launched in 2012, the Audi R8 LMS Cup was staged exclusively on Chinese circuits. A year later, the series expanded to take in venues abroad, with races in South Korea and Malaysia. In 2014, the Cup will be contested in four Asian countries between May and November. The single-make championship still puts drivers in the cockpits of the eponymous Audi R8 LMS—a GT racer designed to GT3 rules and based on the Audi R8 road car. With its displacement of 5.2 liters, the V10 engine powering the Audi R8 LMS ultra produces up to 419 kilowatts.

#### 2014 race dates

Inje, South Korea	May 3 to 4
Fuji, Japan	July 26 to 27
Sepang, Malaysia	August 16 to 17
Guangzhou, China	September 26 to 28
Venue to be decided, China	October
Shanghai, China	October 31 to November 1



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**01** For safety reasons, the circuit designed by German racetrack architect Hermann Tilke has a broad format and features wide tarmac run-off areas. **02** Wheels and tires are cleaned thoroughly each time before use. **03** When the car crosses the finish line, the race engineers' tense focus turns into celebration. **04** Rahel Frey has made her mark—she is the first woman to win a race in the Audi R8 LMS Cup.



01 Rahel Frey (center) with her rivals Alex Yoong (left, second place) and Marchy Lee (third place). Adderly Fong, who ultimately clinched the 2013 series, finished the race in fifth place.

Rahel Frey is really just a slip of a girl. She stands exactly one meter, sixty-three centimeters tall. But anyone who thinks that makes her a pushover is sorely mistaken. The Swiss racing driver is not only tough, audacious and fast but in the tenth round of the Audi R8 LMS Cup event, she also proved she's the best. That makes her the first woman to win an event in the single-make series. Former F1 pilot Alex Yoong together with subsequent 2013 Audi R8 LMS Cup winner Adderly Fong and local hero "Franky" Cong Fu Cheng had to content themselves with coming in as runners-up. "Rahel is an exceptionally talented driver and it was great to see her rewarded with a win today. Hopefully, this will inspire more Asian female drivers to participate in motorsport," said a delighted Rene Koneberg, director of Audi Sport customer racing Asia. "It was a thrilling race and very entertaining for the spectators. I started from second on the grid but then fell back a couple of places in the unfavorable outside lane on the first corner. In the battle to make up lost ground, I got into an extended and punishing dogfight with Cheng. Our cars even came into contact a couple of times. But there was no foul play, just honest to goodness racing," says Rahel Frey, describing her victory.

The race in Shanghai was contested on the Formula One circuit under the Sports Car Champions Festival umbrella. Over the course of this event, the Audi R8 LMS recorded the fastest lap times ever achieved in any series. "This track is unique and technically very demanding. On some of the corners, there's no room for error," explains 29-year-old Franky Cheng, who went head to head with Rahel Frey. Laid out in a form reminiscent of the Chinese character shang, which also appears in the name Shanghai, the circuit sees cars reaching top speeds of up to 275 kilometers per hour. Motorsport in China may still be in its infancy but it's growing at a breakneck pace. "Over a decade ago, there were virtually no motorsporting events in China," points out Rene Koneberg. When, in 2002, Franky Cheng wanted to advance beyond karting, he had no other choice than to head off to Europe. Today, the landscape has changed. "Motorsport is a rapidly expanding market in China. There's been a race here on the Formula One calendar since 2004 and the German Touring Car Masters series is returning. Plus, the World Endurance Championship (WEC) is launching an event, in which the four rings will also compete with its Audi R18 e-tron quattro," adds Koneberg.

The Audi R8 LMS Cup is making an important contribution to the market's evolution. "The Cup provides an excellent platform for up-and-coming young Chinese drivers," explains Franky Cheng, because it gives them an opportunity to go up against experienced European pros like Rahel Frey and to learn from them. There's an open access data policy, which means that after each race, all the drivers have access to information that allows them to analyze the winners' race performance. Koneberg sees customer races such as the Audi R8 LMS Cup as adding a third string to the Audi bow, alongside the brand's other longstanding racing commitments to Le Mans and the DTM.

Gentlemen drivers make up half of the Cup entrants and have a key role to play. "You need a good mix of amateurs and pros," says Koneberg. The "gentlemen drivers" are usually successful entrepreneurs or businessmen looking for an adrenaline rush unlike anything daily life can offer. Aspiring Cup competitors need an Audi R8 LMS and a racing license—which can be obtained by passing the relevant driver training course. Don't let that fool you into believing the amateurs are slow coaches. Quite the contrary. The weekend drivers often snatch valuable points from under the professionals' noses and earn top ten placings. Jeffrey Lee, for instance, finished the 2012 season in sixth place overall and went on to compete as a professional for the Audi Chinese Taipei Team in 2013. "We have access to the video footage of the top drivers. So after each round, I analyze the recordings and compare them with the relevant data. Typically, novice racers get the hang of the slower corners sooner than the faster ones," comments Alex Au, who topped the amateur rankings in 2013. A distinct camaraderie prevails between the amateurs and pros, who are happy to offer tips and advice—as long as the novices keep out of their way during training and don't go too fast. Pro pilot Franky Cheng sees it as a "win-win situation" that makes for a far more convivial atmosphere.

"The series will continue its expansion in Asia and the driver field is also set to grow," promises Koneberg, who has notched up significant successes with the Audi R8 LMS Cup. Some 25,000 spectators attend the races and even more follow the live stream from the website. In fact, the number of visitors to the website doubled over the course of last year. According to Koneberg, "The Chinese fans are hooked."

In 2014, a race will be hosted on the Formula One track in Fuji, Japan for the first time. Many high-caliber drivers have already confirmed their participation in the upcoming series. After joining the field during the current season, Franky Cheng confirmed over the weekend of the Shanghai races that he will be extending his contract. "I didn't win the series—which made my decision that much easier." He regards the 2013 season as a learning curve but plans to make a decisive bid for glory in 2014. Alex Yoong and Marchy Lee will also be back again—which means we can look forward to nail-biting action in the season ahead. //

#### More on the story



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