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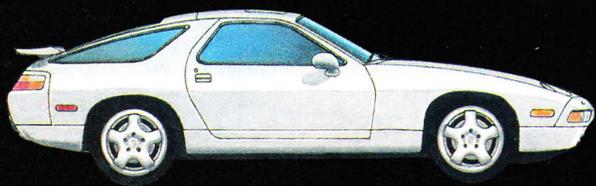


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The Porsche Double Fifty at Watkins Glen

By Dom Miliano. Photos by the author.



Like a rare alignment of the planets or picking the right six numbers for the Powerball Lottery, key pieces have to come together in perfect harmony before something wonderful can happen. These key pieces fell together precisely this past August with the 50th anniversary of one of the greatest sports car companies in the world, the 50th anniversary of one of the greatest road racing tracks in America, and the inspired musings of one of the best sports car drivers to don a helmet. If you haven't figured it out by now, the

driver is Brian Redman, the track is Watkins Glen, and the car company is — now let's not see the same hands — yes, it's Porsche.

Almost exactly one year before the event would happen, Brian Redman, a long-time Porsche factory racer, realized that he could create a significant East Coast Porsche celebration by taking advantage of the 50th anniversary celebrations planned for California and Detroit.

"I knew that the Porsche factory was bringing a number of cars over, primarily for Monterey," Redman explains.

■ **Above—50 years of Porsche racing history assembled at the esses.**

"And, of course, there are an awful lot of Porsche owners and enthusiasts on the East Coast who have no chance at all of going to Monterey, much as they would like to. And so I called the head of the (Porsche) museum, Klaus Bischof, who was one of my mechanics in 1969. And he said, 'Yes, vee bring zee cars.' So I asked 'What's the chance of them coming to Watkins Glen after Monterey?' And that's how it all started!"

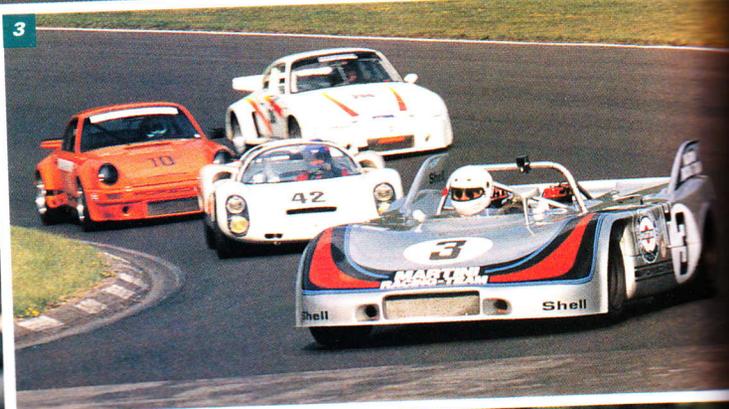
But unlike a Porsche Club Parade where the focus is on social, concours, and non-racing events, Redman's dream for the "Double Fifty" was a celebration of Porsche's racing heritage. That meant bringing together both the cars *and* the drivers from the earliest days right up until this year's victory at Le Mans. With the help of Porsche Cars North America (PCNA), he assembled a driver list that read like a who's who of Porsche racing. That list included Bob Akin, Jürgen Barth, Richard Attwood, Joe Buzzetta, Vic Elford, George Follmer, Hurley Haywood, David Murry, Elliott Forbes-Robinson, and Milt Minter. To this reporter, it seemed the only two drivers missing were Derek Bell and Jacky Ickx. "Not in the budget!" lamented Brian Redman.

With a driver lineup like that, however, Redman knew that the race car field had to be equally impressive to create enough excitement to draw drivers and spectators from all over the East Coast. The Redman name must still have magic because he managed to entice literally dozens of historically significant cars from several private collections — some delivered fresh from a recent visit to Monterey. And while a few were there just for display in the garage area, the majority were raced wheel-to-wheel, over the event's four days of competition. And race they did. Some of these cars, despite their age, were being driven at full chat, as our British friends like to say.

I managed to corner Bob Akin as he hopped out of a 962C and asked

him what it was like to be out there. Akin replied, "I remember driving them back in the eighties, when they first came into the United States and they were really wonderful race cars, though a little hard to get used to, the ground effects being something totally different. And this is the first ground effects car I have driven in some time, so I'm learning all over again. But they are wonderful cars, Porsche really did a great job, remarkably smooth, not violent at all. Really a pleasure to drive."

After a few moments of reflection, he added, "I have a feeling that if you really got them going right at the limit, they would really be violent, but I'm not there yet." And you've got to know that he was smiling the whole time we were talking. As Akin walked away, a fellow





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1—1970 917PA of the Amalfi Racing Collection, #917-031.

2—Vic Elford caught behind the wheel of Moby Dick, the greatest of the factory 935 racers.

3—A 908/3 from the John Wean Collection leads a pack of vintage Porsches out of a tight corner.

4—Howard Cherry's Porsche-powered GTPL was a throwback to American racing in the eighties.

5—Gary Wigglesworth's 1970 914-6 GT managed to stay planted.

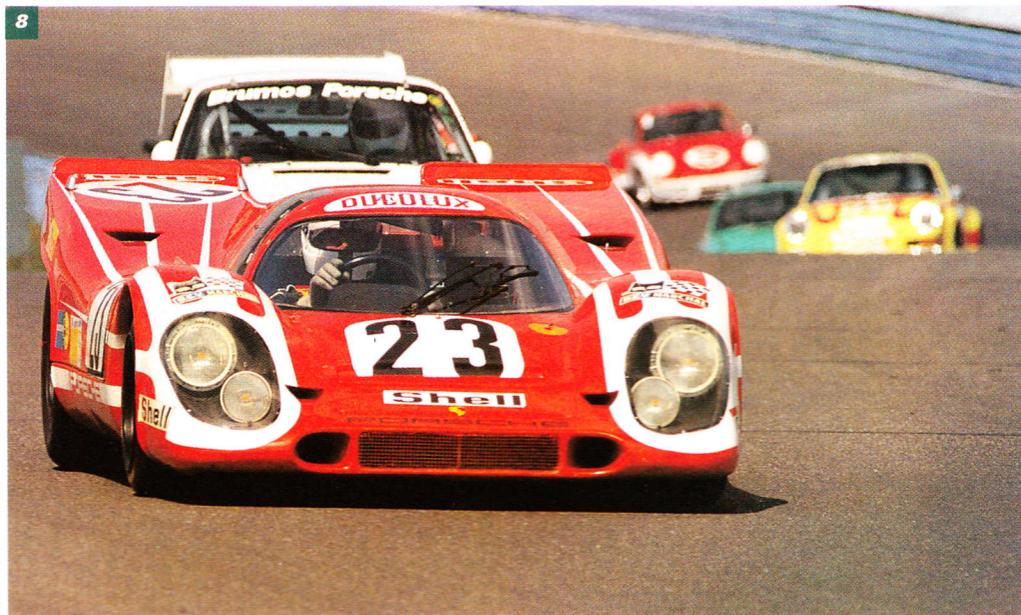
6—Brian Redman (left) and Dick Attwood (center) finished second in the endurance race.

7—A 1969 908 with Bob Jordan driving reminded fans of what racing cars looked like before advertising took over the sport.

8—This Team Salzburg 917K earned Porsche its first overall victory at Le Mans in 1970. It is now part of Porsche's factory collection.



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in a racing suit approached me and enthused, "Oh man, was that Bob Akin? I was just out there in his group with my Carrera. You have no idea what it's like to be passed by a 962! Wooooohhhh! It's pure sex, baby!"

Unlike the movie, "Field of Dreams," you can't just build an ambitious four-day race program and hope they will come. You need publicity, lots of cooperation, and a few hundred racers to fill up the grid. Fortunately, Redman found allies for his dream at the Porsche Club of America, Watkins Glen, and PCNA. Porsche's advertising folks helped promote the event to a wide audience and Watkins Glen International agreed to take a chance on running a Porsche event at their facility. Now the last piece — the

Porsche club and vintage racing drivers — had to fall into place.

Well, that turned out to be the easiest chore of all because the East Coast has a lot of active Porsche Club regions and a healthy PCA racing program. As soon as PCNA's publicity machine got the word out that you could race at the Glen with your Porsche and share the track with some of the greatest names in Porsche racing, the entry list quickly grew to over 350 cars. Curious as to where this event stood relative to others held around the world, Redman asked Jürgen Barth what was the largest pure Porsche racing field in history. Barth said, "I think this is it!"

Unlike Monterey, where "the cars are the stars," the centerpiece of the

Double Fifty was the on-track competition with nearly two dozen race groups formed from the PCA and vintage racing drivers. Kelly Moss Racing took the occasion so seriously that they rented the entire track for several days before the event and hired David Murry and Elliot Forbes-Robinson as coaches for their drivers. And drive they did. Thursday, Friday, and part of Saturday were devoted to practice and qualifying for the Saturday sprint races and Sunday's enduros. Everyone I talked to said they had plenty of track time, due largely to the first-rate scheduling and organizing by Brian Redman's son, James.

The second half of the Double Fifty was the celebration of the return to



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1—Steve Pontin-Waltier's exquisite 908/2 trailed by three 911 derivatives.

2—Amalfi Racing Collection's 1974 911 RSR won its class at Le Mans.

3—Racing cars were not the only Porsches on hand for the weekend, as Jim Kymmer's 1952 356 coupe on pit lane proved.

4—Tracing the route of the original Watkins Glen race track on the town's streets made for an interesting traffic nuisance — a 917 with plenty of motor music followed by 908s, 962s, and other Porsche "street" cars.

road racing at Watkins Glen after World War II. Coincidentally, that very first race also started with one man's inspiration. History has it that a young college student named Cameron Argetsinger managed to convince the town fathers that running a road race on the streets of this remote village would bring them fame and lots of tourist dollars. He must have been right, because road racing has been going on at Watkins Glen for 50 years — and counting. Though the track is different today, the opportunity to drive at speed with some of the most famous Porsches and drivers in history combined with the excitement of the challenging 3.3-mile circuit made the weekend an irresistible one for many of the competitors.

And so it was that Redman's dream

became a reality. There were four days of mostly spectacular weather, close racing throughout the different classes, not too much "crash and bash," and more than ample opportunities for every fan who bought a ticket to get up close and personal with the historically significant cars.

It's hard to convey the excitement of this event. As I sit in my motel room, tapping away on my laptop, I can't play the tape I have of Vic Elford laughing while he tells me about his huge shunt in a 908/2 where he sailed six feet in the air and landed in a tree because Porsche "hadn't gotten all of the bugs out of the aerodynamics." And I can't make the small hairs on the back of your neck stand on end as mine did when I saw, smelled, and heard rare and fast machines like John

Wean's Martini 908/3 or the Amalfi Racing RSR driven the way Porsche meant them to be driven.

There were a lot of special moments during the weekend, too. Another racing favorite celebrating 50 years was factory driver Hurley Haywood. And the good-natured kidding Haywood received from David Murry on the occasion of his 50th birthday was only one example of the friendly atmosphere. Haywood countered that he managed to make the transition from wood wheels to rubber tires very well.

The Double Fifty at Watkins Glen was everything a Porsche fan could have hoped for. More racing, laughing, and fun than any event I've been to in a long time. I hope that Redman doesn't stop dreaming of ways to make this kind of magic happen again. ■