From the “truffle sniffer from Zuffenhausen” to the world’s fastest “hippie”

05/06/2023 The Porsche Penske Motorsport works team showcases a spectacular foil wrap on its three Porsche 963 cars to mark this year’s 24 Hours of Le Mans. The designs pay tribute to historically significant motor racing colours and acknowledge the joint celebration of the 75th anniversary of Porsche sports cars and the 100th year since the tradition-steeped event was first contested in France.

The colours of sponsors such as Martini, Rothmans and Gulf as well as the iconic designs like the “pig” and “hippie” have been recaptured – through to the red of the Porsche Salzburg team. They all honour glorious and spectacular performances at the greatest and most historic long-distance race in the world.

Seven distinctive stripes in yellow, red, dark blue, light blue, green, pink and orange adorn the three Porsche 963 entered in the Hypercar class at Le Mans. These colours pay tribute to legendary racing

car liveries from Porsche's long and illustrious history. Thanks to 19 overall victories and 110 class wins, Porsche is the most successful manufacturer at the world's greatest endurance race, which celebrates its centenary this year.

Orange: the Gulf 917 as a movie star and podium visitor at Le Mans

The orange stripes on the Porsche 963 are a nod to the legendary Gulf design of the Porsche 917. As the previous year's winners, the British squad John Wyer Automotive Engineering switched to the swift prototypes from Zuffenhausen in 1970, and brought the mineral oil company along as a sponsor. Although the three vehicles fielded by the team retired early that year, everyone was talking about the Gulf Porsche: The American Hollywood star Steve McQueen, who plays the character Michael Delaney, drove the blue and orange racer in the film Le Mans, which is still popular today and considered one of the finest motor racing depictions in history.

Before the spectacularly staged duel between Porsche and Ferrari hit the screens in October 1971, the Gulf Porsche clinched a podium spot at Le Mans. Richard Attwood from the UK and Herbert Müller from Switzerland finished second overall in the 917 KH powered by the 4.9-litre twelve-cylinder engine. Almost 50 years later, the Gulf design adorned a Porsche 911 RSR in the FIA World Endurance Championship WEC and several Porsche 911 GT3 R at the 24-hour race in Spa-Francorchamps.

Pink: the legendary “pig” unlucky in the race

In 1971, the Porsche 917/20 delighted fans, drivers and officials at Le Mans. Porsche's designer Anatole Lapine sketched the butchers' cuts of pork on a basecoat of pink and labelled them accordingly: snout, ham, pork knuckle and brain. Endearing nicknames were quick to appear. The car driven by Willi Kauhsen and Reinhold Joest was dubbed, among other things, the “truffle sniffer from Zuffenhausen”. Ultimately, the term “Sau” prevailed in German-speaking countries, while in English, the vehicle got the name “Pink Pig”.

In 1971, the meaty vehicle failed to perform in sporting terms: while running in fifth place, Kauhsen/Joest retired shortly before the end of the 24 Hours of Le Mans. At the revival of the livery, the situation improved: the Porsche 911 RSR decked out in the “Pink Pig” design scored the GTE class win at the Sarthe in 2018 with works drivers Kévin Estre, Michael Christensen and Laurens Vanthoor.

Green: Porsche's new chief designer given complete freedom with the “hippie”

In April 1969, Anatole Lapine was hired as the new chief designer at Porsche. Just one year later, the native-born Latvian made his first artistic mark in motorsport with the long-tail Porsche 917 driven by Gérard Larrousse and Willi Kauhsen: the green and purple waves painted on the “hippie” car with around

1,500 spray cans created a psychedelic effect.

While the paintwork caused some consternation in parts of the executive floor, racing team owner Hans-Dieter Dechent and those responsible for his sponsor Martini & Rossi were thrilled. The fast "hippie" also made waves in the motor racing scene: while Hans Herrmann and Richard Attwood achieved the first overall victory for Porsche at Le Mans in 1970, Larrousse/Kauhsen secured second place.

Light blue: The Martini-Porsche and the record run for almost an eternity

In 1970, Hans-Dieter Dechent deployed his team for the first time at Le Mans with the Italian spirits brand Martini. Porsche locked out the podium, with the "hippie" 917 of Larrousse/Kauhsen and the 908 driven by Lins/Marko finishing second and third behind the winning vehicle from Porsche Salzburg. The breakthrough came the following year: Austrian Helmut Marko and Dutchman Gijs van Lennep won in the Porsche 917 KH fielded by the Martini Racing team. The duo set a distance record that seemed inconceivable at the time: the 5,335 kilometres they covered were considered a record for eternity – one that was only broken 39 years later.

The livery of the white Porsche with the eye-catching light blue, red and dark blue stripes still enjoys cult status today. For example, it also adorned the Porsche 936 of Jacky Ickx and Gijs van Lennep, which netted overall victory at Le Mans in 1976. The third triumph followed a year later: Jürgen Barth, Hurley Haywood and Jacky Ickx won at the wheel of a Porsche 936/77 flying Martini colours.

Dark blue: The Porsche 956 and 962 in Rothmans design influence an era

The Rothmans design with its dark blue and white with red and gold accents is associated with a winning streak for Porsche. The first outing of the works team in partnership with the Canadian tobacco group caused a sensation: the three Porsche 956 that contested the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1982 swept the pool with first, second and third place. The closest pursuer in this group was 30 laps behind. The following year they notched up a one-two victory. In the sports car world championship at that time, the Rothmans Porsche proved unbeatable.

In 1986 and 1987, the Porsche 962C featuring this livery crossed the finish line first in the world's most famous long-distance classic. About 30 years later, Porsche revived the legendary paint job at Le Mans. In 2018, the Porsche 911 RSR sporting the Rothmans look set a new qualifying record for GTE cars. The vehicle finished the race in second place in its class behind its sister car in the "Pink Pig" livery.

Red: Porsche Salzburg calls the tune as the second works team

After narrowly missing out on clinching the first overall victory for Porsche with a 908 LH by only about 120 metres at the debut of the 917 at Le Mans the previous year, the sports car manufacturer from Zuffenhausen doubled down in the 1970 season: the name of the game was full attack with three cars from John Wyer's new works team, plus others registered under Porsche Salzburg. These vehicles flew the red and white national colours of Austria. While Ferry Porsche waved the green flag and sent the field on its way on Saturday, June 13, 1970, his sister Louise Piëch handled the business side of the Salzburg team.

The race at that time, which discarded the classic Le Mans start for the first time, was contested under the most difficult conditions. Torrential rain caused countless accidents, spins and slides. In the end, only seven of the 57 vehicles entered were classified. At the head of the field: Richard "Dick" Attwood from the UK and the extremely careful and level-headed Hans Herrmann from Germany sharing the cockpit of the No. 23 Porsche 917 KH. The pair secured Porsche's first Le Mans overall victory with a commanding five-lap lead.

Yellow: Memories of Porsche and Penske's glory days together

The centrally-positioned yellow stripe with a red border was inspired by the victorious past of the Porsche and Penske combination. The collaboration between the US team and the sports car manufacturer from Stuttgart bore fruit in the early 1970s: two titles in the CanAm series. Even more impressive were the performances of the Porsche RS Spyder decked out in the yellow and red livery of the main sponsor DHL in the American Le Mans Series (ALMS).

The LMP2 prototype swept the title pool between 2006 and 2008 and achieved 24 victories. The unforgettable high point: overall victory at the Sebring 12 Hours in 2008. Germany's Timo Bernhard and his French teammates Romain Dumas and Emmanuel Collard even beat the more powerful LMP1 vehicles. At Le Mans, the RS Spyder won the LMP2 class twice, in 2008 and 2009. In these cases, however, without Penske.

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