

Unforgettable moments of motorsports

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22/06/2016 Porsche has written history with its sports cars – on the racetrack as well. After the 18th overall victory at the 24 Hours of Le Mans, Porsche looks back at three unforgettable motorsports events.

1962 – Porsche in elite class: An unparalleled success

It is July 8th. In the French Grand Prix, the American Dan Gurney is on the third row of the grid with his 804/F1 Monoposto. A minor miracle. Because previously, neither the driver of the Porsche, nor the racing car especially constructed for Formula 1 had met expectations: Gearbox damage at the Grand Prix in the Netherlands. Did not finish after a collision during the race in Monaco.

After these setbacks, initially the 804 takes a one month break. During this time, the Porsche works team improves the car according to Gurney's wishes. Among other things, the mechanics lower the racing car. A good decision.

Gurney starts the race in sixth place. 42 laps later, the Porsche factory driver was leading the field. He remains there until the finish line and achieves the first – and so far the only – official victory in the elite class of a Formula 1 Porsche which had been built completely by Porsche.

1970 – The start of a success story: First overall victory at Le Mans

The racing cars are at a 20° angle to the direction of travel. A typical picture at Le Mans. The fact that two 917 cars of Porsche Salzburg are among them on this June 13th is thanks to Louise Piëch. She had unexpectedly had the cars transported to Le Mans.

The starting flag falls, the race begins. The first hour passes without any great excitement. In the second hour, a real catastrophe occurs for Ferrari who are competing with Porsche: Three of their drivers collide. And that in the box of Scuderia Filipinetti. The fourth Ferrari driver is able to narrowly avoid an accident – but can't avoid dropping out. He brakes sharply and over-revs the engine.

After one and a half hours, seven of the ten fastest cars in training are no longer in the race. Porsche also has to deal with breakdowns: Jo Siffert from the John-Wyer-Team over-revs his engine while in the lead. Until the eighteenth hour of the race, Vic Elford and Kurt Ahrens in their 917 are leading the field. Then the 4.9 litre engine fails.

But one Porsche team stands firm in the race marred by breakdowns and accidents. Start number: 23. Drivers: Richard Attwood and Hans Herrmann. The team repeatedly changes the tyres on the 917/4.5 short tail to adapt the car to the weather conditions.

At the end, 16 cars cross the finish line, only seven are ranked. Right at the front: the red/white 917 with start number 23. For Porsche it is the first win at Le Mans. For Herrmann the pinnacle of his career – and a fitting conclusion to it, as this was the day the man from Swabia retired from active racing.

1977 – Race to catch up in the 936/77 Spyder: The best race Jacky Ickx ever had

In the 70's, a legend becomes part of the Porsche team: Jacky Ickx. He won undoubtedly his most spectacular victory in 1969 in the Ford GT40 at Le Mans. The race to the finish line is considered to be the tightest of all times. The best race of his life? No, he says, that was his fourth overall victory at the 24 hour Le Mans race.

After only three hours, Jacky Ickx then had to retire from the "Circuit des 24 Heures" with engine failure.

His car breaking down initially ruined any chance he had of winning. But then the Porsche team makes a far-reaching decision and gets Ickx to join the team of Jürgen Barth and Hurley Haywood as the third man, who are hopelessly behind at that point in time. A lost race for the 936/77 Spyder?

For the team there is only one possible strategy left: total attack. Jacky Ickx takes the wheel for seven and a half hours – with only a one and a half hour break. In this night at Le Mans, he fights his way up the ranks step by step and manages to get up to fourth place. On the morning of June 12th, then the great surprise: All the Renaults in places one, two and three break down. All of a sudden, the Spyder is in the lead.

The race to catch up takes its toll. In the twenty-fourth hour, the Porsche develops engine problems. At this point in time, no one knows whether it will survive the last round... Today we know: It did.

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