



## Patrick Long... branches on the tree

11/05/2023 "I found my home here, my professional passion. The branches all come from this tree." - Patrick Long

**Atlanta, Georgia.** On March 28, Patrick Long, along with his mentor and friend Alwin Springer, were named co-Grand Marshals of the Porsche Rennsport Reunion 7. While his place of honor needs no explanation now, 25 years ago, the Porsche world would have stepped up and asked: "Who?" And, in fact, that is exactly what Springer did when he was introduced to a quiet redhead in 2002. Today, the native of Southern California has become the personification of Rennsport Reunion, a representative of multiple branches on the Porsche tree. The celebration of Porsche Motorsport past, present and future will take place September 28 – October 1 at WeatherTech Raceway Laguna Seca in Monterey, California and with the guiding hand of Long, the timeline is well represented no matter which way you choose to look.

"The experiences inside of Porsche, of working alongside and with such visionaries, carry so much organization and sense of brand, community, heritage, leadership. It just is an amazing world that has so many places to find your fit," reflected Long just hours after the last person left the ninth edition of the now hallmark Luftgekühlt event he founded with his friend Southern California-based creative director Howie Idelson. "I found my home here, my professional passion. The branches all come from this tree."

## Naturally aspirational.

Growing up in Southern California, Long learned the characteristic engine note of an air-cooled Porsche. However, the closest he had gotten to being behind the wheel of one was riding with his grandfather in a dune buggy powered by a flat-six air-cooled engine from the German marque.

"Sitting in my grandfather's locally built dune buggy and getting a ride in it, that was when I first heard the name Porsche. But, my first real introduction to the brand was through a close friend's dad. He drove a vibrant green 911 Targa. He was an entrepreneur with one of the biggest action sports brands of the decade. I remember that car pulling up in the driveway and that sound. It struck me even then that here was someone who was an executive but had an essence of creativity. The note of the engine and the look and stance of the car, the color, it all just captured me. All around me, air-cooled Porsches were what I aspired to."

## Man of the world.

Surrounded by a family with an entrepreneurial bent and taste for the mechanical, it was only natural that Long would want to get behind the wheel. From the off road racers of Southern California to the dirt tracks that encircled his Thousand Oaks hometown, he was drawn to everything about racing. But it was the whine of the two-stroke kart engines, not the melody of the flat-six that provided the soundtrack for his early career.

"I started racing in Southern California as soon as I was old enough to race: eight-years-old," grinned Long remembering back to those early sparks. "Instantly, it was my world and everything else was just detail. I did ten years of racing from local to regional, state to national and then international karting. I got an invitation to work, live and study in Italy as a junior in high school [age 16]. It was all focused on being in the middle of the best karters on the planet. I won my first international race that year, and it was the first time in 20 years an American, Lake Speed, had won an international karting event. That drew some attention, and I picked up a couple of sponsorships that helped me move into formula car racing."

Once out of karts, the eyes were clearly set on Formula One. That prospect became more real when he was selected to be part of the Elf Campus series in 1999. He finished third in that unique training program that had him living "on campus" at the center of the Circuit de la Sarthe. The students raced all over France and tested regularly on what is now the Bugatti Circuit inside the famed 24-hour track. The same year he traveled back to race in the United States winning nine of 11 races in the Skip Barber Formula Dodge Series. In 2000, he carried the momentum to the heart of Europe's open wheel ladder system in Great Britain.

"I moved to England to race in the British Formula Ford Zetec series. I narrowly missed winning the championship on the final lap of the final race by one point. Final year I was there I was a teammate to

Lewis Hamilton. It went well but I was pretty much out of funding. I was doing anything to make it work from auctioning off family heirlooms to collecting \$500 sponsorships here or there. It wasn't easy."

Long returned to the United States to win the Barber Dodge Pro Series 'Big Scholarship' Shootout later that year. However, despite the difficulty on the financial side, he turned down the scholarship that came with winning the Shootout to remain in Europe the following season in Formula Ford. While the talent was showing, the big break in his career was yet to come. All of that changed in 2002 not by winning a driver search but, instead by finishing third in it.

## Coming home to stay.

In 2002, Red Bull was searching for an American driver to race in Formula One. The energy drink innovator saw the untapped potential of the market in the United States and felt an American would capture the hearts of the population and make F1 a leader in racing on this continent. Long was among 16 American drivers that were asked to participate in the Red Bull F1 Driver Search. He made it to the final cut, one of only six drivers. In the end, he would be the third selection, one spot out of F1. But while it would end his dreams of being a Grand Prix driver, it would take him down another branch that would see him become a legend.

"Danny Sullivan [1985 Indianapolis 500 winner] contacted me and said he had unique opportunity to be one of 16 drivers with a shot at a Formula One seat. They were making the announcement at United States Grand Prix. That got me to Indianapolis where the Porsche Supercup was racing. I meet Uwe Brettel [then head of the Porsche One-Make Championships globally for Porsche]. I wasn't the U.S. selectee but the next morning the phone rang, and it was Uwe asking me to test for the Porsche UPS Junior team. At that point, the team had been going awhile in Supercup but it was only Germans up until then. They wanted to expand the drivers into other nationalities. It went really well, and I was selected as Marc Lieb's replacement to team when he was moved into a factory driver role. I was chosen along with Mike Rockenfeller."

Now as a Porsche Junior, Long had his first taste of GT cars and a look at a career beyond open wheel race cars. Even more so, he was able to peer over the walls of Porsche.

"The spot on the UPS Junior team showed me what was behind the gates at Weissach. It was quickly apparent to me that Porsche's effort and focus on motorsport was so far beyond anything I had been exposed to up until then. I just fell in love with the 911 GT3 Cup car and the entire culture of Porsche. I found pace pretty quickly. My transition was pretty quick. By my fourth race I had earned my first victory at Norisring [Nuremberg, Germany]."

Long wasted little time impressing Porsche and even less time overwhelming his competition. With his mind clearly focused on being the very best Porsche driver he could, the eventual two-time 24 Hours of Le Mans winner (2004, 2007), dove into deep end of all things Porsche.

"My time in the Junior program was expedited by Porsche's desire to have a new American on the works team," offered a humble Long. "Inside of 12 months I went from virtually nowhere to my first start in an IMSA race [Petit Le Mans, 2003]. Three or four races later I was a last minute selection in the main car at Le Mans [Petersen Motorsports/White Lightning Racing, 2004]. It was a lead into what I had never imagined as a 20 year career as a work driver."

## What are you doing next weekend?

"I remember getting the call. I was in the driveway of my parent's house, and it was a 'what are you doing next weekend?' call from Uwe Brettel." So, started the greatest chapter of Patrick Long's career.

"I need you to get a flight to France," Long continued the narrative of the call he received from Brettel who was, by this time, the president and CEO of Porsche Motorsport North America (PMNA). "We are putting you in a car with Sasha [Maassen] and Jörg [Bergmeister]. I showed up to the track and I didn't know anybody. There was a little bit of a feeling of 'is this a good idea to take a rookie and put him in the lead entry at the 24 Hours of Le Mans?' Everybody at Petersen/White Lightning was very encouraging and supportive. It was really overwhelming until the checkered flag flew and we had won. It was such an amazing opportunity. Going back the year after, [again with the Dale White-led program] it was like I had been there forever. But that 12 months from the first call to going back was daunting. I remember thinking I can't believe I am going this fast for this long. It was a great battle that year and both of us had little issues there, but we persevered through and took the victory. There was such a relief. I was a Le Mans winner. I remember waking up in Paris and looking at the French newspaper for my picture. It was incredible. It was a little surreal."

The hard work paid off for Long, providing him factory driver status with Porsche from 2004 until his professional retirement. In the full-circle of his "works" career. Long started at Road Atlanta's 10-hour Petit Le Mans in 2003 and closed at the legendary race in 2021. In that time, he earned three American Le Mans Series GT2 Driver's Championships (2005, 2009, 2010), was a two-time Pirelli World Challenge GT (Overall) Driver's Champion (2011, 2017) and twice was the IMSA Endurance Cup Driver's Champion (2014, 2021). He holds 28 IMSA wins, 12 Pirelli World Challenge wins, three FIA World Endurance Championship wins, the two 24 Heures Du Mans wins (2004, 2007), a Rolex 24 at Daytona win (2009), three 12 Hours of Sebring wins (2005, 2014, 2020) as well as three Petit Le Mans victories (2005, 2006, 2007). He raced to victory lane in the 2017 Liqui-Moly Bathurst 12 Hour Pro-Am Class and the Monterey Sports Car Championship win in 2005 along with an FIA GT Festival Bahrain win (2004). He holds the distinction of providing Porsche with its first victory for Porsche 911 GT3 R Hybrid at 1000kms of Zhuhai, China (2010) and the car's first overall victory in the VLN Masters at Nürburgring Nordschliefe.

## Driver Change

While Long might have stepped out of professional competition, he has been clear that he is far from

retiring. Today his calendar is filled with his own vintage racing which includes not only Porsche race cars but also historic Formula One machines. "Luft" has reached international status as a genuine car culture event that attracts non-car people. Just a few weeks ago, Luftgekühlt 9 was held in the Oakland-area of California drawing tens of thousands of visitors across the three day event. In addition, he oversees numerous racing and non-automotive ventures and partnerships. He remains a key consultant to Porsche Cars North America (PCNA) for PR and Marketing activities and pays it forward, acting as driving coach to the Porsche Junior Program North America with PMNA.

"Working so closely with Alwin, Jens [Walther], Uwe, Daniel and now with Volker [Holzmeyer, current president and CEO of PMNA], it has been fun to have a home base in Southern California. PMNA is an extension of my early days in Weissach and some great leaders at PMNA have become friends. The days with Hartmut [Kristen], he is such a big part of the motorsport story of my generation. The drivers who are some of my closest friends: Jörg [Bergmeister], Sasha [Maassen], Hurley [Haywood]. I am honored, and humbled really, to be a representative of all them and all of the icons of Porsche. All of the men and women that have made Porsche what it is today and all that it can become in the future. All of those branches to the tree, Rennsport Reunion is the one place all of the elements of Porsche land and it really is a true family reunion."

MEDIA ENQUIRIES



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