

Rennsport Reunion Legends: Vol. 4

11/08/2023 Celebrating the motorsports stars that have helped make Porsche legendary in the run up to Rennsport Reunion 7

Atlanta. At Rennsport Reunion, we celebrate the stories and accomplishments of legendary drivers that gave their all for Porsche. Each week leading up to the event, we will showcase drivers and share their stories. These are the heroes of Rennsport Reunion 7 for the week of August 11: George Follmer, Hurley Haywood, Wolf Henzler, David Hobbs, Kevin Jeanette, Stefan Johansson, and Willi Kauhsen.

George Follmer

Born in Phoenix but brought up in California, George Follmer may retain his title as the oldest debutant in the modern era of Formula One forever, and his third overall in a Joest Porsche 956 at the 1986 Le Mans after returning from retirement is the stuff of legend – but it is for his exploits in Can-Am at the wheel of the mighty Porsche 917/10 that he will be remembered forever.

Born in 1934, Follmer started motor racing quite late after a stint in the Army. He bought himself a two-year-old Porsche Speedster in 1959 before progressing onto a Porsche 550 RS. He really made his

name by taking the outright US Road Racing Championship, while still a rookie, in a Lotus 23 into which he had shoe-horned the motor from a Porsche 904. This brought him to the attention of Baron Huschke von Hanstein at Porsche HQ, who made sure that he had a whole 904 GTS to race at Sebring, where he promptly won his class.

But it was only a nasty accident for Mark Donohue in the 917/10 that caused Roger Penske to pick up the phone to Follmer and ask him to get himself to Atlanta as quickly as possible. Following Penske's instructions to win races but not break anything, Follmer took the incredible turbocharged 917 to five race wins in 1972 and the championship title by a comfortable margin. The following year he was runner up to Donohue who in 1973 was piloting the even more powerful, longer-wheelbase 917/30.

Hurley Haywood

Porsche legend Hurley Haywood is one of the greatest endurance sports car racers of all time. His tally of 10 victories at major endurance races is staggering: 24 Hours of Daytona (five: 1973, '75, '77, '79, '91), 24 Hours of Le Mans (three: '77, '83, '94) and the 12 Hours of Sebring (two: '73, '81). Additionally, he was the first driver to win the Rolex 24 At Daytona and 24 Hours of Le Mans in the same year (1977).

He first raced a Porsche in 1969 at the 6 Hours of Watkins Glen, where he and Peter Gregg took a class win in a 911. He won the IMSA GT Championship in 1971 in a Porsche 914/6 and in 1972 in a 911 S. In 1988 he drove an Audi 200 Quattro to win the Trans-Am Drivers' Championship. He added the IMSA Supercar Champion in 1999 driving a Porsche 911 Turbo. He became North American GT Endurance Champion in 1994 and is a three-time winner of the Norelco Cup.

Haywood represented Porsche through the majority of his racing career and has made appearances in some of the most iconic Porsche race cars: 917/10, 956, 962, 935, 936 and 911, to name just a few. He was a key figure at Brumos Racing, a name that became (and continues to be) synonymous with Porsche race cars in the USA. Long after his racing career, Haywood continued to represent Porsche as Chief Driving Instructor for the Porsche Track Experience, co-creator of the North American Porsche Young Driver Academy (PYDA), and attendee of every Rennsport Reunion (even the prototype event at Watkins Glen). He remains a Porsche Ambassador today.

Wolf Henzler

German race car driver Wolf Henzler started out in karts, winning the German Junior Kart Championship in 1991. He progressed into Formula BMW Junior the following year, being named Rookie of the Year in 1992 and posting two wins in 1993. He continued in open-wheel racing up to the F3 level until 1998, achieving several wins and numerous podium finishes.

In 2000, he made the move to the Porsche Supercup, finishing runner-up in the 2003 season and

becoming champion in 2004. That same, busy year, Henzler came runner-up in the Porsche Carrera Cup Germany, achieved a podium finish at the Petit Le Mans and recorded two wins from two starts in the Speed World Challenge GT class. Another two victories in the Speed World Challenge came in 2005, as well as a class win at the 24 Hours of Daytona. A great season in 2006, resulted in a second place in the Grand-Am Series and fourth in the American Le Mans Series (both GT class), earning Henzler the prestigious Porsche Cup.

Henzler became a Porsche factory, or "works" driver in 2008, taking the ALMS GT title the same year. His fans didn't have long to wait for his next major successes: in 2010 he enjoyed a GT2 class win at the 24 Hours of Le Mans, an overall win at the 24 Hours of Spa and a class podium at the 24 Hours of Daytona. He went one better at the 2011 24 Hours of Daytona and won the GT class, and also posted an overall win at the 25 Hours of Thunderhill. Henzler later won the Petit Le Mans in 2013 in the GT class and in 2014 in the GTLM class. He has continued to make many race starts in Porsche race cars and, in 2017, took up the role of Talent Pool Coach for the Porsche Carrera Cup Germany.

David Hobbs

David Hobbs is a retired British race car driver and well-known motorsports commentator. During a driving career that lasted more than three decades, Hobbs raced in an astonishing number of different categories: sports cars, touring cars, F1, Formula 5000, IndyCar, IMSA, Trans-Am, Can-Am and NASCAR.

Hobbs' first racing exploits were in 1959 at the wheel of his mother's Morris Oxford (fitted with a clever automatic gearbox designed and built by his father). After a brief racing period in his father's Jaguar XK140 (also fitted with a Hobbs 'box, of course), he entered the 1961 1000km of Nürburgring and achieved a class win in a Lotus Elite (with, you guessed it, a Hobbs 'box). In 1962, he drove the Lotus Elite in his first of 20 races at the 24 Hours of Le Mans, taking a class win and winning the Index of Thermal Efficiency award. He won his class again at Le Mans in 1964 driving a works Triumph Spitfire.

Other notable achievements in an incredibly long and illustrious career include winning the L&M F5000 Championship in 1971 and the Trans-Am Series Championship in 1983. He has raced some of the most iconic Porsche race cars of all time: 917K, 956, 962 and 935/78 – the famous 'Moby Dick' race car in which he achieved a Le Mans class win in 1982 with John Fitzpatrick Racing.

Kevin Jeanette

Kevin Jeannette, founder and owner of Gunnar Racing, has a long involvement with Porsche. From racing with state-of-the-art machinery, to restoring much-loved historic race cars, Jeannette is an almost unrivalled expert on Porsche motorsports in North America. He started out as a Porsche race mechanic before establishing Gunnar Racing in 1978. He began working with teams running 934s and 935s – and even built the engine for the 935 that won the 1983 24 Hours of Daytona. He then moved

focus to Porsche 962s, working with various big-hitting teams such as Busby Racing. Jeannette became a central character in the wild days of IMSA's GT and GTP eras.

Outside of racing, the restoration business (thanks to fine craftsmanship and incredible depth of knowledge) was making a name for itself. Numerous iconic Porsche race cars – the 917, 908, 910 – were passing through and emerging as the flawless, rejuvenated examples that their pedigree deserved. Among those examples: a 908 LH for the Porsche Museum.

In 1990, Gunnar Racing, under Jeannette's leadership, built the first open-topped prototype to run in the IMSA GTP class – the Gunnar Porsche 966 Spyder, based on the 962. The team campaigned the car from 1991 through 1993, attracting notable drivers such as Derek and Justin Bell.

In 2017, Porsche Motorsport North America announced a strategic partnership with Gunnar Racing, collaborating to deliver historically authentic restoration of Porsche race cars.

Stefan Johansson

Swedish race car driver – and accomplished painter – Stefan Johansson grew up around cars. His father owned an auto repair shop and raced saloon cars. It's no surprise then that, at age eight, Johansson was tearing around in karts. At age 12, he began racing karts competitively and went on to win the 1973 Scandinavian Championship, before stepping up to Formula Ford and then F3, winning the British Championship in 1980. He raced in F1 from 1983 through 1991 driving for various teams. His most notable F1 seasons were with Ferrari in 1985-86 (fifth place in 1986 Drivers' Championship) and with McLaren in 1987. In total, Johansson competed in 103 grands prix and scored 12 podium finishes. After F1, he moved into CART IndyCar Series and was named Rookie of the Year.

including sixth place at the 24 Hours of Le Mans and second place at both Silverstone and Nürburgring in 1983 driving the Joest Racing Porsche 956. Johansson raced at Le Mans 15 times, taking an overall victory in 1997 in the Joest Racing TWR Porsche WSC-95, as well as class wins in 1992 and 2003. He also scored an eventful win at the 1984 12 Hours of Sebring in the iconic Porsche 935.

Since retiring from competitive driving, Johansson spends his time as a talented painter, watch designer, driver manager and Sporting Director for Ferrari GT Racing.

Willi Kauhsen

Willi Kauhsen started racing in the 1960s, becoming European Touring Car Champion in 1967 with an Abarth 1000 TC Corsa. By 1968, he had been named as a Porsche works driver and won the Marathon de la Route, an 84-hour race at Nürburgring, and the 24 Hours of Spa in the same year – both in a factory Porsche 911. He raced a Porsche 908 in the 1969 season, but perhaps his most memorable performances were at the wheel of the Porsche 917. He piloted the fan-favorite 'Hippie' 917L to

second place at the 1970 24 Hours of Le Mans in a Porsche 1-2-3 finish – a historic race that marked the first overall Le Mans win for Porsche. Another appearance in a Porsche racing icon followed at the 1971 Le Mans, where Kauhsen drove the Porsche 917/20 'Pink Pig'.

Kauhsen went on to form Willi Kauhsen Racing Team (WKRT) and competed in Interserie and Can-Am in a Porsche 917/10. He finished runner-up in the Interserie Championship in 1972 and 1973 and earned third place in the 1974 championship. During this period, he achieved a total of four wins and 13 podium finishes in Interserie.

After a foray into formula car racing in F2 and F1 with WKRT in the late '70s, Kauhsen devoted himself to building historic race cars – a passion for which his specialist knowledge of iconic Porsche race cars makes him well-equipped.

Image Sublines

Path: media/Images/img_3.jpg
Title: Haywood 1974 911 Carrera RSR and Bill Webbe.jpg
Subline: Hurley Haywood and Bill Webbe in a 1974 911 Carrera RSR

Path: media/Images/img_5.jpg
Title: Henzler 2012 ALMS Road Atlanta Petite Le Mans No. 17 911 Cup.jpg
Subline: Wolf Henzler drives the No. 17 Porsche 911 Cup in the 2012 ALMS Road Atlanta Petite Le Mans

Path: media/Images/img_7.jpg
Title: Hobbs 1983 1000km Nurburgring No. 11 956 KH 6th PL.jpg
Subline: David Hobbs pits the No. 11 956 ahead of a 6th Place finish at Nurburgring in 1983

Path: media/Images/img_10.jpg
Title: Johnasson 1984 Int. ADAC 1000km Nurburgring 956 C1.jpg
Subline: Stefan Johannson drives a 956 at Nurburgring in 1984

Path: media/Images/img_12.jpg
Title: Kauhsen 1971 Le Mans 917 'Pig' .jpg
Subline: Willi Kauhsen drives the 917 'Pig' at Le Mans in 1971

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