

The world's fastest class reunion

30/09/2015 The largest event worldwide with historic Porsche race cars and legendary Porsche race drivers has lured over 57,000 spectators to the Rennsport Reunion at the Laguna Seca Raceway close to Monterey.

Eleven Le Mans winners from Porsche

Eleven Le Mans winners from Porsche fielded questions from fans at the Rennsport Reunion, talking of the old days while busily signing autographs. The youngest was Earl Bamber at 25 years old, the oldest Hans Herrmann, who won the long distance classic in 1970 and turned 87 on 23 February. The other Le Mans winners in attendance were Richard Attwood (1970), Jacky Ickx (1976, 77, 81, 82), Gijs van Lennep (1976), Hurley Haywood (1977, 83, 94), Jürgen Barth (1977), Derek Bell (1981, 82, 86, 87), Vern Schuppan (1983), Hans-Joachim Stuck (1986, 87) as well as Nick Tandy who won Le Mans this year with Earl Bamber.

Hans-Joachim Stuck: “These cars are amazing”

Hans-Joachim Stuck’s favourite car at the Rennsport Reunion was one of the few that fans did not get the chance to admire on the Laguna Seca circuit. The Porsche 962 in which he won the Sebring 12-hour race with Bob Akin and Jo Gartner in 1986 is just being rebuilt. “That victory was one of the milestones of my career,” he said and was obviously impressed by the great atmosphere and enthusiasm at the Rennsport Reunion. “The cars you see here are just amazing. They’re all in incredible condition. And the best thing is that I’ve contested races in many of them.” This is the first time Hans-Joachim Stuck has attended the Rennsport Reunion. “I’d received invitations before but somehow it always coincided with a race weekend. If I’d known just how fantastic this event was I would have immediately cancelled all the other commitments and come straight here.”

Hurley Haywood: “Fans for the rest of their lives”

The only Porsche racing legend who has attended all five Rennsport Reunions between 2001 and 2015 is Hurley Haywood. “The event has never been as organised as this and we’ve never seen as many beautiful cars as we’re witnessing here this weekend,” says the American, who has won Le Mans three times for Porsche and the Daytona 24-hour classic five times. “I’m particularly delighted to see how many visitors have brought their children to share the fascination of Porsche with them. I’m sure they’ll be fans for the rest of their lives.” When asked what his favourite car is, his brow furrows. “That's like asking a father to name his favourite child. I have a very special connection to them all.” After contemplating a while he then decides: “I’ve always had a soft spot for the Porsche 936 with which Jacky Ickx, Jürgen Barth and I won Le Mans in 1977. The car in which you scored your first Le Mans win always holds a very special place in your heart.”

919 Hybrid and 911 RSR turn demo laps

Porsche’s LMP pilots Mark Webber, Brendon Hartley and Neel Jani made their first appearance at a Rennsport Reunion. They were in hot demand for interviews with journalists, and fans waited in long queues to get their autograph. The demonstration laps with the Porsche 919 Hybrid was the first time that many of the 50,000 plus visitors along the Laguna Seca Raceway witnessed the innovative Le Mans winner in action. The GT drivers representing Porsche at Laguna Seca were Earl Bamber, Jörg Bergmeister, Michael Christensen, Wolf Henzler, Patrick Long, Frédéric Makowiecki and Nick Tandy. Another highly sought-after photo subject was the Porsche 911 RSR, which can be admired again in the USA this coming weekend: On the storied Road Atlanta circuit, it contests the final round of the 2015 Tudor United SportsCar Championship.

Hans Herrmann: “Young race drivers need to know how it was back then”

When Hans Herrmann and Jacky Ickx met on the opening night of the Rennsport Reunion, their delight was second to none. “It's always wonderful to be reunited with so many drivers from the early days and talk about old times,” says the first Le Mans winner for Porsche (1970 in the 917K with Richard Attwood). “It is important for the future to keep these memories alive. The young drivers need to know how it was back then when the steering wheels were wooden and we had no computers like today.” When he meets Jacky Ickx, the conversation quickly turns to the 1969 episode when the Belgian beat him to the flag by mere seconds. But the bitter defeat also yielded something positive: “Ferdinand Piech was so annoyed that for 1970 he built a super engine and we then won with it.”

Porsche RS Spyder evokes memories of Mark Donohue

The Porsche RS Spyder was built in 2007 – but it only celebrated its race debut at this year's Rennsport Reunion. Kevin Jeanette, one of the big names in the American racing scene for the last 37 years, managed to acquire the race car just three weeks ago from a private collector. At the Laguna Seca Raceway, David Donohue sat at the wheel of the sports prototype, with its Sunoco livery evoking memories of his legendary father Mark Donohue. In 2009 David won at Daytona with a Riley Porsche. His 0.167-second advantage went down in history as the closest finish at the 24-hour race.

Earl Bamber dreams of the Porsche GT1

Earl Bamber was a kid of seven and had already launched his karting career when the Porsche GT1 1998 claimed the 16th outright victory for Porsche at the Le Mans 24-hour race. “Back then I dreamed of sitting in such a car one day,” says the New Zealander, “but I never thought that I would be one of the drivers to secure the next Le Mans victory for Porsche.” But that's exactly what happened. When Porsche notched up its 17th victory at the world's most famous long distance race this year, he was one of the winning drivers at the wheel of the Porsche 919 Hybrid with Nick Tandy and Nico Hülkenberg. At the Rennsport Reunion he discovered the GT1 that he had once idolised amongst the other historic Porsche race cars. He thinks he would like to buy a historic Porsche one day, “but first I need to contest a few more races.”

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