



Coming together

09/09/2022 "This has all come together in a way that is special. I am having a blast and I am just happy to be here." – Jeff Gordon

It took a special event and a special car to bring one of NASCAR racing's greatest all-time drivers back together with longtime teammates and his hometown fans. The second Porsche Sports Car Together Fest, held on the hallowed grounds of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, saw the legendary reunion of Jeff Gordon and Ray Evernham. The legendary driver-crew chief pairing was there to take on the challenge of competing in one of the world's most iconic cars, the Porsche 911 GT3 Cup in the Porsche Carrera Cup North America Presented by the Cayman Islands. The celebration of the Porsche culture and passion for the brand truly did come together in Central Indiana on Labor Day weekend.

The path to a brief step out of retirement for Gordon was not planned, not until the four-time NASCAR Cup champion visited Thermal Club race track in California for a different project. While at the popular club track, he met with friend and Porsche Carrera Cup North America regular Kyle Washington. A test drive of the Porsche 911 GT3 Cup race car had the NASCAR Hall of Famer hooked.

"We had customers in Thermal and one of them had just taken delivery of a GT3 Cup car," said Gordon

while racing in Indianapolis. "I was asked if I would like to drive it and I did... and I had a lot of fun."

From there, the wheels began to turn. They gained momentum as Gordon learned that with the purchase of the 500 hp, naturally aspirated flat-six racing machine, came the requirement to race the car in the premier one-make race series.

"So, when I left there, I said, 'How do I get one of these?' and little did I know at the time that you have to race this car if you purchase it," continued the three-time Daytona 500 winner. "I really had no intentions of racing this car but that is the deal that you have to abide by with Porsche and I am happy I am here doing this. It is fun to drive but it is even more fun to be competitive out there."

It was only natural that Gordon would pick the Porsche Sports Car Together Fest held at the "the Brickyard," the world famous track just east of Pittsboro, Indiana, the town he grew up in. Once the date was set Gordon looked for the next piece of the puzzle... who would prepare the race version of the Porsche 911 GT3 road car. He placed a call to the crew chief he had found so much success in NASCAR, Ray Evernham. The weekend would mark the first time the pairing would work together since 1998. With the recent International Motorsport Hall of Fame inductee on board, the pairing began to add the remaining pieces to the Hendrick Performance Group. It was coming together.

"The best part of this whole thing is working with Ray," smiled Gordon. "Ray and I have talked at different times about doing different events. The coolest thing for me was when this came about, I couldn't wait to call Ray and see if he wanted to be a part of it. I am glad that he is. That is what is making this a lot of fun for the both of us."

Gordon continued: "The other great part about this is that I get to do it here at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. This track is incredibly special to so many people but especially me growing up down the road in Pittsboro. This place is special."

"We haven't worked together in 22 years, but we have known each other for 32 years," said Evernham about his professional relationship with Gordon being renewed this weekend. "He has been like a little brother to me and even though we haven't been working together we always stay in touch. We always thought it would be great to work together again because we enjoyed it, we had fun. When he said I've got this car and we are going to go race would you be interested I said heck yeah! Indy is just a real special place to the both of us. The other competitors have been fantastic as well as the people at Porsche. They have made it a great experience."

One of the last pieces of the puzzle to fall into place was reuniting him with the famous car number 24 he used throughout his NASCAR career. That was made possible by Premier Racing who handed over the number Adam Adelson had used all season in homage to Gordon.

"I owe him a huge thanks," said Gordon about the number exchange, the Premier team and Adelson. "Not that we had to have the 24 but it does make the experience more special. He was very gracious for doing that. Big thanks to him."

On August 24, just weeks before the black on silver Porsche would roll out for first practice, the news broke raising a stir in stock car and sports car racing communities alike. The fans came into the Speedway with the added enticement of watching a living legend take on the very best talent in GT one-make racing and they got the added attraction of Porsche Sports Car Together Fest.

The three-day end of summer Porsche Sports Car Together Fest played host to multiple activities on and off the track highlighting the Porsche culture ranging from the importance of motorsport to the development of the brand's road-going sports cars. Included in the unique celebration was the crowning of the second champion of the Porsche Classic Restoration Challenge. Legendary racing entrant Champion Porsche won top honors with their restored 1989 911 Turbo Type 930.

An endurance relay race held by Ragnar brought people power to the Indy road course after which all in attendance enjoyed the new *Top Gun: Maverick* feature film on the massive digital screen on the back of the track's famous Pagoda. Celebrating the highest level of road going Porsche cars, 115 of the amazing performance-focused Porsche GT machines were on the Speedway grounds on Sunday alone. Showing the reach of Porsche, the German marque held both the semi-finals and finals of the months long Porsche Esports Challenge USA. Chicagoan Randall Haywood was crowned as the Gran Turismo 7-based champion of the driving sim event. Porsche-centric events, programs, activities and displays around the facility included artists creating themed works, health and wellness activities for the entire family to participate in and more. Bringing in aspects of its sports and lifestyle experiences, Sports Car Together Fest is an event the entire family and fans of all ages enjoyed.

The Porsche 911 GT3 Cup car proved a fun challenge to the engineering mind of Evernham.

"They are really incredibly well engineered cars," stated Evernham about the Porsche 911 GT3 Cup race car. "Like any tool, learning how to use it. As long as we are continuing to step up in the right direction there is a ton to learn and that is fun. I am enjoying it. The Porsche people have been fantastic, and the competitors have been fantastic."

Looking at the challenge of a brand new type of car and race series, Gordon was contemplative. "I am a competitor, Ray's a competitor. If we are constantly making progress with the car and the speed and the competitiveness. I really want to have fun and having fun to me is pushing the car to the limits, learning about this style of car, this style of racing. Here I am, I couldn't stay out of it."

With limited seat time in the car, Gordon, who last raced in 2016, made a strong showing against the field of experienced hands of the rear-engine racing machine. He finished 14th in the Pro class of his first race in the series and followed that the next day nearly breaking into the top 10 with an 11th-place finish in class on Sunday.

"I wanted to do some fun things, make some passes," reflected Gordon after his second of the two 40-minute races. "I made a pass on the white flag lap. That made my whole weekend. I think we ended it on a positive note. All week I have been happy I am here, having a great time with Ray [Evernham], Steve Bardahl, my dad, Jon Edwards and the whole team. I must say [the first race], I thought, 'Man, I am

getting beat out here,' and I don't like that. If I am going to be in an environment like this, I want to be competitive. But [Sunday] turned the corner for me. So, I hope I get to do another one one day."

Gordon's time behind the wheel and on the radio with Evernham made a special event for fans, competitors and two legends themselves. It all comes together and that is what Porsche Sports Car Together Fest is all about.

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