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New role for Patrick Dempsey

When this season's World Endurance Championship gets underway in Silverstone this weekend, the Hollywood star will no longer be involved as a race driver but as co-owner of the Dempsey Proton Racing team. An interview.



Patrick, how would you describe your new role as co-owner of Dempsey Proton Racing and the 911 RSR with the number 77?

It's great to be involved in motorsports from a new perspective. Last year I made the decision to mainly focus on motorsports as a driver. I raced in the FIA World Endurance Championship – one of the biggest and most rewarding challenges in my life. This year I am excited to support the team in my new role as a co-owner. Currently we are preparing for Silverstone and the team is doing a world class job. I will be present there for the first round of the season, as well as in Le Mans.

How often will we see you at the racetrack?

I'll try to be at the races as much as my schedule allows me to. I have always been a huge fan of motor sports and I love taking on new challenges. My new role as a co-owner of Dempsey Proton Racing gives me the opportunity to combine both. So far it's been quite a rewarding experience to learn about the managerial aspects of co-owning a race team and I can't wait to kick off the season in Silverstone this weekend.

With Richard Lietz and Michael Christensen, the FIA WEC title defenders are the lineup for the No 77 911 RSR. Are you proud of having such great drivers?

Oh yes, extremely proud. Richard and Michael are amongst the fastest and most experienced drivers in the field. They have a lot of responsibility to defend the championship and they are the right drivers for this kind of pressure. I am incredibly lucky to have them in our team. But it will not be easy, as they are the only Porsche in GTE-Pro class. And some other manufacturers are racing new cars in a full 2016 specification. Our car is an updated 2015 car. But reliability should be one of our advantages. And whenever the track is wet, the 911 is by far the best car on the grid. We have proven this multiple times in the past season.

What makes it special to drive a 911 RSR?

Driving a 911 RSR is as exhilarating as it is demanding. It's a very powerful car and there is a lot of force acting on your body, so you need to be in good shape to put in consistent lap times. At the same time it's very well balanced. Feedback is great and it's easy to feel what the car is doing. Exactly what you want from a good GT race car. It still feels like a 911 road car, but it is even more precise and much faster on the race track. Above all it's a fun and thrilling experience. There is really nothing else like it.

In 2015 you mainly focused on improving your skills as a driver – with fantastic success. P2 in GTE-Am in Le Mans and the win in Fuji.

How was it for you?

Yes, it is completely a dream realized and come true. I worked very hard that season and it was great to achieve this many goals. It was a very fulfilling experience. As a sportsman success is what you are aiming for. All the preparation, all the workouts you do – you always have this success in mind. That's your motivation.

Can you describe the feeling standing on the podium – especially in Le Mans – in front of thousands of fans?

This was my biggest dream come true. When you are standing up there in front of this massive crowd – it is hard to put it into words. It was so overwhelming and emotional in the best way. Especially when you think about the meaning and history of Le Mans and all the legendary race drivers who have raced there. I will certainly remember those moments for the rest of my life.



Patrick Dempsey: "In Le Mans my biggest dream came true"

Are there other highlights of the 2015 season you want to mention?

I have tremendous, great memories from the 2015 season. I took my skills as a race driver to a new level which felt great. And working so closely with Porsche was really enjoyable. It was an extraordinary year. I look back at the season with great fondness and satisfaction.

What is your focus for 2016?

My focus is on building results as great as last year as a team leader. But as I already said: In GTE-Pro class it will be even more difficult. I am looking forward to the first race in Silverstone very much.

Your family will have more contact with the racing scene in 2016. Are you excited about that?

Yes, Porsche and family are all in one. Being involved in endurance racing means a lot of traveling. So being able share the experience and passion for racing with my family more often will be great.

Last year you came to Silverstone last minute without knowing the track, which must have been extremely difficult. Do you enjoy coming to Silverstone now without a rush, in a different role and more time to watch and enjoy the race?

Last year at Silverstone was not easy. Silverstone is a very fast and challenging track with a significant amount of history. Being there in a different role will be a great way to kick off the season from a different perspective. And definitely a more relaxed one.

In the past years you became an important member of the Porsche Family. How would you describe your relationship with the other drivers and all the other Porsche people?

I have always been a great Porsche fan. And working so closely with them is a truly inspiring experience. They're great guys. I have a tremendous relationship with everyone in the Porsche family including all the drivers. I love being a part of the team. I got so much helpful advice from some of the best drivers in the world. This was very helpful to improve my skills and achieve these great results.

Where does your fascination for motor racing come from?

My fascination began very early in my childhood. I always loved racing and cars since I was very young. My father would bring me home little Matchbox cars, we would watch or listen to the Indianapolis 500. I just always had an interest in all things racing.

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