

# The JWAE Gulf Porsche Racing Programme 1970/71

## The Tensions Behind The Success

Forty five years ago, on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1970, the Gulf Porsche 917s of Pedro Rodriguez/Leo Kinnunen and Jo Siffert/Brian Redman, entered by JW Automotive Engineering Ltd, dominated the Daytona 24 Hours Race. This was to be the first of many Championship victories for the Gulf/JWAE team, culminating in the World Sports Car Championship in both 1970 and 1971.



The Porsche 917

For Porsche it was a period of total domination; 2 Championships, and 2 Le Mans victories, all without an official works team. The difficult years of 1968 and 1969 forgotten, the hierarchy in the family were all extremely pleased, but behind the success lay many tensions for the John Wyer/Gulf Oil team.

As Wyer's team battled through Sebring in March 1969, with the elderly but race winning Ford GT40, Porsche opened negotiations with him to run their team in 1970 and 1971. The first formal meeting took place in early April and was attended by Dr Ferry Porsche, his nephew Ferdinand Piech the director of engineering, Helmuth Bott the chief development engineer, Hans Mezger the chief designer and Paul Hensler the engine guru, along with Rico Steinemann the team manager and Wyer himself.

Wyer used to recall with glee the opening question from Dr Porsche, 'How many cars do you think you need to win the World Championship?'. Wyer replied, 'Two as a minimum and it would really be

better to have three'. There was a stunned silence after which Ferry Porsche asked 'Do you know how many we built last year?' silence again, and then finally - 'We built 52!'

The heads of terms for the contract that were agreed reflected Porsche's concern at the cost of the racing programme in both financial and technical terms, which Dr Porsche himself considered was to the detriment of road car development and production. Furthermore there was a tacit acknowledgement that Gulf/JWAE did a better operating job in racing than they did.

The detail of the deal between the 2 companies was :

- a. Porsche would withdraw completely from participation in the World Championship series.
- b. Porsche would supply JWAE with 7 cars, on loan, for the programme.
- c. Porsche would continue with development of the 917, with the commitment that all improvements be passed on to JWAE as an absolute priority.
- d. JWAE could only change the specification of the cars with Porsche approval.
- e. All engines would be prepared and rebuilt at the factory.
- f. Transmissions and all other aspects of preparation were to be JWAE's responsibility.
- g. The costs, to an agreed budget, to be picked up by Gulf Oil, in whose colours and branding the cars would run.
- h. JWAE to have complete operational freedom.
- i. Porsche could continue to support their customer teams on a commercial basis.
- j. The deal to be for 1970 and 1971.
- k. The programme was to win the World Sports Car Championship only.

It was points c, d, e, and i that were to cause so much difficulty throughout the 2 years of success. It should be noted that Porsche had built 25 examples of the 917 to comply with the regulations and needed to get some return on their commercial investment.

John Wyer recalls the totally different motivation for racing success between Ford and Porsche. The Ford programme was a marketing exercise, whereas Porsche were 'exclusively engineering orientated', the



The architects of victory. John Wyer (l), and Grady Davis (r) Senior Executive Vice President Gulf Oil Corporation



Brands Hatch, 1970