



Fearsome foursome: The driver quartet of the victorious GT3 RS Michael Schrom, Kevin Buckler, Jörg Bergmeister, Timo Bernhard (from left)

## Winning from the Beginning

A perfect start for the new race car generation from the Porsche Customer Sports Department: The Racer's Group Team earned the twentieth overall victory for Porsche at the Daytona 24-Hour Race in a 911 GT3 RS. A total of 200 cars built in Weissach are debuting this spring.

By Michael Sönke: Photos by Ulrich Upietz



Keeping an eye on customer success: Uwe Brettel (left) and Alwin Springer from Porsche



Victories like this are a joy to factory drivers: Timo Bernhard (left) and Jörg Bergmeister

Towards the end of the sixth hour, the Porsche 911 GT3 RS of the private American Racer's Group team took over the lead in the huge concrete bowl at Daytona. Three-quarters of the distance and a long night still lay ahead of the crew—consisting of the two German factory drivers, Jörg Bergmeister and Timo Bernhard, and their American team colleagues, Kevin Buckler and Michael Schrom—at the first major event of the 2003 circuit racing season. The Porsche drove one solitary lap after the other; neither the prototypes nor the Ferrari of the eventual runner-up, the Risi team, could prevent it from triumphing.

"Our car didn't need the slightest repair," emphasized Bernhard at the finish line. Again and again, the Porsche factory driver spoke of the flawless run at the long-distance classic that traditionally marks the opening of the motor racing season. Bernhard: "Refuel, change the tires, clean the windshield—that's all our mechanics needed to do to our Porsche." And when it runs, it really runs—the quartet drove 695 laps on

the course, half of which consists of steep turns. That equals a distance of 3,981.655 kilometers (2,474.09 miles). Another 911 GT3 RS from the Rennwerks Motorsports team came in third behind a Ferrari, and fifth place went to a Fabcar Prototype with a Porsche engine, ahead of yet another 911 GT3 RS with factory driver Marc Lieb on board.

In Weissach, one person was especially pleased by this success in Florida. Hartmut Kristen is responsible for Customer Sports at Porsche. And the Daytona victory proves that this concept is working. From what other carmaker can a team purchase a sports car for the racetrack and immediately win a major international competition? "No other manufacturer has such a long tradition of supporting private drivers," Kristen emphasizes. Some makes come, some go, but Porsche remains. It's been that way for around five decades, and private teams put their faith in it. This leads to magnificent results at the racetrack and to full order books in Weissach.

The racing workshop in Weissach was working at full capacity this winter. Around 200 Porsche 911 GT3 Cup models were built and delivered for the numerous brand cups across the globe, as well as nineteen of the faster 911 GT3 RS models. Kristen: "Since 2000, we have assembled a total of 190 GT3 RS models."

Buckler, from Sonoma, California, is one of Kristen's customers. For one thing, he drives the car superbly. Secondly, he is not only a racing driver, but also heads up a team. He is the owner of "The Racer's Group." In 2002, working with the same partners, he won his class at Daytona as a driver. Throughout the year, he maintained that level of performance. His well-deserved reward: the coveted Porsche Cup for the best private driver.

The check for €37,000 that he received in Weissach in December seems to have been invested in a new purchase. Just prior to Daytona, the new 2003 GT3 RS was delivered. The latest edition of the 3.6-liter six-cylinder engine packs 435 hp; the revamped version of the car weighs in

at 1,100 kilograms (2,425 lbs.). It is designed for a wide range of uses: the races of the American Le Mans Series and a start at the Twenty-four Hours of Le Mans as well as the FIA GT championship and the North American Grand Am series—as shown by the victory at the venerable Daytona race-track.

During qualifying, the Buckler team only managed to place sixteenth, but they moved up in a hurry. At the finish, its lead over the second-place team was nine laps. "We had decided to attack from the very beginning and to trust in the reliability of the Porsche," said Buckler. A beaming Bernhard adds, "It paid off."

Those who buy a racing car from Porsche have a good chance to win—whether it's their class, category or the overall classification. That was true in the 1950s of models like the 550 Spyder or the 356 Carrera. In the 1960s, the winning numbers were 904 and 906; in the 1970s, they were 908, 917-10 and 935. Never to be forgotten are the great post-1982 victories of the most successful racing

The name tells all: The Racer's Group consists of an entire collection of ambitious drivers—with the Daytona winners in the center

Tank you for everything: The pit stops of the winning car were limited to the intake of liquid nourishment





**Route 66:**  
The brand new 911 GT3 RS proved a model of reliability in the toughness test in Daytona

prototype of all time, the 956/962 C. A total of 148 of these world champions and Le Mans winners were built. And most of the 600-hp race cars were delivered to customer teams. As factory driver Bergmeister says: "Now the 911 GT3 RS is continuing in that tradition. We have provided a demonstration of the power and reliability of these cars."

Along with the production, Kristen mentions another guarantee of success: "We provide spare-parts service and technical support at racetracks throughout the world. In the USA, this is taken care of by Alwin Springer's team at Porsche Motorsport North America."

Specialists from Kristen's thirty-man team are on duty in Europe and in Japan. "On about forty to forty-five racing weekends, we are at the tracks of the FIA GT series or the French and Swedish GT championships," Kristen explains. In addition, advice from the experts is also very much sought after at the numerous brand cups across the globe.

Kirsten on the demands placed on his Customer Sports crew: "We sell parts, of course, up to and including entire engines and cars. But we also contribute advice and support. After all, some smaller teams work with very enthusiastic but not necessarily very experienced mechanics." This uncomplicated collaboration helps Porsche's customers, and it helps

Porsche. Kristen: "Our specialists are very aware of where glitches occur and what suggestions our customers have. We can then include this knowledge in future development projects in Weissach."

Orders aren't the only thing piling up on Kristen's desk in Weissach. Comprehensive Daytona statistics can be found there as well. From the Porsche perspective, they look like this: "Twenty overall victories since the first by Neerpasch/Elford in a 907 in 1968. Fifty-five class wins; the 911 has been victorious thirty times. There have been eleven double wins. Continuous overall or class victories from 1966 to 1987..." To be continued. ◀



**Third place in a fast race: The GT3 RS from Rennwerks Motorsports (No. 83) dueling one of the new Ford prototypes**



### Carrera Cup – Dates

#### Porsche Michelin Supercup

April 20: Imola  
May 4: Barcelona  
May 18: Spielberg  
June 1: Monte Carlo  
June 29: Nürburgring  
July 6: Magny-Cours  
July 20: Silverstone  
August 3: Hockenheim  
August 24: Budapest  
September 14: Monza  
September 28: Indianapolis

#### Carrera Cup Germany

April 27: Hockenheimring  
May 11: Venice  
Mai 25: Nürburgring  
June 8: Lausitzring  
June 22: Norisring  
August 17: Nürburgring  
September 7: Spielberg  
September 21: Zandvoort  
October 5: Hockenheimring

#### Carrera Cup Australia

March 9: Melbourne  
April 14: Phillip Island  
May 4: Eastern Creek  
May 25: Winton  
June 29: Hidden Valley  
July 20: Queensland  
September 14: Sandown  
October 12: Bathurst  
October 26: Surfers Paradise

#### Carrera Cup France

April 20: Nogaro  
Mai 18: Dijon  
June 8: Pau  
June 22: Le Vigeant  
July 13: Le Mans  
September 7: Albi  
October 26: Magny-Cours

#### Carrera Cup Great Britain

April 21: Mondello Park  
May 5: Brands Indy  
May 25: Thruxton  
June 8: Silverstone  
June 22: Rockingham  
July 13: Croft  
August 9: Snetterton  
August 24: Brands Indy  
September 7: Donington Park  
September 21: Oulton Park

#### Carrera Cup Japan

April 6: Fuji  
Mai 25: Sugo  
August 3: Fuji  
September 7: TI  
November 16: Suzuka



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