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[Hot blood, cold feet: Porsche prepares for the 1969 endurance season](#)

Lead

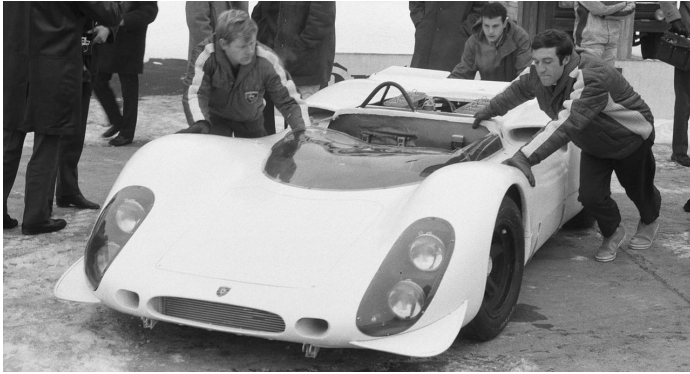
A story of rubber on plain old Tarmac doesn't quite cut it on the cusp of Christmas. As a result, we fade back to 1969 and relive Porsche's mid-winter preparations for an assault on that year's International Championship of Makes, and ultimately the 24 Hours of Le Mans...

An all-star driver line-up and a heady dose of commitment come into play

"Phew," exclaimed a mechanic, watching Porsche's quintet of 908s being pushed into the Daytona pit lane. "If there's any truth in the saying that Porsche is a small company, then Ford should have fielded 30 works entries." But in a quest to dominate the 1969 International Championship of Makes, Porsche didn't only flex its mechanical muscle: an all-star driver line-up and a heady dose of commitment also came into play, as proven at a snow-covered Hockenheimring on January 8, 1969 – a few weeks before the descent on Daytona.

Even the most determined works teams would reschedule a press conference and testing session in these conditions, but not Porsche's. Not only did the team bring along one of the 908/2 Spyderys being tweaked in preparation for imminent battle, but also the full gathering of its team hand-picked from racing's elite. Among the other cast members, Hans Herrmann, Jo Siffert, Brian Redman, Richard Attwood, Pauli Toivonen and Björn Waldegård were all present.

Signing the stars



For reasons to be justified at a later date, Attwood and Herrmann were among the first names on the team sheet. The former signed up for the project immediately; the latter – the oldest member at 40 years – was already a long-serving veteran with 17 racing seasons under his belt, including a win for Porsche at the previous year's 24 Hours of Daytona. The in-demand Jo Siffert took a little longer to convince: only after his request for a £50,000 golden handshake was refused point blank by Enzo Ferrari did he sign for Porsche. Meanwhile, an injured Brian Redman was plucked from rival John Wyer's team – having diced with Porsches in the 1968 season – and 'Quick Vic' Elford's services were again called upon, having recently proved himself for Porsche not only in terms of speed, but diversity too.

A drawn-out duel



Despite the glorious gaggle, not all went to plan that year. While the Championship of Makes was won at a canter (the team claimed seven victories from 10 races), a stiffer challenge was present at La Sarthe. Ultimately, though two works 917s were fielded, it was Herrmann's 908/2 which was in the spotlight, locked in a legendary battle with Jacky Ickx's John Wyer GT40. "Over one and a half hours, we overtook one another several times each," recalls Herrmann. "After 24 hours of driving at the absolute limit, Ickx won by one and a half seconds." The last lap saw Ickx allow Herrmann to overtake at the start of the Mulsanne Straight, only to use his slipstream to snatch back the place and retain it until the chequered flag. Of course, Herrmann and his comrades would famously taste that longed-for victory champagne a year later – a fitting conclusion to our warming winter story.

Gallery

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