

PRESS RELEASE

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TRG at Daytona - Three Cars in the Top Ten!



Daytona, FL – February 1, 2004 – In a soaked and trying race, which was interrupted for an extended caution period and then an even longer weather stoppage, the three Monster Cable Porsches of The Racer's Group all finished in the top ten, ending the race in 5-7-9 positions.

The #66 car, driven by team owner Kevin Buckler and Porsche factory drivers Jörg Bergmeister, Timo Bernhard and Patrick Long, endured two cut tires, a failing shock and finally, an unidentified problem in the power train to finish the race in fifth place. In the 23rd hour, with Patrick Long behind the wheel, the gremlin, which had troubled the team since a frightening top-speed spin in the 2nd hour surfaced, as Long was suddenly unable to utilize all his car's gears. Long, who inherited 4th place from Jörg Bergmeister with little more than 90 minutes of racing left, passed the #73 Ferrari for 3rd position, and went on to extend his lead to two laps with 60 minutes remaining. Long had to limp the car along at a maximum at 90 mph for the last 45 minutes of the race, and surrendered two positions to finish the grueling endurance race in 5th place.

Kevin Buckler, whose team had its share of trying experience on the road to the Rolex, was thankful for his team and crew. "It was a very trying week for us - starting with our little fire in our transporter. In the race, we were thrown a bunch of curveballs. I was so happy with the performance of all three cars at the outset of the race, myself, I was in second place in a perfect car when my tire let go. When that happened, all three cars were in the top five and on track for a tremendous finish. From a team owner's perspective, that's a dream come true. We're still not sure what caused all of our tire and power train issues, but we're fairly sure they're interrelated. Once again, my hat is off to my crew and the drivers of all three cars. Even in the pouring rain in the dead of night, they rally to keep all three of our cars in the top ten. I'm incredibly thankful that I have such a stellar group of individuals making up our team. All of the drivers did so well - very few mistakes in a long, frustrating and intensely challenging race."

The #67 car, driven by Pierre Ehret, Jim Matthews, Lars Nielsen, Robert Nearn and Cyril Sauvage, endured a cut tire and contact with another car, which forced a suspension upright replacement to finish a strong 7th place. Each repair, for the tire replacement and subsequent suspension inspection and the upright replacement, took only ten minutes, a tribute to the effort and skill put forth by the crew.

Pierre Ehret, whose family added a newborn daughter, Isabelle, on Thursday, was relieved that the race was over, and thankful for the result. "I'm very happy to be in the top ten," he said, "no way could we have done it without our crew - they helped us so much after each of our incidents. I think that without those two incidents, we would certainly have been in the top three in the class. Our car was so well set up, and overall, it was just a lack of luck that prevented a higher finish. Also, it was great to have the pleasure of driving with Robert and Cyril - tremendous teammates."

Robert Nearn stated: "I think that without the couple of problems we had, we could have scrounged a podium. We demonstrated in our qualifying time that we had the pace to finish very highly. With the incidents, we lost about 30 laps, and the rain really sealed our fate. With six less hours of racing today, we didn't have much chance to make up our lost laps."

Lars Nielsen was tired, but enthusiastic. "Just to finish this race was the most important thing to me. When I woke up yesterday, all I could think of was that I had to do everything that I could for the

team - we all have a big responsibility to each other. The fact that I got to take the checkered flag is beyond comprehension for me - I can hardly express how I feel about it. With the broken tire and broken upright, I felt so bad for our crew. They laid there in an inch of standing water fixing the upright, and they did it perfectly - they literally went through fire and water to get the job done. With a team and crew like that, we can come back next year and get on the podium. I'm ready."

The #68 car, driven by RJ Valentine, Chris Gleason, Bohdan Kroczek, Abraham Zimroth and Ian James, was enjoying a faultless race and fifth position until the wee hours of the morning, when the car was punted off the track from behind, breaking many of the suspension components in the right rear. The deluge of rain, however, and the ensuing extended race stoppage worked in the team's favor, as the team was able to repair much of the car without sacrificing significant track time.

RJ Valentine, who owns F1 Boston, a premier karting facility in Boston, Mass., praised his team. "In light of the result, it was a stellar weekend," he said. "From the moment we got here for practice three weeks ago, we've had a great car and another great TRG experience. As for the race, like they say: 'If it weren't for the ifs and buts and a bag of nuts, we'd have had a jolly Christmas.' A top ten finish here is a great way to start the season, and we'll go forth with renewed determination to get back on the podium."

Abraham Zimroth, racing in his first Rolex 24, was thrilled with the race. "I'm excited! This is the best race of my life - totally exhilarating. We're fortunate to have finished the race given Ian's being hit from behind, but we owe this to the crew. They put the car back together so well and executed all the stops flawlessly... and the Porsche just keeps on going around. I can't wait for next year."

A full event photo gallery of TRG at Daytona can be seen at:
http://www.theracersgroup.com/team/daytona_04.htm

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