

Part 2

The Races



■ Against the might of factory Porsche and other customer teams, John Fitzpatrick Racing did a superb job in its four Le Mans 24 Hours appearances, the best of its strong finishes coming in 1984 with the Skoal Bandit 956 114 driven by David Hobbs, Sarel van der Merwe and Philippe Streiff.

Motorsport Images/LAT

Chapter 4

THE 1983 SEASON

John Fitzpatrick had reached a fork in the road. He wanted to compete in both IMSA and the FIA World Endurance Championship, but the new Porsche 956 prototype did not meet IMSA rules with its twin-turbo motor, and, more importantly, the front axle centre line was behind the pedal box and the driver's feet — a regulation hurriedly drafted to outlaw the 956 in the USA.

Into 1983, sponsor Jerry Dominelli was keen to keep racing in North America, as that was where he was promoting his JDavid investment company, so JFR continued to run the team's Moby Dick Porsche replica alongside the Porsche K4 in IMSA GTP, but Rolf Stommelen's tragic accident meant that it was a short, unhappy campaign.

'The WEC was our logical next step,' says Fitz. 'The 956 had just been announced, and I could see that this was the future. I'd been racing Porsches for a long time, so this was the obvious move. Dominelli wanted to stay with Porsches too, and we had the money. IMSA had now created GTP; the Lolas and Marches were coming in, and the writing was on the wall for the 935.'

'We had worked a lot on the K4 to make it more competitive, but Prototype was going to be the future. At that time we didn't know that the 956 wasn't going to be legal for IMSA, and John Bishop wanted a change from Porsche winning everything. It was understandable, and he banned it on the basis of the driver's feet having to be behind the front axle centre line, and he didn't want the twin turbos.'

'The pedal box business made hardly any difference, it was just 12cms. It was an excuse because he didn't want the 956 in IMSA. There's no question about that.'

While Kremer had the first chassis, 956 101, JFR was next with 956 102. Fitz visited Weissach in January to be shown his actual car (fitted



■ Pit stop at the Brands Hatch
1,000Kms: John Fitzpatrick extracts
himself from 956 110 in order for Derek
Warwick to take over for the final stint
during their superb drive to victory.
Malcolm Bryan



■ The complex Group C regulations made scrutineering a minefield; every weight and measure was carefully checked.

Malcolm Bryan

with a 7.2:1 compression motor) by its creator, Norbert Singer. It was then flown to San Diego, where Singer joined the team for an extended test at Willow Springs, north of Los Angeles.

As Fitz related in his autobiography, ‘The 956 was Norbert’s baby; there was no better person to tell us about the car and how we should look after it. The 956 was like nothing I had ever driven before; it seemed to be glued to the ground compared to the 935, but at first the steering felt heavy due to the downforce.’

‘It was difficult to drive slowly, but as the speed built up it was amazing. It seemed that I could just keep on entering corners faster each lap, and the car just hung on. I was discovering ground effects. The gearbox was a dream, and the brakes felt like a huge hand had grabbed the car and was holding it back in a tight grip.’

‘I did a couple of exploratory laps, came in to chat to Norbert about various controls like turbo boost and brake balance, and then went out for a 10-lap run, gradually increasing speed and bringing down the lap times. I could already feel the strain on my neck muscles, and was having problems holding my head up straight.’

As the majority of the WEC races were in Europe, John set up a base at Silverstone in the UK, and asked his close friend David Prewitt to run it for him.

‘I had already been helping John with his IMSA racing in San Diego, commuting to California from my Solihull home,’ recalls Prewitt. ‘So when he decided he wanted to do the world

championship, which would have been difficult from San Diego, we set up at Silverstone to run the Group C programme, with me as managing director looking after the day-to-day operations.’

That first year the hugely experienced Keith Greene also joined the squad; Greene was a former Formula 1 driver for Gilby and sportscar winner who had gone on to manage Alain de Cadenet’s and Jean Rondeau’s Le Mans campaigns.

‘David was a good organiser, perfect to run the workshop and logistics, but we needed an experienced team manager at the races,’ says Fitz. ‘That was where Keith’s strength was, and he did a good job for us. I also had some really good guys at San Diego, people like Max Crawford and Mark Popov Dadiani, and I brought them over to Silverstone in the early days.’

Prewitt remembers: ‘I was dumped in at the deep end, because John was living in Spain, and Tim [Schenken] had retired; when we lost Rolf Stommelen, Tim said, “Enough is enough”, and went back to Australia to work for CAMS, the Australian motorsports federation.’

David Hobbs was taken on to share the car with Fitz. Prewitt remembers his first test in the 956 at Silverstone: ‘Hobbo was complaining about the car; he came in and said the brakes on this car were no good at all, they wouldn’t stop the damn thing. So John jumped in, went much quicker than David, came back in and said, “No, the car’s beautiful, you’ve just got to press harder on the brakes!” But David really did slot into the team perfectly.’

Zolder

20 March 1983, Deutsche Rennsport Meisterschaft, round 1

The first World Endurance Championship race was at Monza at Easter, but first Fitz wanted to check out the car in a German championship event at Zolder, Belgium, to give himself and the team race experience. There were three other 956s at this sprint race, two Joest cars for Bob Wollek and Clemens Schickentanz, and an Obermaier car for Jürgen Lässig.

‘When we arrived at Zolder it became clear that not all 956s were created equal,’ recalls Fitz. ‘It was a bit of a wake-up; we thought all 956s were the same spec. The race was one hour long, which was just about the limit for the 100-litre fuel tank, so it was obvious that the 956 with its 2.65-litre engine couldn’t be run with high turbo boost and finish.’

‘Wollek pulled away quite easily, and out of the corners could pull out 20 or 30 metres, enough to keep me behind. It was very frustrating; either he was using more turbo boost and better fuel consumption, or he had a bigger fuel tank than I did. But extra fuel capacity would have been easy to check, so it had to be something to do with the engine and fuel consumption.’

‘I’m not saying that Porsche supplied them with something special, but Joest had access to something that allowed them more boost and hence more horsepower, and not run out of fuel.’

Another factor may have been that Porsche mechanics from Weissach were often seen crewing for Joest, when not on factory duties, and brought their latest knowledge.

‘I remember that they had to run in the engine during first practice,’ adds Fitz, ‘presumably because of some tweak they had brought with them from Weissach.’

Fitz kept up the pressure around the undulating Belgian circuit, and even claimed fastest lap at mid-distance. Both factory Ford C100s of the two Klauses, Ludwig and Niedzwiedz, went out with engine or turbo problems, and the rest of the field was left behind. Fitz stayed within two or three seconds of Wollek until the closing stages, when he was forced to make a stop for fuel. The fact that the Joest car didn’t stop further highlighted the unfair advantage.

‘We had the speed, but not the fuel,’ says Fitz. ‘There was a lot to learn, and this would be a recurring problem throughout the 1983 and 1984 seasons. We gradually learned the tricks, but some we were not prepared to use. We wanted to win fair and square, and in my opinion there



were others who played by different rules...’

Refrigerating fuel, to reduce its density to get more into the 100-litre tank, was one ploy. Fuel vent bottles, which caught excess fuel on the opposite side of the car to the filler, to signal that the 100-litre tank was full, allowed a two- or three-car team to give one of its cars extra fuel at pit stops. Each car was allocated 600 litres (510 litres from 1985) and, Fitz explains, ‘If Joest or Kremer ran a slower second or third car, which was using less fuel, it would be overfilled, and the excess passed on to the faster car, dumped through the vent bottle.’

The FIA eventually caught on, and the following year vent bottles were colour-coded and given each car’s number, so that pit marshals could spot any rule-bending. ‘I suppose that when you look back over the years, that was what motor racing was all about, it was the unfair advantage, being able to fool everybody.’

Prewitt confirms Fitz’s principled approach to racing. ‘We discussed it at the time, John, Keith and I, and Fitz was quite adamant. He found out what they were doing, and the boys said, we know what they’re doing, why can’t we do it? But he said to the team, “No, if I can’t win fair and square, then I won’t win at all.”’

Result

Zolder (B), 20 March 1983

2nd John Fitzpatrick, 956 102 (no. 11), -1 lap, Q2, JDavid, Goodyear

Monza 1,000Kms

10 April 1983, FIA World Endurance Championship, round 1

The first WEC race to feature customer 956s, the Monza 1,000Kms, marked the start of a season-long partnership between Fitz and Hobbo, two well-matched drivers who were friends off the track.

'We were of similar height so that made things easier at driver changes,' recalls Hobbo. 'I enjoyed driving with Fitz: we were about the same speed, so when we had to get the job done we knew we could rely on each other to do it.'

Monza also saw the debut of the new Group C Martini Lancia LC2, the Dallara-built 2.6-litre Ferrari V8 turbo-powered coupé. Lancia came to the race with very little testing, just 500kms around Fiorano, and Riccardo Patrese and Michele Alboreto had not even sat in their car until they arrived at Italy's Cathedral of Speed, but Lancia's other entry, driven by Piercarlo Ghinzani and Teo Fabi, took pole. The Lancias, like Porsche, were



■ At Monza for his first WEC Group C race, Fitz discusses front-end set-up.

Malcolm Bryan



running engine management systems, although Marelli rather than Weissach's Bosch.

The factory 956s now had the Motronic 1.2 system, higher-compression engines, and front suspension and steering changes, and were 20kgs lighter than the customer versions.

But the fastest 956 was not, as might have been expected, a factory Rothmans car, but Joest's Marlboro-sponsored Porsche — the only customer team to use qualifying tyres — in the hands of Bob Wollek and Thierry Boutsen. 'We were running with what the factory gave us, bog-standard engines and so on,' explains Fitz. 'It wasn't until later that we started to do our own fiddling about.'

There was a wide spread of tyre manufacturers throughout the 27-car field: Dunlop for the factory and most customer Porsches, Pirelli for Lancia (which suffered several qualifying blow-outs), Goodyear for JFR and Michelin for others.

Wollek dropped back at the start to allow the two factory teams to go head-to-head, but the leading Lancia retired when Ghinzani had the left rear tyre explode, wrecking the cooling

system. Lancia accordingly was forced to make tyre changes at every fuel stop for its other car, Alboreto/Patrese dropping to ninth by the end of the race.

Early on Fitz experienced a misfire that had dropped him out of the lead fight, and he was then punted off the track by a backmarker Group 6 car, losing nine laps in the gravel at the Variante della Roggia chicane, then further time for body repairs when he eventually reached the pits.

Meanwhile, the factory Rothmans Porsches were being harried by the two Joest cars, the second (owned by Dieter Schornstein) in New Man clothing livery in the hands of Rolf Stommelen, Hans Heyer and Clemens Schickentanz. Factory team manager Peter Falk found himself outmanoeuvred by the Joest 956s, which twice went a lap further between fuel stops.

Teams had calculated that they needed to run an average 29 laps per stint if they were going to make the 173-lap distance at full race speed; the factory Porsches were stopping at 27 laps, while Joest could make 28. 'As the championship allowed only five stops, both factory cars had to



■ The JFR car enters Monza's Parabolica turn; both Fitz and the factory were shocked by Joest's fuel advantage, something that would continue to occur.

Motorsport Images/Sutton



■ Fitz on board the JDavid 956 102 he shared with Hobbo to fifth place at Monza.

Malcolm Bryan

reduce speed to get an extra two laps out of the last tank,' recalls Norbert Singer.

Derek Bell fell out of contention when the factory car he shared with Al Holbert had a seized wheel bearing, which dropped them to seventh, and the Jochen Mass/Jacky Ickx car was now running in economy mode. Wollek swept past into the lead, and took the win after five and a quarter hours of racing. Schickentanz's slower pace had dropped the New Man Joest car to third by the finish, with the Boss Obermaier Porsche of Jürgen Lässig/Jürgen Barth/Axel Plankenhorn fourth and the recovering JFR car fifth, albeit 12 laps down.

As Fitzpatrick and Hobbs had lost a number of laps, Greene told Fitz to 'wind up the boost late in the race', and at least have some satisfaction in taking fastest lap. 'But we were not the only team scratching our heads,' Greene remembers. 'The factory was wondering what it had done wrong too.'

Falk was indeed shocked by Joest's fuel advantage; the factory cars were 20kgs lighter than the customer 956s, and had the Bosch Motronic engine management systems, which customers would not get until 1984. Other refinements that customers did not enjoy

were improved steering, subtle nose profile changes and higher-compression engines.

Once the factory team was back at Weissach, Porsche R&D chief Helmuth Bott started investigations into what more needed to be done to their Motronic engine management systems, and his cars pounded the factory test track. But customer faith in the 956 had been rewarded, justifying the \$250,000 purchase price — all seven Porsches finished at Monza, filling the top seven places.

Silverstone was the next WEC race, but first Fitz was invited to share the Tom Walkinshaw Racing Jaguar XJ-S with Martin Brundle and Enzo Calderari in the ETCC round at Donington Park, where they took the win from the two factory Schnitzer BMWs. Fitz had a second outing with the TWR team at Mugello later that month and finished third with Walkinshaw himself in what was to be the last outing of Fitz's long and distinguished touring car career.

Result

Monza 1,000Kms (I), 10 April 1983
5th John Fitzpatrick/David Hobbs, 956 102 (no. 16), -12 laps, Q6, JDavid, Goodyear

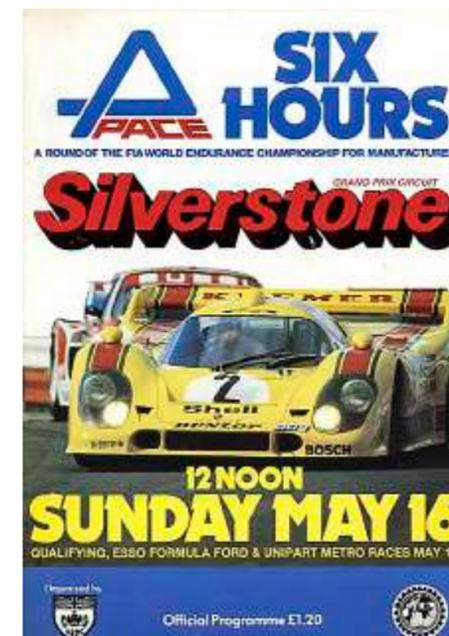
Silverstone 1,000Kms

8 May 1983, FIA World Endurance Championship, round 2

There were already grumblings from teams in this second year of the WEC about the lack of organisation and promotion, and Rothmans' Sean Roberts and Porsche's Jürgen Barth had been trying to inject some sort of order into it. Both had vested interests, Roberts for his sponsor, and Barth because he wanted to sell more customer cars.

Things came to a head at Silverstone, when Richard Lloyd and EMKA's Michael Cane complained to Barry Bland of Motor Race Consultants (which at that time was running the Formula 2 Association and looking after race car insurance) that nobody was doing anything to support the series. So MRC's Chris Parsons was put in to monitor things.

'I would work at this for the next 18 months, wheeler-dealing with circuits, organisers and travel and transport company Kroll, trying to put the



■ Having qualified sixth, the Fitz/Hobbs JDavid Porsche leads the pack at the wet start of the Silverstone 1,000Kms.

Malcolm Bryan





■ Hobbo on board the JFR 956 102, before the car threw a front wheel – a trait that would soon become pandemic among customer Porsches.

John Brooks

■ As the factory Porsches pull away in the early laps, the chasing customer 956 pack squabble over third place: Kremer, Joest, JFR and Obermaier.

John Brooks

championship on a business footing,' says Chris. 'This was a world championship, and we had to create stability.'

Lancia had spent the month since Monza doing the testing it should, perhaps, have undertaken prior to the season, and the two factory LC2s had now sorted their exploding tyres with pressure, camber and toe-in changes, and heat shields between turbos and rear tyres. The Italian cars, which also had improved Marelli electronics, were now ready to take on Porsche at the Silverstone 1,000Kms, joined by Aston Martin with the new Nimrod.

Fuel would not be the issue it had been a year earlier: although the allowance was still 600 litres, this was a 1,000kms race (rather than a six-hour one) that on this fast Grand Prix circuit would be almost an hour shorter.

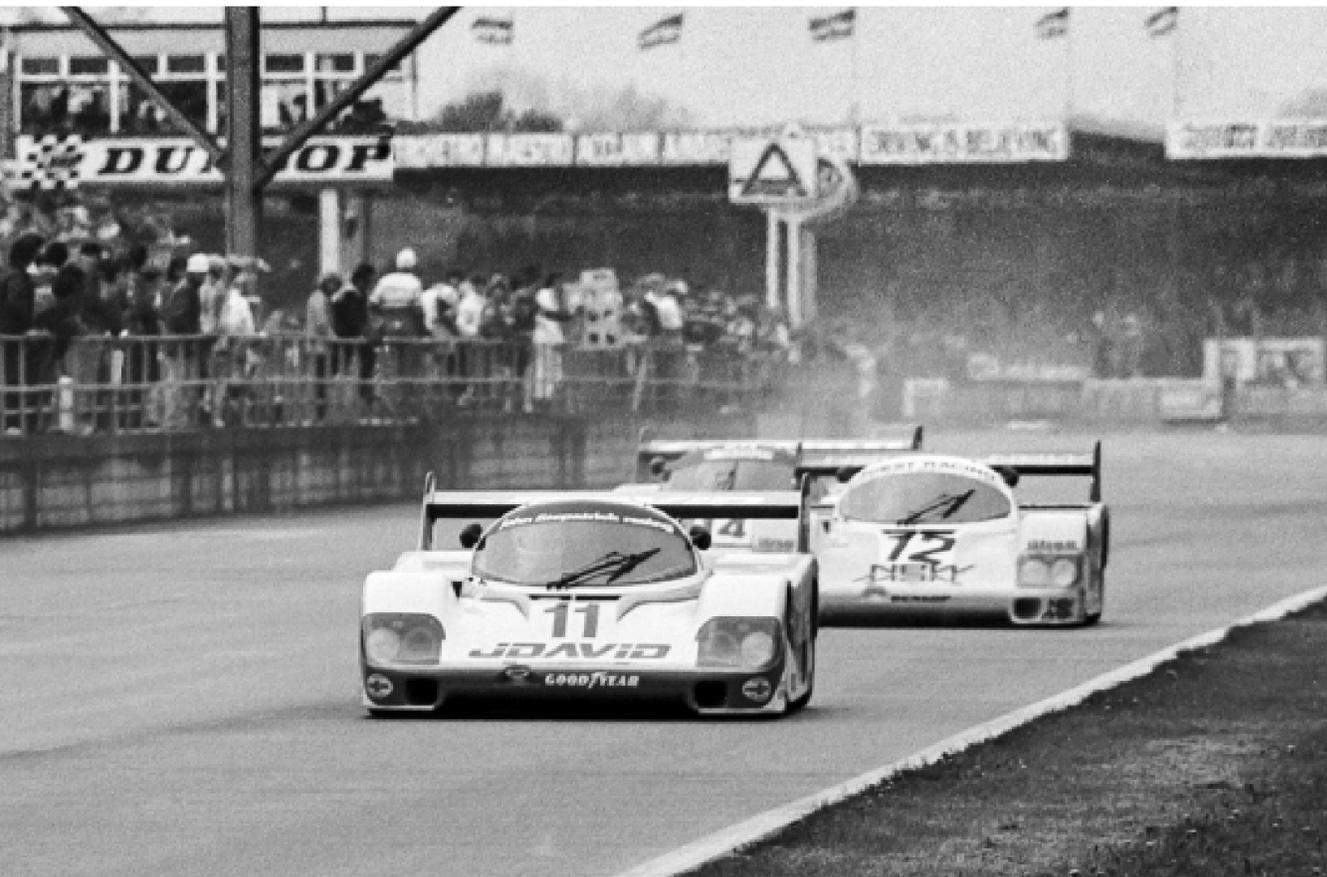
After a wet start to the race, the Lancias quickly fell off the pace, both with overheating, but the Rothmans cars, one running a secret weapon in

the shape of Stefan Bellof, were able to extend their fuel runs and gradually moved into a lead over the Joest Marlboro Porsche, after Bob Wollek had an early spin on slicks on the damp track.

The rain returned mid-race, catching out Jochen Mass, who ploughed into the Club catch-fencing as he tried to pass Joest's Stefan Johansson for second place. Bellof took the win with Derek Bell over Johansson/Wollek, who had been told to wind up the boost to 1.3 bar, good for an extra 30bhp, to compensate for understeer problems. Based at Silverstone, like JFR, Richard Lloyd Racing's Canon 956 finished third, in the hands of Jonathan Palmer and Thierry Boutsen.

JFR's home race was not the success the team had hoped. Qualifying sixth behind the pole-position factory Porsche of Bellof, the two Lancias and the Joest Porsche, the JDavid 956 again suffered from a misfire, then lost a wheel. Fitz and Hobbs recovered to finish eighth, although 32 laps down after its wheel shedding, which would

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■ Fitz, his car starting to suffer a misfire, heads the Joest and Richard Lloyd Porsches down the pits straight at Silverstone.

John Brooks

■ Stopwatch in hand, Keith Greene masterminds a 1983 Silverstone 1,000Kms pit stop. Chris Cox is on the fuel pipe, while Hobbo stands behind open-mouthed!

Motorsport Images/LAT



■ Although Preston Henn's car was run out of JFR's Silverstone workshops, it had its own American crew; note the sponsorship from *Newsweek* magazine, brought by Guy Edwards.

John Brooks



'Although they used the same centre wheel nut, Norbert Singer told us that the BBS wheels needed a lot more torque, about 900,000ft/lbs!' explains Greene. 'We had to use a six-foot bar to tighten them, but then of course we couldn't get them undone when they were hot, so getting it right was touch and go.' It would be a long time before the problem was understood, and a different nut used.

Floridian Preston Henn, well known to Fitz through IMSA competition, did a deal for his T-Bird Swap Shop/BP 956 103 to be prepared at JFR's Silverstone workshop for this race and for Le Mans, but with the work done by Henn's own crew, overseen by Bob Garretson, the 1981 WEC champion. Henn drove at Silverstone along with Guy Edwards and Rupert Keegan, but they went out of the race at quarter distance when the engine expired.

Two other 956s failed to finish: Mass/Ickx crashed and the Joest New Man car suffered engine failure.

■ Floridian Preston Henn ran his Swap Shop 956 103 out of JFR's Silverstone workshops at Silverstone and Le Mans. In the British race he shared the driving with Guy Edwards and Rupert Keegan but engine failure put them out.

John Brooks

be the precursor to similar mishaps for many 956s in races to come. While the factory cars used Speedline alloys with Dunlop Denloc tyres, customer cars were supplied with BBS rims, with an incompatible centre nut that was prone to working loose.

Result

Silverstone 1,000Kms (GB), 8 May 1983
8th John Fitzpatrick/David Hobbs, 956 102 (no. 11), -32 laps, Q6, JDavid, Goodyear

Nürburgring 1,000Kms

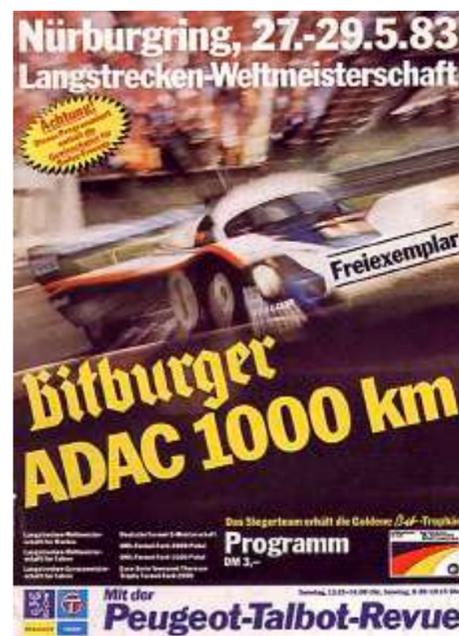
29 May 1983, FIA World Endurance Championship, round 3

There was one more race before the Le Mans 24 Hours, on the tortuous Nürburgring Nordschleife, very much Porsche's home event in the Eifel mountains. This was the last time the original 21km (14-mile) 'Green Hell' would be used for an international FIA race. Formula 1 cars had not raced on the Nordschleife since 1976, when Niki Lauda had his near-fatal crash, and many questioned why the even faster Group C cars should have been permitted still to race there.

'The defeat of the works Porsches at Monza in April, the first round of the championship, spurred Helmuth Bott's department into renewed development activity,' wrote Michael Cotton in *Motor Sport*. 'This might be good news for the team, but it was definitely bad news for the customers and other rivals who cannot now remotely match the pace set by Bellof, Ickx, Mass and Bell.'

Wunderkind Stefan Bellof again showed his precocious talent in setting a record pole lap at a 200km/h average (about 125mph), almost six seconds quicker than the next best, his factory team-mate Jochen Mass. Both cars were in Rothmans colours, but without the branding, as Germany had by now banned tobacco advertising. Mass was in turn 15 seconds faster than the Marlboro-coloured Joest car of Stefan Johansson. As some teams were unwilling to risk their cars just three weeks prior to Le Mans, the 956 count was down to six among only 11 Group C entries. That left the Richard Lloyd Canon 956 of Jonathan Palmer and Jan Lammers (joined here by Keke Rosberg), the JFR car for Fitz and Hobbs (who had not raced at the 'Ring since 1969), and the Obermaier car of Jürgen Lässig/Hans Heyer/Axel Plankenhorn.

■ The logo for JFR's 1983 campaign, as seen on a contemporary hand-out sticker.



Lancia fielded just one factory car for Riccardo Patrese and Michele Alboreto, now on Dunlop tyres instead of the Pirelli radials around which it was designed, and the rest of the entry was made up of Group B sports cars and touring cars.

Bob Wollek led at the damp start, but an unforced error let both factory cars pass, and Fitz then put his JDavid car into third, on wets like Wollek and Patrese. But the track quickly dried, and the wet runners were soon forced to change to slicks, putting Rosberg into third, ahead of Fitz. Keke was having his first race in a turbocharged car, which was, he said, 'handling like a pig'.

'That was quite a dice we had,' recalls Fitz. 'A 1,000kms race, especially when we were having to economise, could get quite boring. We all loved the chance to go head-to-head and race, and Keke and I were to have some good fights that year.'

At the first scheduled stops, Bell and Ickx took over from Bellof and Mass, leader Derek cautioning his young co-driver to take it easy, as they had a four-minute lead. But Stefan's response was to put in a 6m 21s out lap (compared with his 6m 11s pole); he was not seen again.

At Pflanzgarten the car took off, came down on its tail, flipped and smashed into the barriers at 250km/h (155mph) in what he afterwards described as his 'Apollo mission'. Asked if he had been going too quickly, a nonplussed Bellof answered, 'No, the air got under the car, and lifted it off the track. I was on the same line at the same speed I always drove this part of the track. Perhaps it was the wind, I really don't know.'

Bell was furious — rightly so as it transpired, as this was later to cost him the 1983 drivers' title — although Peter Falk simply shrugged and put it down to youth. Porsche knew it had a star in the making. 'To me, it was a totally unnecessary accident, a complete joke,' said Derek afterwards.

Mass was by now far out in front of the Joest and Fitzpatrick cars, the only ones still on the lead lap; the factory Lancia was long gone with transmission failure. Then Walter Brun crashed his Seacar heavily at Kesselchen, breaking his arm, and the race was red-flagged because of debris and damaged barriers.

After a two-hour break for repairs, the race was restarted and ran for 19 more laps, with Mass leading again from the Wollek/Johansson Joest car and Fitz. Then Wollek lost turbo boost and, thanks to slick pit work by Greene's crew, Fitz found himself in second place — only to have a front puncture on the far side of the circuit.

Prewitt takes up the story: 'John had to drive the second half of the lap on the rim. By the time he got back to the pits, the rubber had gone and the rim was worn away. A brake caliper had also wrapped itself around the front suspension, and it took six laps to repair the collateral damage.'

'Because I was still new to the business, I used to get very depressed when we had problems like that. Tim [Schenken] had said to me in the US, "The race is past now, just think of the next one." He taught me to take it all in my stride

and improve things for the next race. But that particular puncture really got me down — we were definitely on for second place.'

So Mass was given a clear track, with nobody else on the lead lap — only for his Porsche's rear suspension to collapse. He limped back to the pits, where the Weissach crew rebuilt the whole corner in just six minutes; neighbouring crews, including the hard-working Fitzpatrick boys, applauded.

Cut short by three laps as fog and darkness descended over the Eifel, the race went to the Ickx/Mass car, which recovered to third place, and won on the aggregate times of both legs. Wollek/Johansson were second, their Joest car the only one still on the same lap. Fitz and Hobbs made it home in sixth place, behind the Richard Lloyd and Obermaier 956s, and the privateer Lancia of Oscar Larrauri and Massimo Sigala.

It was a race everyone had just wanted to end; only 16 of the 35 starters made it home, and the Nordschleife was consigned to the dustbin of history as far as world championship sportscar racing was concerned.

Result

**Nürburgring 1,000Kms (D),
29 May 1983**
6th John Fitzpatrick/David Hobbs, 956 102
(no. 11), -5 laps, Q6, JDavid, Goodyear

■ Fitz drops into the famous Karussell in what would be the last WEC race on the Nürburgring Nordschleife. A puncture while out on the far side of the circuit cost him second place.

Motorsport Images/LAT



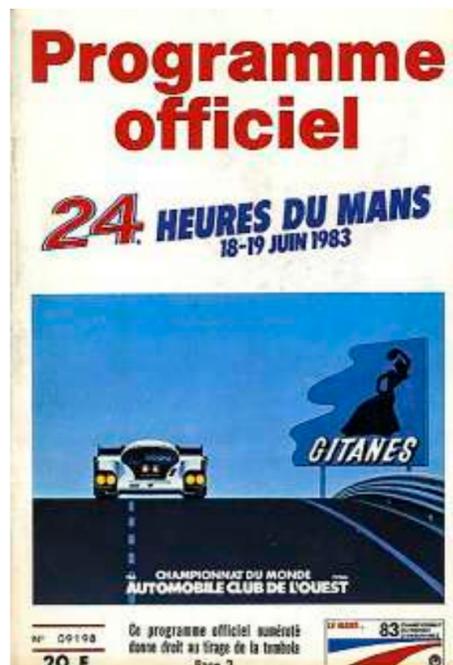
Le Mans 24 Hours

18-19 June 1983, FIA World Endurance Championship, round 4

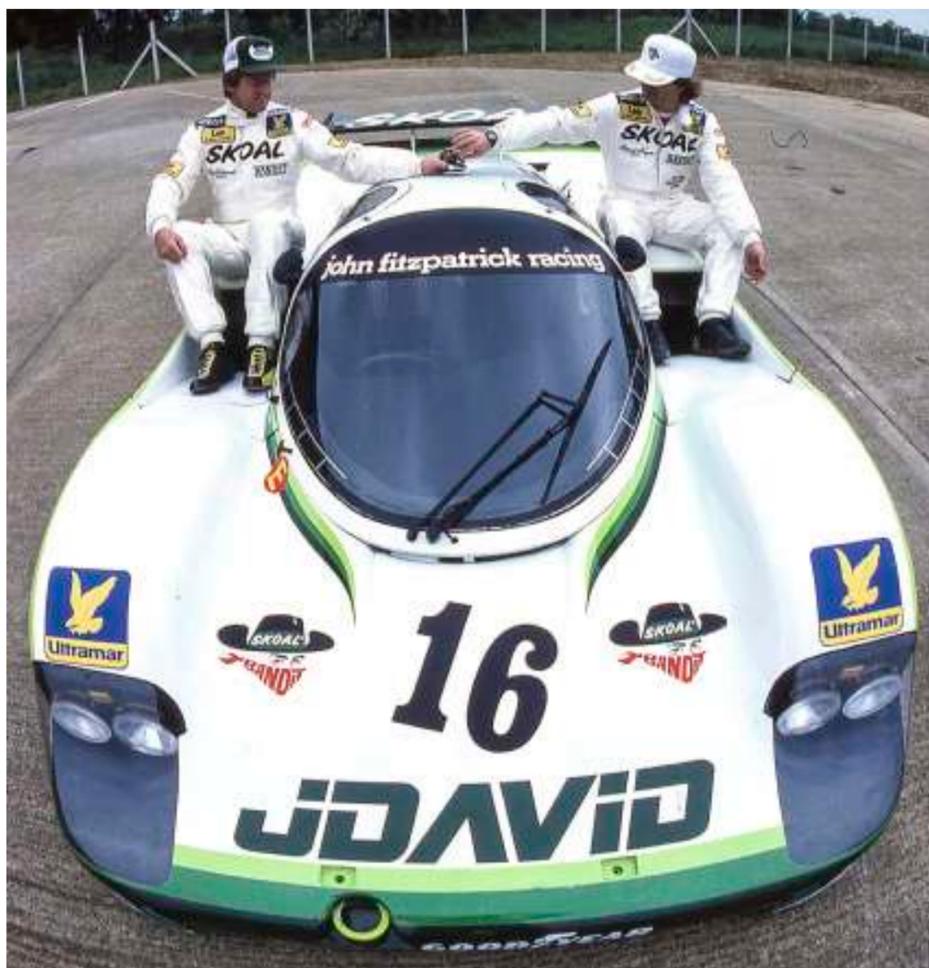
Prior to the Silverstone WEC race, Guy Edwards, the renowned sponsor broker and driver, had approached Fitz to ask if he would consider running him and Rupert Keegan at Le Mans with Skoal Bandit backing.

Guy was a long-time Formula 1 and sportscar racer who had scored two world championship wins for Lola, at Enna-Pergusa and Brands Hatch in 1981, and was a two-time class podium finisher at Le Mans. He and Keegan had shared the Ultramar Lola-Cosworth at Le Mans in 1982, leading the factory Porsches for one glorious moment, until engine failure.

Edwards was the man who had helped to bring together Rothmans and Porsche through his friend Peter Gilpin, managing director of Rothmans International, and now he had another sponsor, United States Tobacco Company, lined up after he had placed its branding for Skoal Bandit — snuff



■ Pictured before their departure for Le Mans, Guy Edwards (left) and Rupert Keegan pose proudly with 956 102, JFR's first Group C Porsche now decked out in Skoal Bandit livery. As Jerry Dominelli paid for the car, it retained JDavid identity as well.
Malcolm Bryan



■ Livery comparison: taking the lead from the established JDavid colour scheme, for Le Mans the Skoal Bandit car's shades of green echoed the tones of its sister entry.
Motorsport Images/LAT

■ Fitz and his Le Mans co-drivers were very proud of their BRDC membership, prominently displayed here on 956 102.
Malcolm Bryan



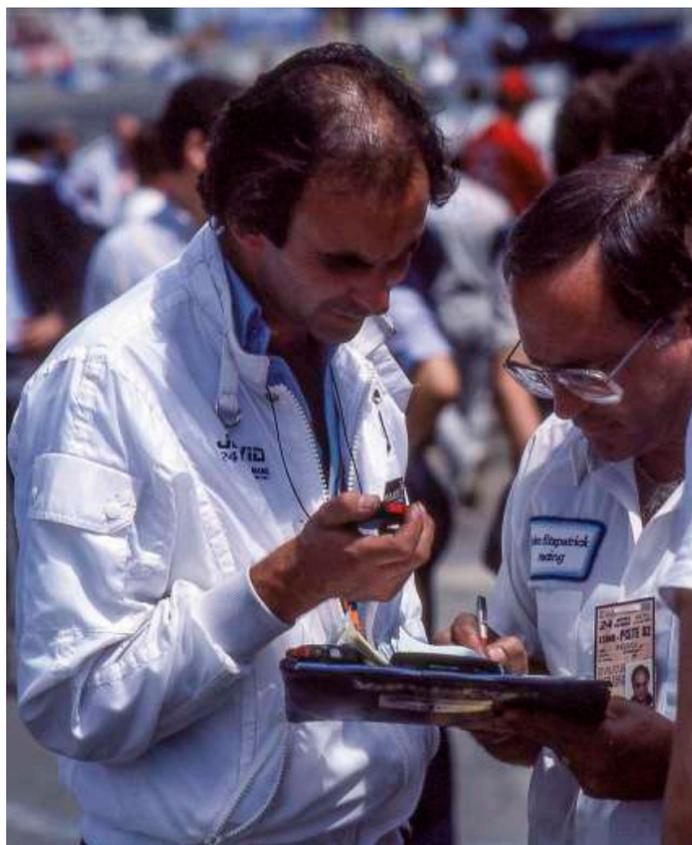
tobacco sachets that had been named after Burt Reynolds's *Smokey and the Bandit* films — on Teo Fabi's 1983 Indy 500 pole-sitting March, earning massive exposure.

USTC now wanted to test the European market, and Guy persuaded them that Le Mans was the place to do it.

'I told USTC chairman Lou Bantle that Le Mans was to Europe what Indy 500 was to the USA,' says Guy, 'and the timing was right, although we had only 20 days to do it! He agreed to a \$100,000 deal for one car, the same he paid for Indy, with *Newsweek* magazine providing a commensurate amount of advertising space.'

Bantle had initially asked for space on the JDavid 956 102 as well, but Dominelli understandably wanted his JDavid branding predominant on the car for the biggest race of the year. Then Dominelli suggested buying a second 956 to accommodate other sponsors, and

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to give the team a spare car. The only snag was that Porsche had sold its 1983 production run of 11 chassis, but when Fitz spoke to Kundensport manager Jürgen Barth he learned that there had just been a cancellation for chassis 956 110, and it could be ready for Le Mans. The deal was done — and Fitz informed Dominelli that a bank transfer was required before Weissach would release the car.

‘I made the contract with Skoal to run the second car and sent our transporter over from England to pick it up,’ recounts Fitz. ‘But the money wasn’t there. I was getting a little panicky and told Jerry that if the money didn’t arrive with Porsche in the next two days, it would be too late to run the car at Le Mans.’

‘Eventually I had to fly from San Diego to London, where Jerry was on business, and confront him in his hotel. He asked me why I hadn’t told him it was urgent, and wrote out a cheque for \$250,000, which I took back to San Diego, where the bank manager was waiting for me, and transferred the money there and then to Porsche. It was a hectic 24 hours, and I should have seen it as a warning sign of things to come, but I had more on my mind just then.’

So the virgin white 956 110 became available to JFR, and for Le Mans 956 102



would run as a Skoal Bandit.

‘Now all hell broke loose,’ Guy recalls. ‘Contracts were signed, cars were liveried, hotels booked, guests invited, receptions organised and the Skoal Bandit Porsche circus descended on Le Mans!’

So it was that John Fitzpatrick Racing arrived at Le Mans, now as a two-car team, 956 110 running no. 11 in the blue and white JDavid colours, and 956 102 no. 16 in the green, yellow and white of Skoal Bandit, but also carrying JDavid decals.

Fitz and David Hobbs were joined in the no. 11 car by Bavarian Dieter Quester, with whom Fitz had raced for Schnitzer BMW at the Nürburgring in 1975. The no. 16 car was for Edwards and Keegan, driving two-handed, with all three no. 11 drivers listed as reserves for no. 16 should the former have any problems.

‘One of my problems was keeping Rupert away from the Hawaiian Tropic girls who were staying in the same hotel as us,’ recalls Guy. ‘I wanted a co-driver full of energy for the race — afterwards he could party. He mournfully agreed.’

At scrutineering in the city centre, 956 110 tipped the scales at 858kgs. Keith Greene was glad to have Quester on board: ‘He was typically German, very friendly and a very good driver. He’d get on with it straight away.’

By now Fitz’s nephew, Karl Jennings, had joined the rapidly expanding team as their ‘gofer’, straight from technical college, and was put on stickering duties.

‘We were forever changing the decals on the cars,’ recalls Prewitt. ‘The customer 956s were plain white when they arrived, and it was up to teams to sticker them up in their sponsors’ colours and logos.’

‘It was very time-consuming, especially as they were such big panels on the Group C cars. We had big folders with all the different sheets and logos in, but it saved us having to buy separate bodywork, and we almost needed a man on it full-time if we were racing Skoal Bandit one weekend, Sachs the next.’ By contrast, the factory Rothmans Porsche blue, red and gold was paintwork.

Le Mans in 1983 was the race at which the dreams of Paul Frère, Pierre Aumonier and Alain Bertaut for a fuel formula sportscar category finally came to full fruition. There was a 42-car Group C entry composed of factory and customer C1 and C Junior cars, and a dozen Group B cars. Including the three factory Rothmans cars, there were 11 Porsche 956s. The mix-and-match uncertainty of previous years was now over, and Group C had truly come of age.

Porsche AG used qualifying engines with larger turbochargers, giving up to 700bhp at 1.4 bar

■ Seen with factory Porsche driver Derek Bell, the Hawaiian Tropic girls, always an arresting feature of the pre-race build-up at Le Mans, stayed at the same hotel as the JFR team, leading Guy Edwards to remind team-mate Rupert Keegan to behave himself.

Motorsport Images/LAT



■ JFR’s Tim Schenken (left) and JDavid’s Jerry Dominelli at Le Mans during the build-up to the race.

Malcolm Bryan

■ In deference to his new sponsor for this race, Fitz sports Skoal Bandit garb, including Stetson.

Motorsport Images/LAT

THE 1983 SEASON



■ Fitz's nephew Karl Jennings (right) joined the team for Le Mans, and stayed with it for the next four years, becoming its archivist. These are his photographs from that race, showing behind-the-scenes work in the paddock on 956 102 (no. 16), which finished fifth, and new acquisition 956 110 (no. 11), which retired with fuel pump failure.

Karl Jennings



■ Early in the race JFR's Skoal Bandit entry races one of the factory Lancias past the crowded pits; all three Lancias retired before the halfway mark.

Malcolm Bryan

boost, and Jacky Ickx accordingly set a record pole lap at 3m 16s, 12 seconds faster than the previous year, and four seconds faster than Michele Alboreto's Lancia alongside him on the front row. Joest, now running high-compression engines, was the fastest privateer, Bob Wollek qualifying fifth. The two JFR cars posted 10th (no. 16) and 11th (no. 11) on the 51-car grid, midway down the 956 ranks.

As at Silverstone, Preston Henn's T-Bird Swap Shop/BP 956 103 was also prepared at JFR's Silverstone workshops. Henn shared it with Frenchmen Jean-Louis Schlesser and Claude Ballot-Lena, finishing 10th in the race.

The start was somewhat chaotic for a 24-hour race. Mass got the jump on team-mate Ickx, and on the second lap Jan Lammers in the Canon 956 went for second place at the end of the Mulsanne straight only to spin, putting Ickx off too. Both lost time taking new tyres, denting the Belgian's chances of a seventh Le Mans victory.

Fitz was having his problems too, as Mario Andretti, in the Kremer 956 he was sharing with son Michael, ran wide through the Mulsanne kink, showering the following cars with gravel. 'A large stone hit my windscreen right in my eyeline, and I had to make an early pit stop to have it helicopter-taped to make it safe,' recalls Fitz.

Nonetheless the no. 11 car was running a strong fourth behind the three factory Porsches, which were dominating proceedings at the head of a 956 top 10. But at around midnight the JDavid car started to misfire, then stopped out on the circuit when its fuel pump drive belt broke. Undaunted, Fitz hitched a lift back to the paddock, and jumped into the Skoal Bandit car

THE 1983 SEASON



■ With the Saturday evening sun casting long shadows, Guy Edwards takes on fuel in the no. 16 car as Fitz (above open door) watches his crew at work.

Motorsport Images/LAT

with Edwards and Keegan, and the trio continued to run solidly in fifth.

'Keith Greene, our ever-committed and professional team manager, did a good job and Fitz joined our car as third driver when he retired midway through the night,' remembers Edwards. 'Our Skoal Bandit Porsche hadn't missed a beat and we had a good buffer in fifth place.'

A second chink in the Porsche factory armour appeared when Mass's car dropped an exhaust valve and had to run on five cylinders; sounding rough, it fell back to seventh behind the Skoal Bandit 956.

By half distance, the Al Holbert/Hurley Haywood/Vern Schuppan Rothmans 956 was half a lap ahead of Ickx/Bell, with the Andretti Kremer car third, three laps behind. The Monza-winning Joest Marlboro car had picked up a misfire too, but after a spark-plug change was running strongly again, although now six laps down, with the sister New Man Joest 956 of Clemens Schickentanz/Volkert Merl/Mauricio de Narváez fifth, and the remaining JFR car sixth.

Early in the morning, Bell took the lead, only to coast to a halt at Mulsanne corner when an ignition lead came off; he was able to replace the

black box out on track, as factory drivers had rehearsed, but lost four laps doing it before he rejoined in third place, now behind the Andrettis. Almost immediately, Mass's five-cylinder engine cried enough at a pit stop, and refused to restart despite his Weissach crew's best efforts.

Ickx now had the bit between his teeth, and at noon, with four hours still to run, passed Michael Andretti for second place and set off after the lead Rothmans car. Then Ludwig crashed the Joest Marlboro car at Tertre Rouge: he dragged it back to the pits for repairs but lost two places in the process to the New Man and Skoal cars.

The Skoal Bandit car was having to make more stops than the Schickentanz/Merl/de Narváez Joest 956, because of the latter's better fuel consumption — something that would bite everyone at Le Mans over the next two years — but the 956 was still running faultlessly. It logged fuel consumption of 50 litres per 100kms (4.7mpg) compared with Joest's 44 litres per 100kms (5.3mpg) over the 24 hours.

There was late drama when the leading factory car had to have attention to the rear underfloor, delaying it during a pit stop, allowing second-placed Bell to get closer. Then the left-hand door



■ JFR's lead car, running in JDavid colours with Skoal Bandit decals, lay fourth behind the three factory Rothmans Porsches when its fuel pump drive broke at around midnight, stranding the car out on the circuit.

Motorsport Images/LAT

■ The unique night-time atmosphere of Le Mans, looking up the pits straight from the Ford Chicane.

Malcolm Bryan



THE 1983 SEASON



■ After his own car broke down, Fitz jumped into the Edwards/Keegan Skoal Bandit 956 and helped to keep it in contention for a strong finish.

Motorsport Images/LAT

■ Guy Edwards hustles his Skoal Bandit through the Ford chicane during his only 1983 race with JFR, although a full season would follow.

Malcolm Bryan



blew off, interrupting the radiator airflow. Even though the door was quickly replaced, the damage was already done and the engine was overheating. At the final fuel stop, when Schuppan handed over to Holbert, bodywork had to be removed to refill the water header tank. Bell was now on the same lap.

On the final lap white smoke started puffing from the leading 956's left-hand exhaust even as Schuppan and Haywood were heading for the podium. As Norbert Singer recalls, 'On the last lap it seized at Mulsanne corner, and Holbert had to bump it with the clutch to make it restart. It was running very rough, and maybe he had pushed the clutch down at Mulsanne to let it cool down a bit.'

Holbert crawled over the finish line just 64 seconds ahead of Bell to take the factory's second Group C win. Behind them, Kremer, Marlboro Joest and Skoal Bandit JFR completed the top five.

JFR had been having its own drama in the closing stages, with Keegan at the wheel. 'A front brake disc exploded halfway down the Mulsanne straight,' recalls Rupert. 'I lost a wheel and hit the wall at about 220mph, then bounced back onto the track. It was a bit scary, to say the least. I managed to do half a lap back to the pits, where they all looked at me as if it was my fault.'

A nervous Edwards was watching from the pit counter, aware that Skoal Bandit people were

present, in force, on the balconies above. 'There were 20 minutes remaining, and at Le Mans you have to complete the final lap; if you don't it is as if you never started. Keith and his mechanics tore into car, and working in the space of a parking meter bay, accomplished in eight minutes flat a task that would take a normal garage several hours.'

There were just two minutes remaining on the clock when Greene waved Keegan back onto the track, still in fifth place, 'to the delight of the spectators, who saluted the job the crew had done with a roar of approval,' adds Guy.

'It was a bit disappointing, but you need a lot of things to come together at Le Mans, and luck is one of them,' says Fitz. 'Skoal Bandit was pleased with the result, however, and told us it was looking good for a full two-car team for 1984.'

Fitz did not know it at the time, but this 10th appearance at Le Mans as a driver turned out to be his last.

Results

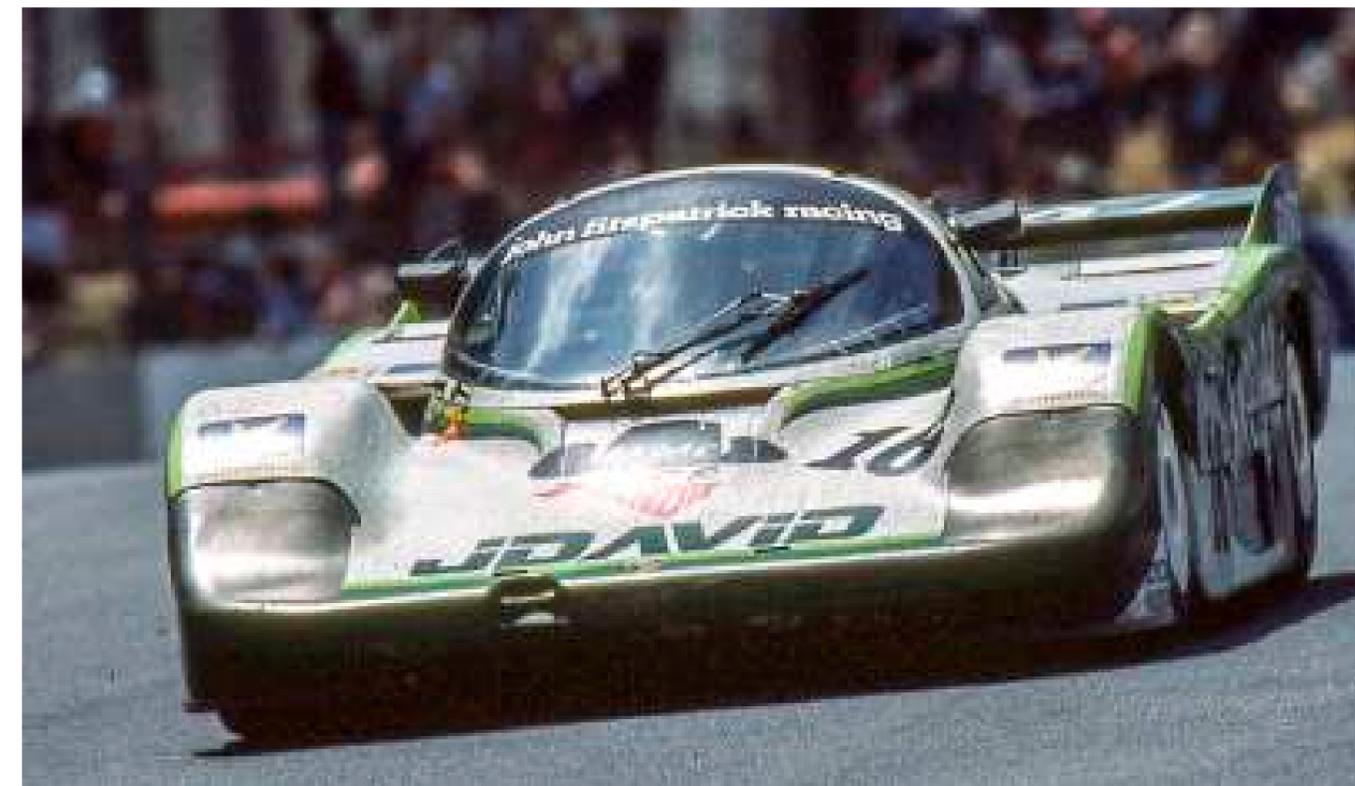
Le Mans 24 Hours (F), 18-19 June 1983

5th John Fitzpatrick/Guy Edwards/Rupert Keegan, 956 102 (no. 16), -12 laps, Q10, JDavid/Skoal Bandit, Goodyear

DNF John Fitzpatrick/David Hobbs/Dieter Quester, 956 110 (no. 11), fuel system, Q11, JDavid, Goodyear

■ The Fitzpatrick/Edwards/Keegan 956 102 exits the Esses en route to fifth place at the team's first Group C attempt at the Le Mans 24 Hours.

Malcolm Bryan



Norising

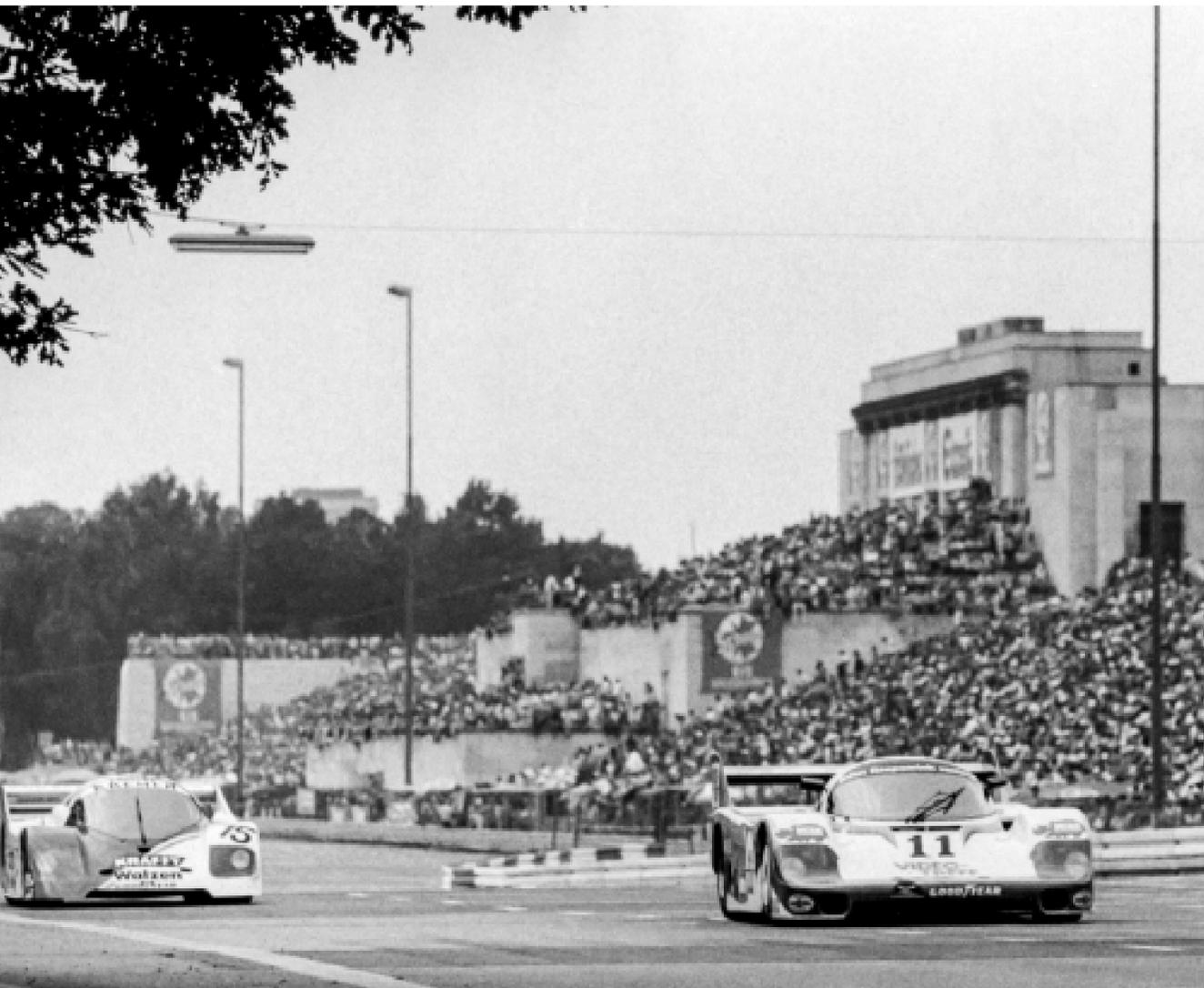
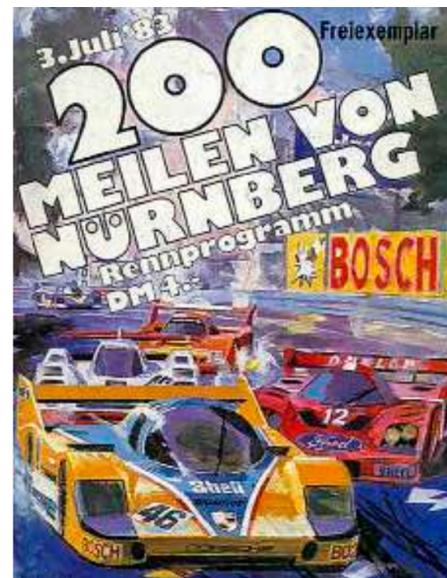
3 July 1983, 200 Meilen von Nürnberg and Norising Trophäe

■ Pursued by Frank Jelinski's Kremer Porsche, Fitz roars past the packed Nazi Steintribüne at the Norising in one of his two races that day; he retired from the morning's DRM round but took a strong fourth place in the afternoon's Trophäe event.

Motorsport Images/LAT

While the WEC was now JFR's main campaign, Fitz's long-time sponsor, Sachs, a German manufacturer of automotive parts, had asked him to make an appearance at Germany's biggest motorsports festival, at the Norising around the *Steintribüne* of Hitler's 1930s Nazi Party rallies in the city of Nürnberg (Nuremberg to English speakers).

Hardly had the dust settled after Le Mans than JFR took in two races at the Norising. Fitz was entered for the morning's one-hour Deutsche Rennsport Meisterschaft race (the fifth round) in the Sachs-liveried 956 102 and was joined by David Hobbs in the JDavid 956 110 for the afternoon's slightly shorter Trophäe race.



Porsche had just released to customers its 8.1:1 compression engine with bigger K27 turbos, which gave more lag between throttle input and the power coming in, but the factory cars had moved up a notch to 8.5:1 with intermediate turbos, which gave them even more power. 'Fitz sees this,' noted *On Track*, 'and fits smaller turbos to his new 8.1:1 engine.'

Qualifying fifth among the Joest, Brun, Richard Lloyd Racing and Obermaier Porsches, and the two Zakspeed Ford C100s, Fitz lasted for nine laps of the 70-lap DRM race around the bumpy street circuit before having to retire with suspension damage, leaving Bob Wollek as the winner for Warsteiner Joest.

The 45-minute Trophäe had a far bigger entry, two factory Porsches and a factory Lancia LC2 joining the field that had raced that morning. It saw disappointment for Hobbo, who pulled into the pits with a water leak after 22 of the 54 laps — and the team decided not to risk the car

further. But Fitz took fourth place behind the factory 956s of Stefan Bellof and Jochen Mass, and Wollek's Joest car, beating Keke Rosberg's Kremer Boss Porsche after a race-long scrap.

'Yes, that was a fantastic fight,' remembers Fitz. 'I had better acceleration out of the corners with the smaller turbos, less lag. We picked up our battle where we had left it at the 'Ring; this time I won it.'

Results

Norising (D), 3 July 1983

200 Meilen von Nürnberg

DNF John Fitzpatrick, 956 102 (no. 11), suspension, Q5, Sachs/JDavid, Goodyear

Norising Trophäe

4th John Fitzpatrick, 956 102 (no. 11), -1 lap, Q9, JDavid/Sachs, Goodyear

DNF David Hobbs, 956 110 (no. 10), overheating, Q10, Video Treff/JDavid, Goodyear

■ On the first lap of the Trophäe race at the Norising, the factory Rothmans cars of Jochen Mass and Stefan Bellof, and Hans Heyer's Lancia, are already out of shot, so this Porsche-dominated pack is led by fourth-placed Bob Wollek from Harald Grohs, Keke Rosberg, John Fitzpatrick, Jan Lammers, Klaus Niedzwiedz, Volkert Merl, David Hobbs, Klaus Ludwig, Frank Jelinski and Stefan Johansson.

Motorsport Images/LAT



Road America

17 July 1983, SCCA CanAm Challenge, round 3

In North America IMSA was still refusing to accept the Porsche 956 for GTP but the SCCA had no such reservations for its CanAm Challenge. Invited to help bolster the fading CanAm, which had been dominated by McLaren and Porsche in its 1960s/1970s heyday, Fitz agreed to run at two races either side of the WEC Spa 1,000Kms. It would be the first time that a Porsche 956 had raced in America.

For the first CanAm event, at the Road America circuit near Elkhart Lake in Wisconsin, 956 110 was air-freighted to Chicago. Fitz used a combined JFR crew from the San Diego and Silverstone workshops and David Prewitt and Keith Greene were in attendance.

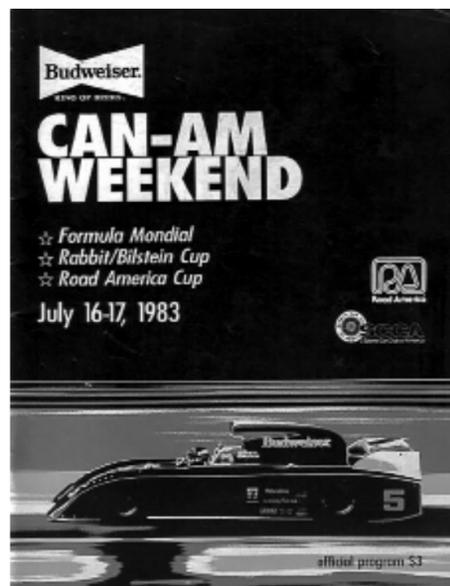
Despite the concern over falling CanAm numbers, there was still a 25-car entry for this event, with Jacques Villeneuve Sr (brother of Gilles), Jim Crawford, Michael Roe and Wally Dallenbach Jr among the front-runners.

Much to his surprise, Fitz planted the JDavid car on pole and took it to a 12-second win over Villeneuve's championship-leading Frisbee-Chevrolet after 88 minutes of close racing, with no fewer than five cars finishing on the lead lap.

'The CanAm chief scrutineer said we were too fast in qualifying,' Greene remembers, 'and reduced our fuel allowance off the top of his head. I worked out that we would be running on fumes towards the end, so I was giving Fitz the go-slow board, but he kept pushing until he had to back off for the last few laps. There wasn't enough gas left for a post-race fuel test.'

Fitz recalls: 'We were the only Group C car there, and it was very competitive, as Elkhart Lake has three long straights, which suited our car very well. I was four seconds faster than the year before, when I won the IMSA race there with

■ Road America, Wisconsin is one of the USA's best road-racing circuits, but like most lacks the basic facilities to which European racers are used. But none of that mattered to Fitz, who revelled in his CanAm win with 956 110, before starting an extensive test at Willow Springs to produce a factory-beating car.
Karl Jennings



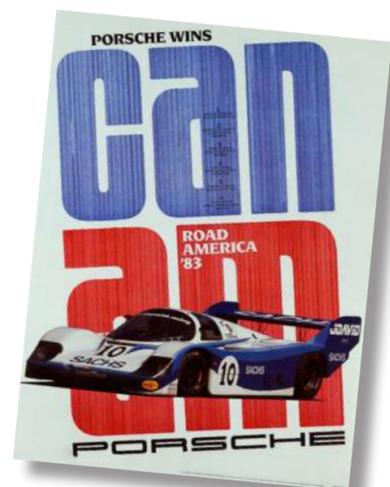
the K4. The CanAm regulars weren't happy, and regarded us as an interloper into their series — I probably would have felt the same.

'I had a real battle with Jacques and Jim's Ensign for most of the race, but came out the winner after Jacques spun, which gave me time for a splash-and-dash, but, yes, it was tight on fuel.'

Nonetheless, that win later took on great significance: 956 110 was the only Porsche 956 to win a contemporary race in the United States. It would be January 1984 before the IMSA GTP-legal 962 made its debut in The Land of the Free.

Result

Road America, 17 July 1983
1st John Fitzpatrick, 956 110 (no. 11), Q1, JDavid, Goodyear



Spa 1,000Kms

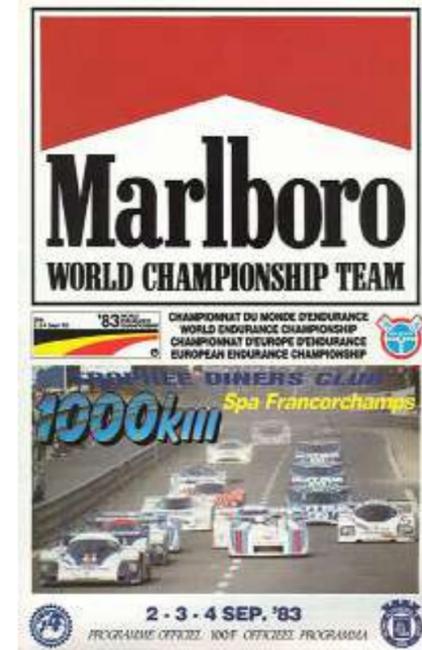
4 September 1983, FIA World Endurance Championship, round 5

The Spa 1,000Kms marked the return to the World Endurance Championship after a break of almost three months since Le Mans, giving teams — and Lancia in particular — plenty of time to apply lessons learned during the 24 Hours.

Porsche AG had also done more work, further refining the Bosch Motronics for better throttle response and automatic ignition control, which allowed Weissach to run its engines at a higher 8.5:1 compression ratio, while customers, Joest apart, still ran 8.1:1.

'We wouldn't get those updates until months later,' recalls David Prewitt. 'They were slow in passing them on to customers. Weissach didn't like being beaten, even by other Porsche teams.'

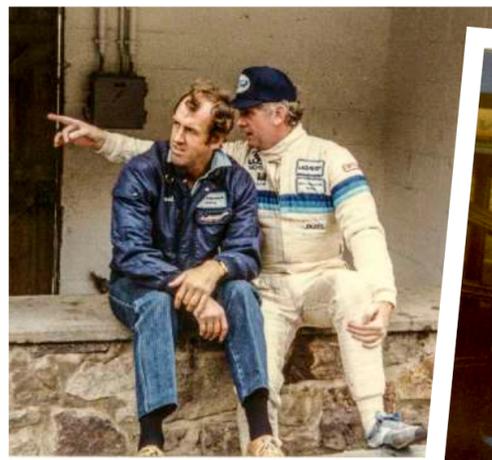
Porsche had won Le Mans for the eighth time, and at the same time claimed the 1983 WEC Makes' title, so Spa-Francorchamps would see attention switch to the Drivers' championship



■ Fitz is guided onto his marks by Keith Greene during the Spa 1,000Kms, driving 956 102 while his regular 956 110 was on its American tour.
Motorsport Images/LAT



THE 1983 SEASON



■ Spa is everybody's favourite circuit, with its spectacular Ardennes scenery, beer and frites mayonnaise, but racing there is serious business. Fitz and Hobbs took 956 102 while 956 110 was on its North American tour, and were rewarded with their first podium finish, third place. Better yet was to come.

Karl Jennings

for the final four WEC races, with two European Endurance Championship races interspersed.

JFR was back to one car. While 956 110 was touring North America, the team took 956 102 to Belgium in JDavid colours for Fitz and Hobbo, who qualified fifth among the nine 956s and two Lancias present.

One surprise was the pace of Derek Warwick, driving the Boss-sponsored Kremer 956 for the first time; he planted it third on the grid, behind the two Rothmans cars, in only his second sportscar race, having driven Kremer's CK5 at Le Mans. The JDavid Porsche qualified fifth, behind the Riccardo Patrese/Teo Fabi Lancia.

Derek Bell and Stefan Bellof were in the

heavier spare car after their regular 956 had been destroyed by engineer Roland Kussmaul on the Weissach track the day it was due to leave for Spa.

Nonetheless, at the race start Jochen Mass and Bellof went away from the field at two seconds a lap, with Warwick holding third ahead of Patrese, Fitz and Klaus Ludwig in the Zakspeed Ford C100. But they were under attack from the Joest Marlboro 956 of Stefan Johansson, who, with fewer fuel concerns than others, quickly moved into third place, just as Fitz had to pit with a puncture.

It all changed again as Johansson and Patrese collided, ending the Swede's race and sending the Lancia to its garage for lengthy repairs. Warwick

■ Start of the 1983 Spa 1,000Kms: Fitz is on board the fifth-placed JDavid 956 behind Stefan Bellof, Derek Warwick, Riccardo Patrese and Klaus Ludwig.

Motorsport Images/LAT





■ Fitz and Hobbo took third place at Spa, winning the battle of the privateer Porsches.
Malcolm Bryan

handed the third-placed Kremer car over to Franz Konrad, but a piston failed a few laps later, and it was out. Bob Wollek had jumped into the New Man car after Johansson's crash, but he too went off when the suspension collapsed. The favourites were going down like ninepins.

Mass had managed to eke an extra lap out of his Porsche before the first stop, and although he had had to go slowly on his in-lap, handing the lead to Bell, he and Ickx would have a lap's fuel in hand in the final hour. They didn't need it, as it happened; Bell had to make an unscheduled stop immediately after changing front brake pads, to have a retaining pin secured after a mechanic admitted the error to team manager Peter Falk, leaving Mass and Ickx with a 60-second lead to the chequered flag.

Meanwhile the JFR car was having a battle royal with the Martini Lancia of Piercarlo Ghinzani and Michele Alboreto, until a Marelli ECU wire came loose on the Italian car. That left Fitz and Hobbo, who at one point had to deal

with a faulty rev limiter that was causing a misfire, with a clear run to the final podium slot, winning the privateer 956 battle.

'That was a fantastic race, on a fabulous circuit,' Fitz says. 'The original circuit was shortened in 1981 but kept many of its best features, especially the run back along the valley through Blanchimont — that was flat in a 956. We all loved it, and to do well at Spa was always hugely satisfying.'

Behind JFR, Brun Motorsport brought its new 956 into fourth place, shared by owner Walter Brun, Harald Grohs and Hans Stuck; it was the team's first Porsche race after struggling with the Swiss-built Sauber-Sehcar, and 32-year-old Stuck would soon become Weissach's favoured son...

Result

Spa 1,000Kms (B), 4 September 1983
3rd John Fitzpatrick/David Hobbs, 956 102 (no. 11), -5 laps, Q5, JDavid, Goodyear

Mosport Park

11 September 1983, SCCA CanAm Challenge, round 5

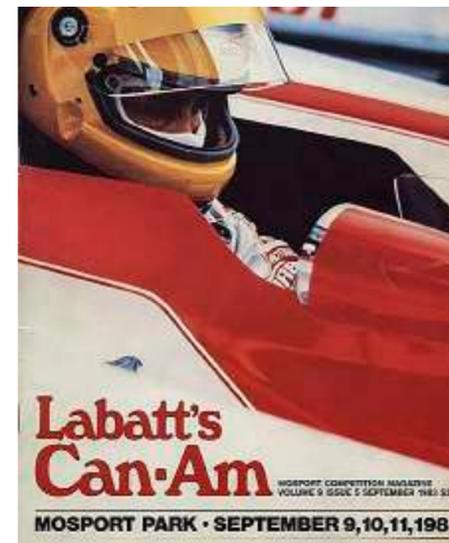
Following Road America, Fitz still had the 956 in his transporter when the team went to Portland, Oregon, where he was due to race the K4 in the Camel GTP round on 31 July.

'IMSA technical director Mark Raffauf saw that we had unloaded the 956 to get to the K4, and suggested we do a few laps in it during a break. I lapped easily four to five seconds faster than the K4, which probably convinced John Bishop he had done the right thing to ban the car. That was my mistake; on reflection perhaps it wasn't the wisest thing to have done!'

But it would be to no avail for IMSA. Four months later the Porsche 962 would arrive at the Daytona 24 Hours, and American sportscar racing would change forever.

After Portland, Fitz and Prewitt had returned to Europe for the Spa 1,000Kms, and John now found himself back in North America, dovetailing his WEC campaign with American races, the next CanAm round at Canada's Mosport Park.

Here on Ontario's mini-Spa, Fitz found the track 'unbelievably bumpy, and I felt like the car was going to fall apart at any time.' He qualified fifth among much the same field he had raced at Elkhart Lake, but took it easy in the race: 'The track didn't inspire me with much confidence, and I drove very circumspectly to third place behind Crawford and Villeneuve.'



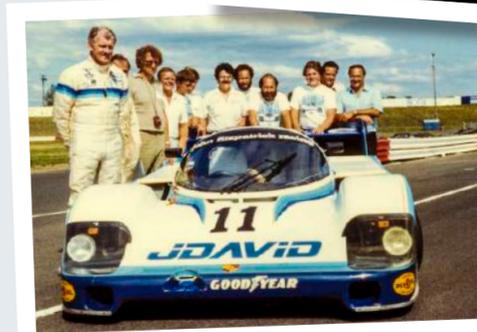
Canadian Jacques Villeneuve went on to win the 1983 CanAm Challenge title, watched by his 12-year-old nephew, also Jacques, who in turn became the 1995 Indy 500 winner and CART Indycar champion, and then 1997 Formula 1 World Champion.

Result

Mosport Park (CDN), 11 September 1983
3rd John Fitzpatrick, 956 110 (no. 11), -2 laps, Q5, JDavid, Goodyear

■ When Fitz went to the Portland IMSA round to race his K4, 956 110 was in the transporter too — so IMSA's technical chief invited him to do a few unofficial laps.

Karl Jennings



Brands Hatch 1,000Kms

18 September 1983, FIA European Endurance Championship, round 6

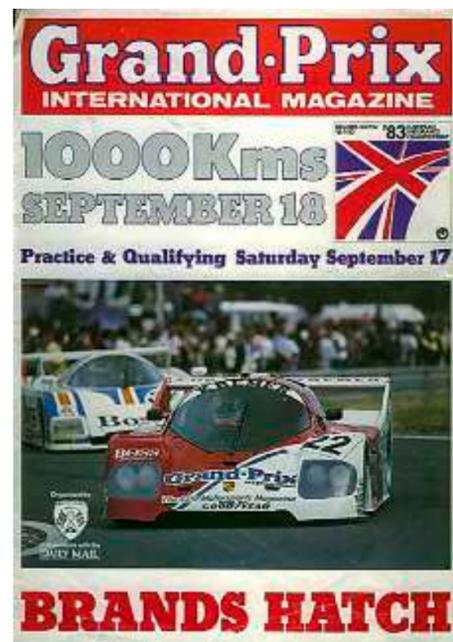
■ Derek Warwick joined JFR for a one-off drive at Brands Hatch in Hobbo's absence. Here he and team manager Keith Greene discuss set-up during qualifying on the Saturday, when the weather was bright. All Porsches were right-hand drive as circuits were predominantly clockwise.

Malcolm Bryan

Brands Hatch marked the sixth round of the FIA European Endurance Championship, this one for Drivers' points only, the first of three (along with Imola and Mugello) that were separate from the world title for Makes — which would conclude at Kyalami in December. But this was September in England, and a wet race was in store.

With its factory drivers still in the European fight, Rothmans Porsche sent two cars to the British circuit, as did Lancia, and five customer 956s also made the journey — a shortish one for John Fitzpatrick Racing and Richard Lloyd Racing, both based at Silverstone. By now the factory had come up with a shovel nose, which reduced understeer, and this was made available to all customer teams.

Aware that it was down on performance compared with the factory and Joest cars, JFR had



■ Willow Springs is a motorsport facility north of Los Angeles. Between the two CanAm races in which JFR took part, the team spent several days in these arid-looking surroundings working on underbody tweaks to give more downforce. It was Glenn Blakeley who came up with the solution to run with drag-inducing underbody louvres closed off, the necessary cooling air for the engine found elsewhere.

Karl Jennings

been working on its own refinements to 956 110, running a second test session at Willow Springs — out of sight of the opposition — while the car was on its US tour.

'It was very hot there, and we were testing different cooling louvres,' explains Fitz. 'The 956 had a small set of louvres in the underbody tunnels to let in air to the engine to aid cooling. For qualifying these louvres were covered by plates to seal the tunnels and this was worth a second a lap with the improved downforce,

but could only be done for three laps or the engine would overheat.'

JFR's Glenn Blakeley found a solution that allowed the car to run with these louvres permanently closed, by using side ducts and a turbo-driven cooling fan, and the resultant downforce increase would be a bonus.

'We had to alter the ride height because of the changes we had made,' says Greene, 'and the cooling fans took a lot of power from the turbos. But Brands Hatch isn't a power circuit, and of course



■ Opening lap of the Brands Hatch 1,000Kms and as the field streams down from Druids to Bottom Bend Derek Warwick in JFR's 956 110 is right behind the two factory Porsches.
Malcolm Bryan



■ This black-and-white sequence shows the leaders exiting Druids on each of the first three laps of the race: on lap 1 Ickx and Bell in their factory Porsches lead Warwick; on lap 2 Warwick has 956 110 in second place, splitting the factory pair; and by lap 3 he is in front.
John Brooks

THE 1983 SEASON



■ In the dreadful weather at the 1983 Brands Hatch 1,000Kms Derek Warwick quickly got to grips with the Goodyear rain tyres, and left the field behind.

Malcolm Bryan

■ This is Warwick's first pit stop after an hour of racing and leading by a lap. The plan had been for Fitz, helmeted and ready to go, to take over, but he is about to tell Warwick to stay in the car while the JFR crew set about servicing it.

Motorsport Images/LAT



■ Roostertails of spray from two Dereks: Warwick chases Bell through the back section of Brands Hatch during the first lap.

John Brooks

■ Once past the Rothmans cars, Warwick and Fitz were never headed again – and even lapped the factory Porsches.

Motorsport Images/LAT



THE 1983 SEASON



■ Now Fitz is in 956 110, on a drying track, leading Bellof's second-placed Rothmans Porsche by a full lap thanks to Warwick's efforts during his double stint.

John Brooks

■ Apart from great driving, the combination of Goodyear tyres, under-floor modifications and Keith Greene's strategy management gave the JFR team its advantage in the 1983 Brands Hatch 1,000Kms.

John Brooks



it was wet, so it didn't really affect us.'

Fitz and Greene had been impressed by fellow Briton Derek Warwick's performance in the Kremer 956 at Spa, and as a stand-in was needed for David Hobbs — who was defending his TransAm Championship lead at Sears Point in California — they had no hesitation in calling up the 1978 British Formula 3 Champion, who was now racing for Toleman in Formula 1, to join them for the Brands Hatch 1,000Kms.

The incessant rain was reminiscent of the 1970 Brands Hatch 1,000Kms, when Pedro Rodríguez wrestled the Gulf Porsche 917 to an historic victory. The 1982 race, when Porsche's Jacky Ickx beat Lancia's Riccardo Patrese to the drivers' title, had been wet too.

The factory cars were on the front row, with Joest's Wollek and JFR's Warwick on the second row. 'Wet, wild and windy,' was how Michael Cotton described conditions in his *Motor Sport* report, 'and when the field was unleashed at midday, a huge ball of spray made conditions extremely hazardous.'

Ickx was in front for the first two laps, before Warwick took the lead on the third tour at Druids

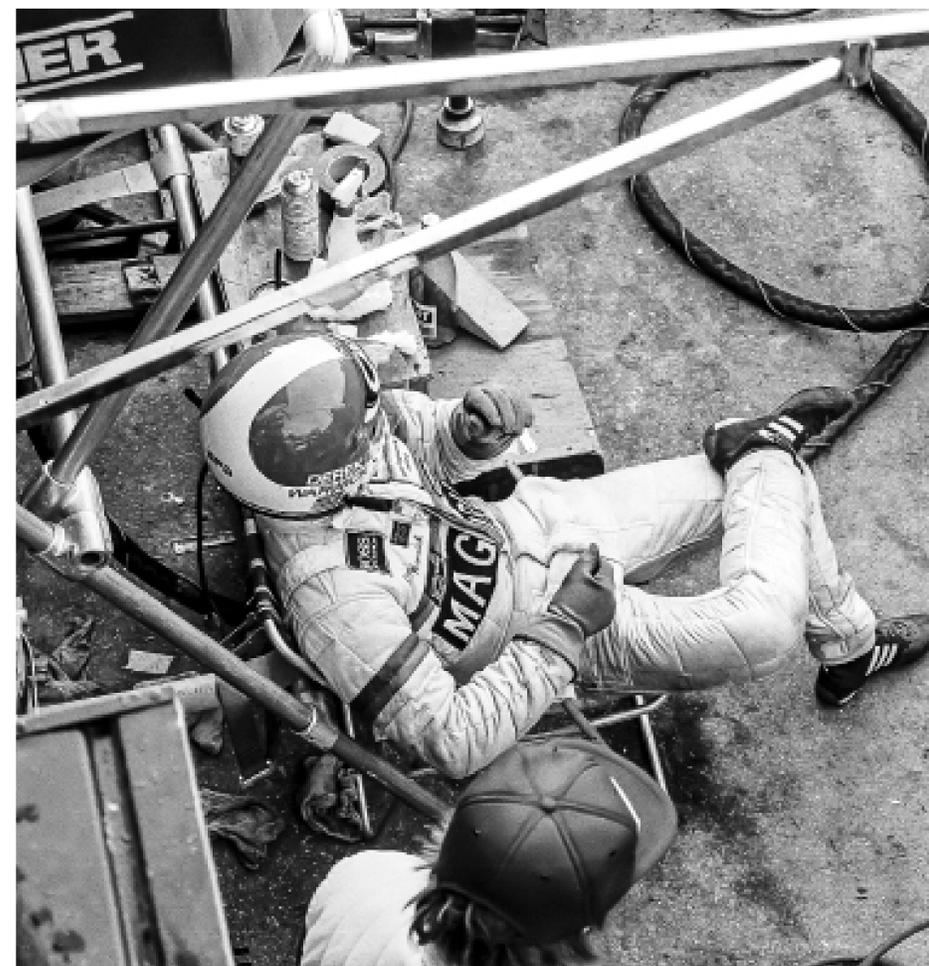
hairpin, his extra downforce and Goodyear tyres giving him the edge over Dunlop runners. Despite running new high-downforce undertrays, the Rothmans Porsches could not respond, and Ickx even had a spin at Clearways.

By lap 20, the leading five — Warwick, Wollek, Bellof, Ickx and Lancia's Alboreto — had lapped the entire field. Ickx and Alboreto had their race compromised when the safety car was called out as the track was flooding at Bottom Bend. It joined the track right in front of them, costing them a lap from the three cars ahead.

Warwick continued to lead, totally relaxed on a circuit at which he had learned much of his racecraft, and stayed on board after his first routine stop. Midway through his second stint he lapped second-placed Bellof, underlining just how good a car he had beneath him.

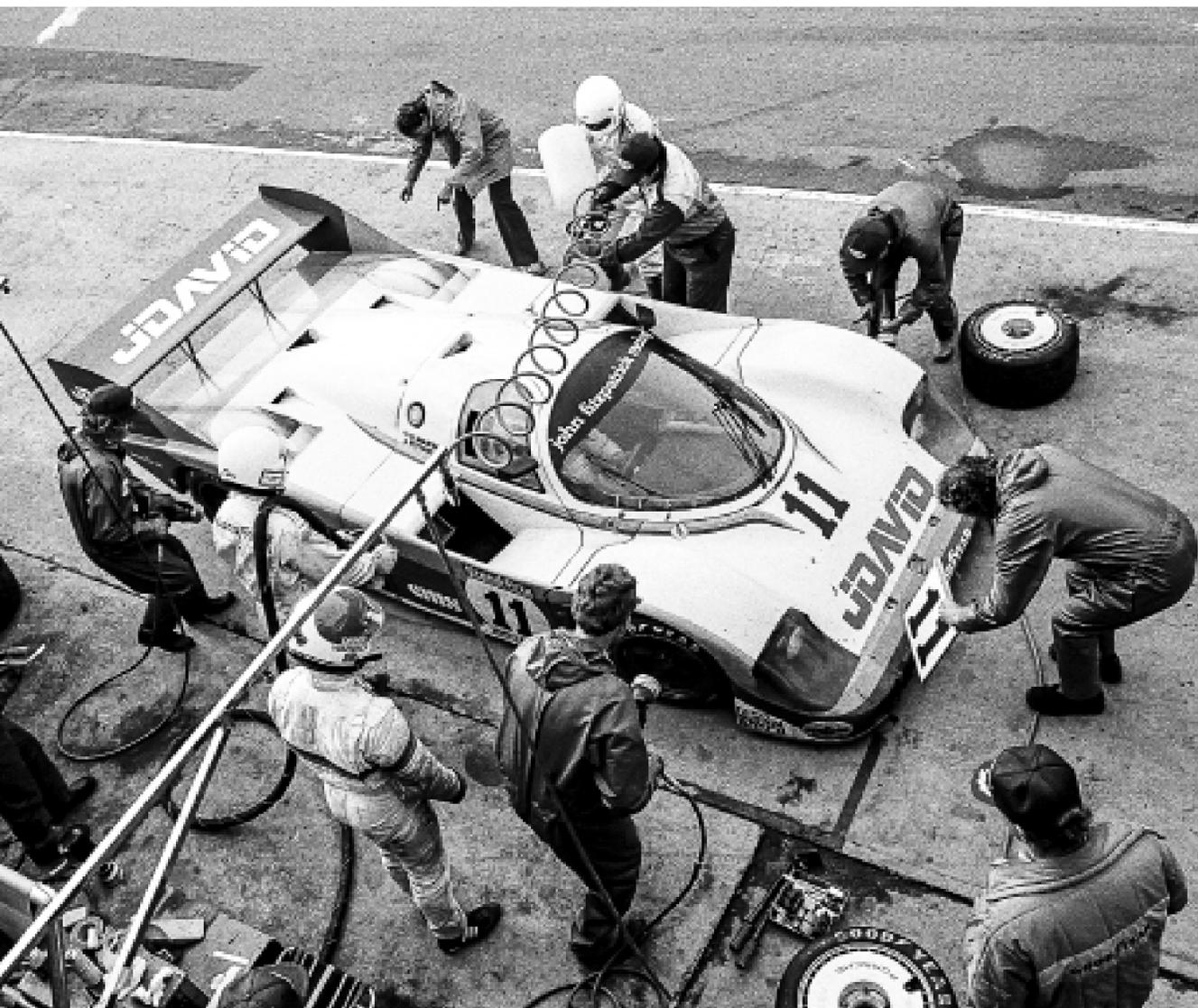
'When Derek handed over to me at the second fuel stop at the two-hour mark, we still had over a lap lead on the factory Porsches,' says Fitz. 'Both Derek and I had been pushed off the road by slow cars, but luckily had recovered each time without damage.'

The opposition was crumbling, the two



■ With an hour to go, the rain now replaced by sun, Warwick waits to take over the lead car for his final stint — no expense was spared on pit facilities!

John Brooks



■ The final stop: Fitz arrives to hand over to Warwick, who stands waiting as the JFR crew swing into action the moment the car comes to rest.

John Brooks

Rothmans cars excepted; Joest was delayed by an alternator belt change, and the Richard Lloyd car had a distributor drive breakage. One of the factory Lancias went out with engine failure, while in the other one Alboreto/Patrese were by now five laps down.

But on a dry track, the factory Porsches — with more power and, in Ickx's case, 20kgs less weight — were now hunting down the JDavid 956. Both made it back onto the lead lap, but not without difficulty. Fitz had held off Ickx for nine laps before the Belgian eventually got past to unlap himself, with fuel consumption now of no concern, as the weather meant that the race would never reach its full 1,000kms distance, but would be stopped at six hours. Slick pit work at every stop by the JFR crew under master strategist Greene helped to maintain the edge over the factory cars.

'Fitz had told me that, if it was wet, I would

start the race and do two stints behind the wheel, so that's how we played it,' says Warwick. 'But at the end of the first stint I was just bursting for the loo, and after an hour in really heavy rain I'd had enough. I just wanted to get out!

'So I was just unstrapping the harness and on the point of getting out when Fitz opened the door and said, "You don't want to get out, do you Derek?" and slammed the door, bang, and ran away. He later told me there was no way in the world he was going to get in that car after I'd come in with a lap lead!'

Michael Cotton well remembers that afternoon. 'Fitzpatrick's team could not afford any slip-up with the formidable works team poised a lap behind, for two minutes can so easily be lost if a body panel is damaged, or the brake pads don't come out easily. That is the difference between winning and losing. Everything worked perfectly, there weren't any stumbles in the pits and the



JDavid 956 maintained its advantage.'

Warwick was just 35 seconds clear of Bellof when, with only five minutes remaining, Margie Haas-Smith had the fire bottle go off in her Porsche 930 and, unsighted, took Derek off the road. He quickly recovered, but there was body damage and the radiator ducts were clogged; Bellof arrived at the scene to find debris all over the road, and ruined a front tyre under heavy braking, sending him pitwards — which put Mass back into second place.

Warwick drove the last three laps with the engine temperature climbing, but his lead was back to a lap, and for the second — and final — time a customer 956 had beaten a factory one.

'Afterwards Norbert Singer was very interested to see what we had done to allow us to run with the sealed-off tunnels,' adds Fitz. 'We had the back off the car, and he had a good look, before giving me one of his wry smiles. "Sehr gut, Fitz,"

he said, and he meant it. He was a great innovator, and loved to see others do it too.'

This was too much innovation, perhaps, as cooling fans were banned after this race. The FISA considered them to be moving aerodynamic aids, and JFR would have to go back to the regular underfloor before others could copy.

'The main reasons for our win were the superiority of the Goodyear tyres and Derek's brilliant driving,' judges Fitz. 'Okay, I hadn't done a bad job either, but Derek was the star, and the win justly rewarded our hard-working crew, who had done such a magnificent job.'

It was a hugely popular win, by a British team with two British drivers on a British track, and Porsche's Peter Falk was among those to congratulate both men.

Derek Warwick would build on his first win in three years (his last had been at Silverstone's round of the 1980 European Formula 2 Championship)

■ Bellof's challenge in the closing laps ended with a shredded front tyre, after locking up to avoid debris just five minutes from home; it was a costly pit stop for the factory.

John Brooks

THE 1983 SEASON



to drive for Jaguar in Group C, before winning both the Le Mans 24 Hours and the FIA World Sportscar Championship for Peugeot in 1992. Derek describes the Brands Hatch victory as career-changing: 'That performance was noticed, and it helped a little to get me my Renault Formula 1 drive.'

Jürgen Barth was delighted, of course, that one of his customers had again beaten the factory — more wins, more sales. 'I had a very good relationship with John and his team; we were at all the races together, and always had fun. I was once driving with Fitz, and I wasn't as fast he was, so he

showed me a hammer sign from the pit wall!

'It was a really good team, and I had a perfect relationship with David Prewitt and Keith Greene too, they were really good guys, very serious about their racing. They often came to Weissach to collect engines, gearboxes or whatever, which we rented out to customers.'

■ Warwick takes the chequered flag at the end of just over six hours of dramatic racing — the best WEC race yet.

John Brooks

Result

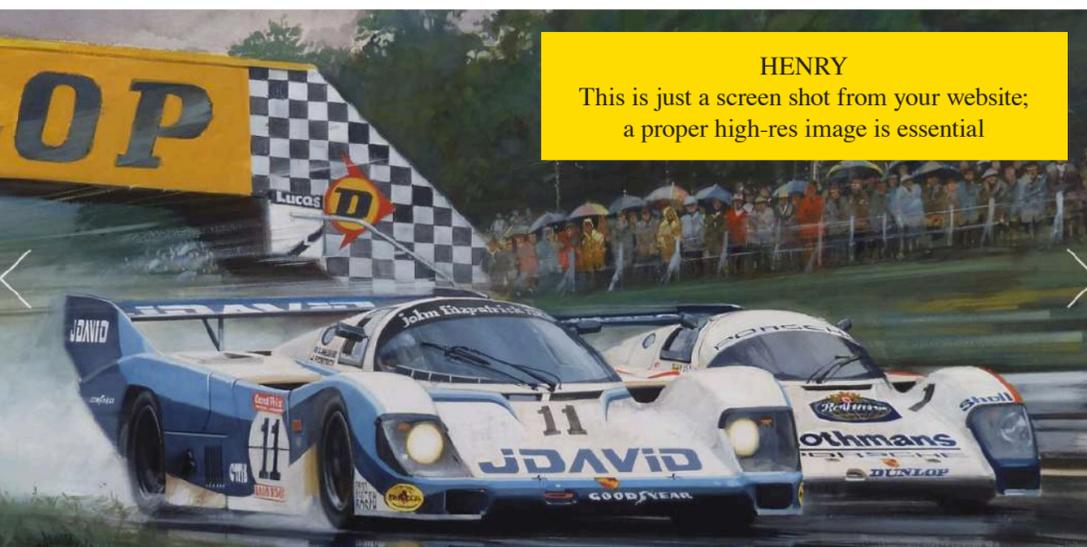
Brands Hatch (GB), 18 September 1983
1st John Fitzpatrick/Derek Warwick, 956 110 (no. 11), Q4, JDavid, Goodyear

■ Warwick and Fitz celebrate their factory-beating success at Brands Hatch, British drivers in a British team.

Malcolm Bryan

■ To mark his team's finest hour, John Fitzpatrick commissioned James Dugdale to paint this scene showing Warwick outraking Ickx's Rothmans Porsche into Druids on the third lap to take the lead.

Courtesy of John Fitzpatrick



Fuji 1,000Kms

2 October 1983, FIA World Endurance Championship, round 6

John Fitzpatrick's first trip to Japan two weeks later brought the team back down to earth with a bump; 956 102 had been sent on ahead, one of 10 regular WEC cars that the Japanese Group C teams — Nissan, Toyota and Mazda among them — would be taking on at the awesome Speedway in the shadow of Mt Fuji.

Fitz was at the wheel during free practice when he had a huge accident. 'I suffered a tyre blow-out at about 160mph, just as I turned into the final right-hander that leads onto the main straight. The car went straight on into the barriers, and bounced upside down high in the air, luckily landing back on its wheels.'

Derek Bell had been following close behind and recalls passing right beneath the JDavid Porsche. 'I just shut my eyes and hung on, then went straight into the pits to report what I thought I had seen,'



■ JFR team manager Keith Greene and David Hobbs inspect the wreckage of 956 102 after Fitz's roll during practice for the Fuji 1,000Kms; Honda Formula 1 driver Satoru Nakajima also looks on. *Motorsport Images/LAT*



■ We thought we were eating bowls of steaming broth, until one of the lads leaned over and lifted the lid off the dish, and there was a head and skeleton in there. It turned out we had been eating raccoon — a great Japanese delicacy. ■



he recalls. The JFR car was, unsurprisingly, too badly damaged to repair.

Fitz's incident was not the only one prior to the race: Geoff Lees's Dome-Toyota caught fire, singeing the British driver, and Frenchman Philippe Alliot somersaulted Kremer's 956 over the barriers, breaking it in two but without harm to himself. Amazingly, an all-night effort saw the 956 repaired in time to start the race.

Seeing no point in staying, Fitz and Hobbo headed for Tokyo's Narita airport, but their mood was not improved by an earthquake, then being caught in Tokyo traffic, and finally language problems. 'We eventually found our way to the airport and flew back to California, both swearing never to set foot in the country again.'

The JFR crew did stay, however, and ran Yoshiho Matsuda's 956 112, which the Japanese collector had bought for his museum, the Matsuda Collection. The original purchaser of this car was John Frankenheimer, the director of the film *Grand Prix*, who was planning another Hollywood movie about a father-and-son team going from the US to win Le Mans, obviously based on the Andrettis. Following the Mosport CanAm race, Fitz had received a call from Porsche asking if he would take JFR's 956 110 to Riverside for a day connected with the proposed film.

'John Frankenheimer was trying to raise money for his film and arrived with his potential investor, whom we strapped in the passenger seat with belts and helmet. I asked Frankenheimer how fast I should go and he told me to show this man what it would do. After I returned to the pits, the fellow just sat there, looking very pale, saying nothing, and the mechanics lifted him out. Neither Frankenheimer nor I heard from him again.'

So at Fuji, the potential movie car was taken out of its wrapping for Thierry Boutsen and

Henri Pescarolo, who went on to finish the race in fourth place, behind the Bellof/Bell and Ickx/Mass factory cars and the Nova/Trust Porsche of Vern Schuppan/Naohiro Fujita. After the race 956 112 returned to Matsuda's Porsche Museum of Japan at Hakone, in the foothills of Mt Fuji, close to the Speedway.

A notable aspect of the race was that between pit stops the factory cars went two or three laps further than any others, Joest included. Bosch's fuel-economy work was starting to pay off, as indeed it would need to for everyone, because for 1984 the FIA was proposing a 15 per cent reduction in fuel capacity for 1,000Kms races, from 100 litres to 85.

David Prewitt, who stayed on with Keith Greene to help manage the Matsuda car, remembers his crew being offered 'English' breakfast at the local hotel. 'Cornflakes, only it was a big bowl of milk with three or four cornflakes floating on top. Japanese food wasn't for them — they were soon looking for the nearest McDonalds.'

'After the race the organisers found a special prize for fourth place, so we all went to the prize-giving. Mr Matsuda took us all out to a very nice restaurant, but we had no idea what we were served. We thought we were eating bowls of steaming broth, until one of the lads leaned over and lifted the lid off the dish, and there was a head and skeleton in there. It turned out we had been eating raccoon — a great Japanese delicacy. The boys weren't too impressed.'

Result

Fuji (J), 2 October 1983

DNS John Fitzpatrick/David Hobbs, 956 102 (no. 11), practice crash, JDavid, Goodyear

■ At Fuji the JFR crew also ran 956 112, which Japanese collector Yoshiho Matsuda had bought for his museum, the Matsuda Collection. *Author*

Imola 1,000Kms

16 October 1983, FIA European Endurance Championship, round 7

For the first time in the WEC, JFR was up against an entry that did not feature a factory Porsche. But Lancia was at the Bologna circuit of Imola in force, determined to overcome its reliability issues on home ground at the Autodromo Enzo e Dino Ferrari. Lancia's only problem was that Riccardo Patrese, Michele Alboreto and Piercarlo Ghinzani were all racing at the South African Grand Prix that weekend, so driving duties were left to Teo Fabi/Hans Heyer and Alessandro Nannini/Beppe Gabbiani.

There were five privateer Porsches present, among them the JFR car for Fitz and Hobbs; Hobbo had clinched the 1983 TransAm title at Las Vegas the previous weekend. Derek Bell hitched a ride with Jonathan Palmer in the Richard Lloyd Canon 956, chasing European driver points, in which he trailed Ickx (absent from this race) but headed Wollek.

Lancia took the front row, from the Marlboro Joest and Canon 956s, with the JDavid entry fifth. Right from the start, the Italian cars cantered off into the distance, the two LC2s constantly changing places, leaving Wollek as best of the rest.

Palmer's Canon car then came through into third after a series of rapid pit stops, and quickly disposed of the Nannini/Gabbiani Lancia. But everyone was exceeding their fuel regimes — apart from JFR. Keith Greene was confident that they had the consumption right. Bell then lost time with a brake pad that stuck during a

change, so Lancia was back to a 1–2.

Then the rain came, ending fuel-economy concerns. Gabbiani spun his Lancia into barriers, although he rejoined in fourth with bodywork damage. Palmer spun into the tyre wall at Tosa, losing several laps before resuming in fifth. It was the Fitzpatrick/Hobbs car that made the most of all this, now second to the leading Lancia.

Already it had been one of the best races of the year, but there was more to come. With a few laps left, Nannini's gearbox began to seize and he parked in the pits, promoting Wollek to third, crucially two places ahead of points rival Bell.

Lancia finally took its first Group C win, with JFR crossing the line in second place a lap down, but still two laps ahead of the third-placed Joest car. This was to be Hobbo's best result of the year, as he had missed Brands Hatch.

'Hobbo was usually quick,' says Keith Greene. 'He was a really good driver and could jump into anything. I remember him with his automatic Lotus Elite when I was racing against him in the early sixties... that's going back. If a car was half right he would be bloody quick and reliable.'

Lancia team boss Cesare Fiorio made a final-lap bid to get Nannini into the results, sending him out jammed in third gear, but the lap took him so long that he was not classified, despite finishing fourth on the road. This kept Bell's title hopes alive, as he inherited that fourth place.

For Fitz, it was another excellent FIA result to add to his Brands Hatch win and third place at Spa, especially as the team had again beaten Joest.

'Joest was our main opposition,' says Fitz. 'We didn't consider the factory cars as opposition, because they were obviously always so far ahead. But of the privateers, Joest was our main rival. Kremer didn't do all the races, and didn't always have the best driver in there. But Joest seemed to have unlimited funds to do everything. And a lot of his guys who came in at weekends also worked for Weissach, and they would bring the latest factory tweaks, so he always had the edge right from that very first race with 956s.'

'Nonetheless, I had an excellent relationship with Reinhold. We had bought Moby Dick off him the year before, and if either team needed help from the other, we gave it, and my nephew Karl Jennings eventually went to work for him.'

Result

Imola (I), 16 October 1983

2nd John Fitzpatrick/David Hobbs, 956 110 (no. 11), -1 lap, Q5, JDavid, Goodyear

■ The principal customer Porsche teams, GTI Engineering, Joest and John Fitzpatrick Racing, battle out the 1983 Imola 1,000Kms; JFR beat them to finish second to Lancia.

Motorsport Images/LAT



Mugello 1,000Kms

23 October 1983, FIA European Endurance Championship, round 8

The European season ended a week later, just 60kms away at Mugello, with virtually the same entry as Imola, and again no factory Porsches. Lancia had two of its three factory drivers back, Patrese and Ghinzani, but the team struggled to set up the cars, with the RLR, Joest and JFR 956s annexing the top three qualifying positions.

Thierry Boutsen joined Fitz and Hobbo in the JDavid car. 'I had already decided to stop after Mugello,' recalls Fitz, 'and the only person I had told was Hobbo. I asked him who we should take on in my place for next year, and he suggested Boutsen, because he was really quick. So he joined us for that race, and I only did one hour.'

Greene was a Boutsen fan too. 'He was great, a lovely bloke, a fantastic driver and much underrated in a way. Whenever he stepped out of his single-seater shell he always went like a rocket. Didn't matter what car he was in, he just jumped in and did the job.'

'I ran him at Rondeau, and he was quicker than Henri [Pescarolo] straight away. He was straight on it after a few laps, would make a few comments, a few changes and off he went.'

Their faith in the Belgian was justified when he jumped straight into second place to chase Bob Wollek, with Lancia's Patrese right behind.

Once again the JFR crew worked their magic at the pit stops, putting Fitzpatrick back out in the lead from Stefan Johansson, with Bell (again in the Canon Porsche) third. But Derek had the undertray come loose, and lost four laps in the pits having it refitted, watching his title hopes disappear as the clock ticked down.

Fitz was now struggling with oversteer, exactly what the shovel nose was designed to induce, but this was too much, and eventually Johansson found his way past, although Fitz stayed ahead of the two Lancias. When Hobbs took over, a driveshaft started to tighten up as it lost its lubrication, and he was forced to let both Nannini and Bell past. Ten laps were lost as the right-hand driveshaft and hub carrier were replaced, but they had clawed back two by the end to place fourth.

That was how they finished, winner Wollek claiming the European Endurance Championship by six points from Bell and nine from Ickx. Fitz finished fourth equal in the points with Johansson, after the last race of his 22-year driving career.

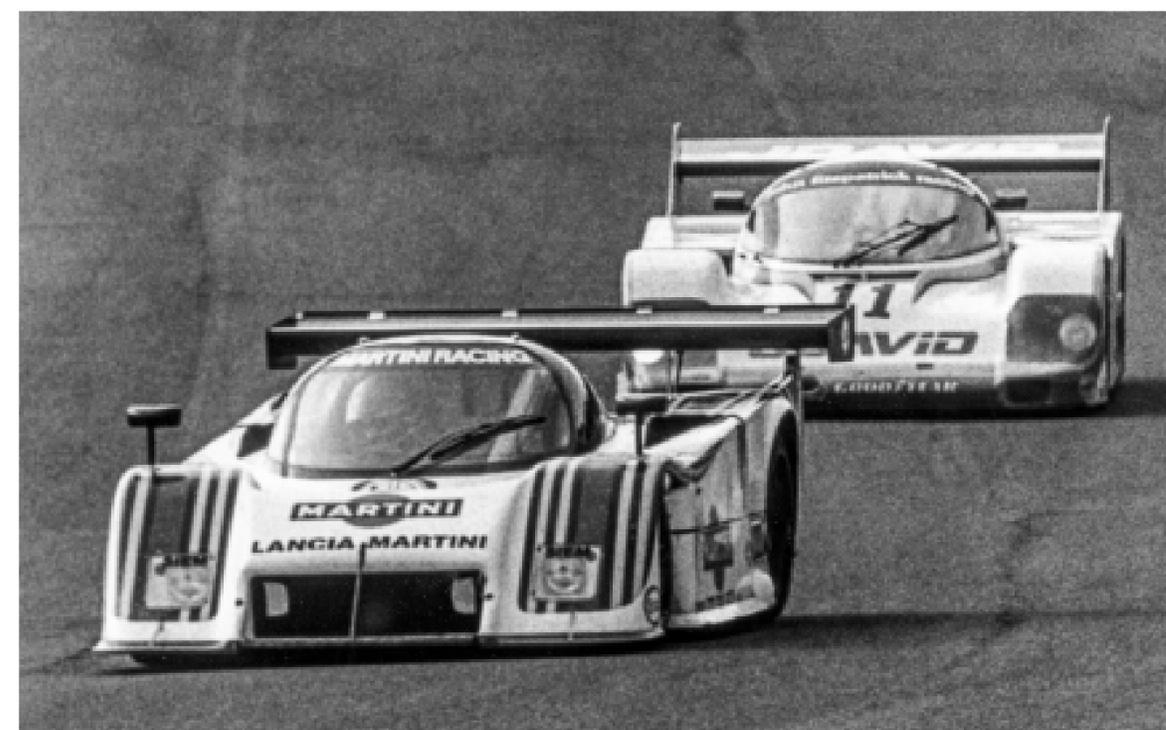
Result

Mugello (I), 23 October 1983

4th John Fitzpatrick/David Hobbs/Thierry Boutsen, 956 110 (no. 11), -8 laps, Q3, JDavid, Goodyear

■ New to the JFR team at Mugello, Thierry Boutsen was immediately quick, mixing it with the Patrese/Alboreto Lancia early on, but a long delay to replace a driveshaft dropped 956 110 to fourth place by the end.

Motorsport Images/LAT



Kyalami 1,000Kms

10 December 1983, FIA World Endurance Championship, round 7

The 1983 season ended in the southern hemisphere at the Johannesburg circuit of Kyalami, high on the South African veldt. Its 1,550-metre altitude would not affect the turbo cars, but summer afternoon rain always had to be factored in.

Thierry Boutsen was on the JFR roster again, sharing with David Hobbs and South African Desiré Wilson (the only woman to have won a Formula 1 race, at Brands Hatch in 1980). Hobbo had quickly warmed to his new Belgian team-mate. 'I was flattered that I was sharing the car with Thierry; he was a quick Formula 1 driver and our times were not that far apart. He could be quicker than me in qualifying, so we tended to leave qualifying to him, but in the races our times were about the same.

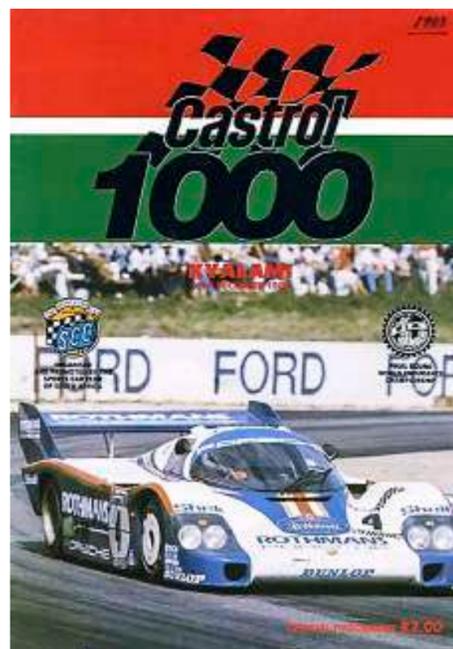
'We got on very well, and we were about the same height, so no seat-juggling. The only thing that irritated me about Thierry was that if I did more than four laps in one of those cars, I would be soaking wet, saturated in sweat. He would do a whole stint, get out and he would be absolutely dry, I couldn't get over it! But we drove very well together.'

South African star Sarel van der Merwe brought his Kreepy Krauly swimming pool cleaner sponsorship to pay for a second JFR car, the team's original JDavid 956 102, rebuilt at Weissach after its Fuji crash, shared with compatriots Graham Duxbury and Tony Martin. Fitz took a back seat as team owner.

Porsche AG was here for the seventh and final round of the WEC, although it had won the Makes' title as far back as Le Mans, as only the best five results counted. But the Drivers' title was still to be decided between Ickx and Bell, and Weissach brought a third car for Le Mans winners Schuppan and Holbert fitted with the PDK (Porsche Doppel Kupplung) double-clutch gearshift system, which was still in development.

There were two Lancias (one of them a new chassis for Patrese/Nannini), and six customer 956s. Like JFR, Joest was fielding two cars, while Richard Lloyd Racing (in Gunston colours) and Brun had one each.

Rothmans Porsche — racing at home for the brand-owning Rupert family — set the immediate pace, Bellof from Mass, who quickly caught the tail end of the 40 starters, Group B and local touring cars among them. Patrese and Ghinzani were third and fourth, but being hounded by the customer Porsches, Wollek from Boutsen,



Stuck, Lammers and van der Merwe. Holbert was running ninth, the third factory car having reverted to a manual gearbox for the race after the PDK test. Norbert Singer later admitted that the PDK was 'a little before its time in 1983, because, like ABS, it needed modern electronics to make it work properly; it was too slow and could sometimes stick using mechanical means.'

Lammers dropped out of the group when the Richard Lloyd car lost a front wheel, and Ickx was delayed when an air hose jammed on his car at a scheduled stop.

The skies had been blackening across the veldt, and when the rain arrived it was of biblical proportions. Cars switched to wets, but the water was ankle deep and several touring cars piled off at the Esses. Then at Barbecue three of the 956s went off, Hobbs finishing atop Chico Serra's Joest car, and Massimo Sigala's Brun car was buried deep in the catch-fencing too. Desiré didn't get to drive in her home race.

'There was nothing I could do,' remembers

‘The only thing that irritated me about Thierry was that if I did more than four laps in one of those cars, I would be soaking wet, saturated in sweat. He would do a whole stint, get out and he would be absolutely dry.’

■ At Kyalami 956 110 ran in Carwil mining equipment colours and Thierry Boutsen, seen passing Alessandro Nannini's Lancia for fourth place, joined Hobbo for driving duties, with Desiré Wilson as third driver.
Malcolm Bryan





■ David Hobbs was driving when a rainstorm arrived and the Carwil-backed JFR entry left the road at Barbecue bend, ending up in the catch-fencing perched on top of Chico Serra's Joest car. *Motoprint*

Hobbo. 'I just drove into a wall of water across the track, and the car acquaplaned off and finished on top of Chico.'

Ickx was the next to arrive at Barbecue, and executed a perfect 360-degree pirouette, continuing unabated still in second. Then he did it again the following lap, but this time caught the kerbs and damaged the underbody, which cost him eight laps in repairs.

Bell had been more circumspect and kept his lead car on the track ahead of the two Lancias, while van der Merwe, with local knowledge, also kept the JFR Kreepy Krauly car on the island, running in the top six. Holbert and Schuppan went out when the engine stopped, Vern unable to restart despite changing the ignition black box trackside.

The rain ceased as quickly as it had arrived, although most of the front-runners elected to stay on wets until their fuel stops — but not Nannini. After previously losing a door on the main straight, he defied team orders and came in early, which would have fuel repercussions later in the race. As darkness came — the final hour was scheduled to run into night — the Bell/Bellof car now led Hans Heyer's Lancia, but he crashed heavily at Sunset when the suspension broke.

While all this was going on, the South African JFR car had moved up to fourth place and was

having a great run until it threw a cooling fan belt. It lost five minutes while the crew fitted a new one. That too broke, sending the car back to the pits for a third, costing two places.

All this left Patrese in second from Ickx/Mass, but his Lancia was short of fuel; Cesare Fiorio ordered him to eke out three more laps before he could stop, not helped by his headlights failing and he was now racing in total darkness. But he did it, and although four laps down, secured that second place.

Ickx was World Drivers' champion for a second successive year, beating Bell by just three points; Bellof's Nordschleife crash back in May had come back to haunt Derek.

Joest took fourth with Dieter Schornstein and 'John Winter', the Richard Lloyd Porsche of Jonathan Palmer and Jan Lammers was fifth, and van der Merwe/Duxbury/Martin gave the Fitzpatrick team sixth spot.

This is Keith Greene's take on the Springbok crew: 'Sarel was a good old boy, very laid back, and all three of them drove very well, very sensibly. They didn't try and do anything fancy. It was a very slippery blah-blah race, and they brought it home; we had the Goodyear wets, which were probably three seconds a lap quicker than the rest.'

Six weeks later the same trio would go to



America's biggest sportscar race, the Daytona 24 Hours, with the Kreepy Krauly March-Porsche and win it. 'I hope that some of my tips at Kyalami rubbed off for Daytona,' adds Greene.

Fitz's decision at the end of the European season to stop driving had been prompted by both Rolf Stommelen's accident in the Moby Dick at Riverside and by his own big accident at Fuji. He and his new wife Sandra, whom he married in 1981, now had a young son, and he told her only after Kyalami that he was quitting. Rolf's death had affected her a lot, hence Fitz putting Boutsen in the car at Mugello and Kyalami to see how he felt about taking on a managerial role.

But first there was the question of the future of John Fitzpatrick Racing. Fitz had growing concerns about Jerry Dominelli's continuing sponsorship, particularly with payments slowing down, and the future was far from secure.

Results

Kyalami (ZA), 10 December 1983

6th Sarel van der Merwe/Graham Duxbury/Tony Martin, 956 102 (no. 16), -20 laps, Q7, Kreepy Krauly, Goodyear

DNF David Hobbs/Thierry Boutsen/Desiré Wilson, 956 110 (no. 11), accident, Q4, JDavid/Carwil, Goodyear

1983 FIA World Endurance Drivers' Championship

1	Jacky Ickx	97
2	Derek Bell	94
3	Jochen Mass	82
4	Stefan Bellof	75
5	Bob Wollek	64
6	Thierry Boutsen	44
7	Jan Lammers	43
8	Jürgen Lässig	42
	Axel Plankenhorn	42
10	Vern Schuppan	40
11	Stefan Johansson	36
12	Hans Heyer	30
13	John Fitzpatrick	29
	David Hobbs	29

1983 FIA European Endurance Championship

1	Bob Wollek	94
2	Derek Bell	88
3	Jacky Ickx	85
4	John Fitzpatrick	74
	Stefan Johansson	74
6	Jochen Mass	70
7	Jürgen Lässig	66
	Axel Plankenhorn	66
9	David Hobbs	54

■ With Kreepy Krauly sponsorship, Sarel van der Merwe, Graham Duxbury and Tony Martin took JFR's 956 102 to sixth place at the 1983 season-ender at Kyalami. *Malcolm Bryan*



Chapter 5

THE 1984 SEASON

In January John Fitzpatrick went to visit Jerry Dominelli, his main sponsor, at his offices in San Diego, California. Dominelli wasn't there — and his staff were hurriedly packing documents. It emerged that his foreign currency futures company had been a front for a massive \$200 million Ponzi pyramid scheme, and people wanted their money back, including the administrators.

'He'd sponsored the team to the tune of \$3 million over two years, and owned half of it,' says John. 'It wasn't long before I heard from the bankruptcy trustees that they wanted me to buy back their 50 per cent. Many of our friends and my drivers had invested in JDavid, and were now facing big losses.'

David Prewitt, who had also invested in the company, sent his wife Valerie down to London to get back their money, but she arrived to find the offices empty.

Dominelli, known in his native San Diego as 'Captain Money', was charged with mail fraud (a quicker way of prosecuting, based on sending fraudulent statements through the post) and income tax evasion, and received a 20-year prison sentence. He served just over 10 years before being released penniless on parole. He died in Chicago in August 2009, aged 68.

It wasn't all bad news, however, recalls Fitz. 'An investors' committee was formed and proceeded to sue JDavid's lawyers, accountants and bankers for negligence, and eventually received around 80 per cent of their original investments.'

Fitz eventually settled with the trustees. 'My lawyer said that Sandra and I were very disillusioned with the United States and were happy to sell 50 per cent for half of what they wanted so we could return to

■ Hobbo in the no. 33 Bandit during the early laps at Le Mans in 1984, turning into the Dunlop Curve with one of the Aston Martin Nimrods in its wake.

Motorsport Images/LAT

THE 1984 SEASON



■ Ready for 1984, JFR team photocall, with regular drivers David Hobbs, Thierry Boutsen, Rupert Keegan and Guy Edwards. Behind them are (from left) Andrew Lindsey, Clive Parker, Steve Charsley, Phil Walters, Dave Scotney, Steve Davey, John Fitzpatrick, Paula, David Prewitt, Stuart Collins, Jim Steggar, Dave Knott, Tony DiGinero, Terry Grey and Robin Baxter.

Courtesy of John Fitzpatrick

England. This included them taking over our San Diego workshop, which we would have had to sell anyway. We still had the cars, and we had a race team to run in Europe. They reluctantly agreed.'

This was all going on against an emerging background of drug-smuggling prevalent in American racing; IMSA had even earned itself the sobriquet of International Marijuana Smuggling Associates. Following Dominelli, father and son John Paul Sr and Jr, who finished second in the 1984 Le Mans 24 Hours in the Preston Henn 956, were indicted in 1985 for importing drugs, and in May 1986 were jailed for 25 and five years respectively. Junior's lawyers even asked the judge if he could delay sentencing as he was due to race in that year's Indy 500; he did not make qualifying.

Then the Whittington brothers, Bill and Don, who had won Le Mans in 1979 with Kremer, were sentenced in 1986 to 15 years and 18 months respectively. Their 1984 IMSA champion Randy Lanier followed: he went into hiding when due to be sentenced and ended up with life imprisonment once he was caught; he was released in 2014. All had been importing marijuana on an

industrial scale, by the hundreds of tons.

For John Fitzpatrick Racing, again timing was everything. Guy Edwards came back with renewed Skoal Bandit sponsorship, again with the *Newsweek* advertising deal, for a planned three-year programme to run two cars in the FIA World Endurance Championship. He and Rupert Keegan would be in one car, David Hobbs and Thierry Boutsen in the other.

'I had also done a deal with United States Tobacco Company for Skoal Bandit to run with John Macdonald's RAM Formula 1 team,' recalls Edwards, 'but John Fitzpatrick Racing, now well-funded, was USTC's lead team, which we launched at the London Hilton in March.

'The package provided value for money: it gave 100 per cent branding on the team, and as always carried the added bonus of *Newsweek* advertising. Although the publication wasn't really on target for USTC's consumers, it would provide another avenue of communication in a Europe ignorant of both the company and its products — Europeans had no tradition in taking tobacco in this way.

'It wasn't always easy, as Fitz had little experience of dealing with a sponsor whose

primary aim was to sell product, not just to go racing for the fun of it.'

Fitz himself would run the team together with David Prewitt, Keith Greene now having moved to Richard Lloyd's GTi Engineering to run the Canon Porsche.

'Keith did a good job for us,' says Fitz, 'but as I had stopped driving and was going to take an active management role, we both knew that we wouldn't be able to work together. But we parted on good terms.'

JFR also planned to compete in the German championship, running cars for Boutsen and Austrian Franz Konrad in selected DRM races.

There was also money from Yokohama, the Japanese tyre manufacturer, which, through its European racing manager Bert Baldwin, had been looking for a front-running WEC team to use its tyres.

There was more opposition this year, as not only the Rothmans squad but Joest New Man, Kremer and Brun were all running two-car teams, and Lancia was back with its improved Martini LC2s, now running on the same Dunlop Denloc tyres as the factory Porsches.

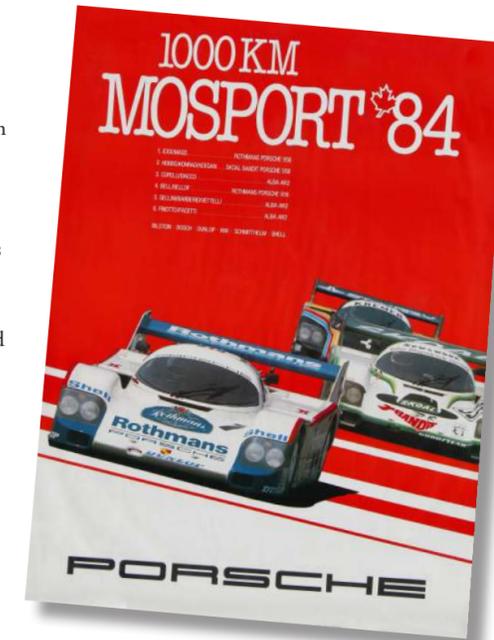
A new series of the 956, limited to just six chassis (956 113 to 956 118), was offered to favoured Porsche customers — single cars for JFR, Kremer, Brun and Joest, and two for Japan's Nova Engineering. JFR added 956 114 to its existing pair of 1983 cars, freeing up one of those to accommodate pay drivers; 956 118 was supplied as a bare chassis to rebuild Nova's 956 108, crashed at Fuji.

These new 956s utilised upgrades developed from the 1983 factory cars: a lighter chassis, lighter steering, revised one-piece underbody, shovel nose and, all importantly, for the first time the Bosch Motronic ECU used by Weissach. This was a fully electronic and integrated ignition and injection system, which allowed a higher compression ratio — which meant more power, better fuel consumption and more progressive throttle response.

'It was light enough to need ballast added to get the weight back up to 850kgs,' Fitz told *Motor Sport*, speaking of the new 956 114. 'It cost us around \$250,000, but at least they didn't charge us for the 40kgs of lead...'

By now, of course, the factory had moved on, and was now fitting titanium suspension parts and experimenting with different noses and rear aero configurations, as well as wind-tunnel testing different underbodies. The factory was always one step ahead of its customers.

Porsche had also reacted to the call from potential American customers for a longer-wheelbase version of the 956 to address IMSA



ANDY
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GTP's blocking of the car, citing safety standards. The lengthened wheelbase placed the driver's feet behind the front axle centre line, as IMSA rules required, and a steel roll cage was added to the aluminium chassis. The first 962, which had another 12cms between front wheel arch and door, appeared in January 1984 at the Daytona 24 Hours in the hands of Mario and Michael Andretti, but the factory would continue to race the 956 in the WEC throughout 1984.

'I went to Daytona to have a really good look at the Andretti car,' remembers Fitz. 'It was the first 962 I had seen. I wasn't driving, but I wanted to see what it was all about.'

■ This works poster issued after the Mosport 1,000Kms exemplifies JFR's status as one of Porsche's leading customer teams.



■ Funding in 1984 from Skoal Bandit, an American tobacco sachet, brought what sponsorship guru Guy Edwards described as '100 per cent branding on the team'.



THE 1984 SEASON

Monza 1,000Kms

23 April 1984, FIA World Endurance Championship, round 1

The 1984 season started with controversy, as the autocratic President of FISA, Jean-Marie Balestre, announced that there would be no 15 per cent fuel reduction for 1984 after all; he had visited Daytona and had been impressed by the way IMSA handled its GTP regulations without fuel restrictions, using a formula balancing capacity with weight.

He imposed what were virtually IMSA regulations on the WEC, with an immediate minimum weight increase to 850kgs, and permitted as many fuel stops as teams wished, although fuel was still restricted to 600 litres. Porsche immediately protested, citing 'a breach of the stability rule of the FISA Sporting Code'.

But it was not economy that caused further fuel controversy at the Monza WEC opener. The organisers' fuel supply, thought to be as low as 92 octane, was blamed for 10 piston failures between one factory and seven customer 956s during the weekend. Monza quickly pointed the finger of blame to the new Bosch Motronic system, which was fitted for the first time to seven of the customer Porsches present, but not all the affected teams were equipped with it.



Whatever the explanation, it was a race that John Fitzpatrick would prefer to forget.

All three JFR cars — 956 102 was running in Italian Deborah cosmetics branding for Renzo Zorzi and former Lancia factory driver Giorgio Francia — had engine failures in qualifying.



■ Before luxury garages, teams had to set up their own encampments; here Dave Knott sorts out gear ratios for 956 114.

Malcolm Bryan

■ The Monza pitlane is crowded as David Hobbs prepares to take out the 956 114 Skoal Bandit for qualifying.

Malcolm Bryan



THE 1984 SEASON



■ David Hobbs (right) and Rupert Keegan (centre) with Joest's Stefan Johansson in the spring sunshine at Monza 1984; none of them would finish this race of attrition.

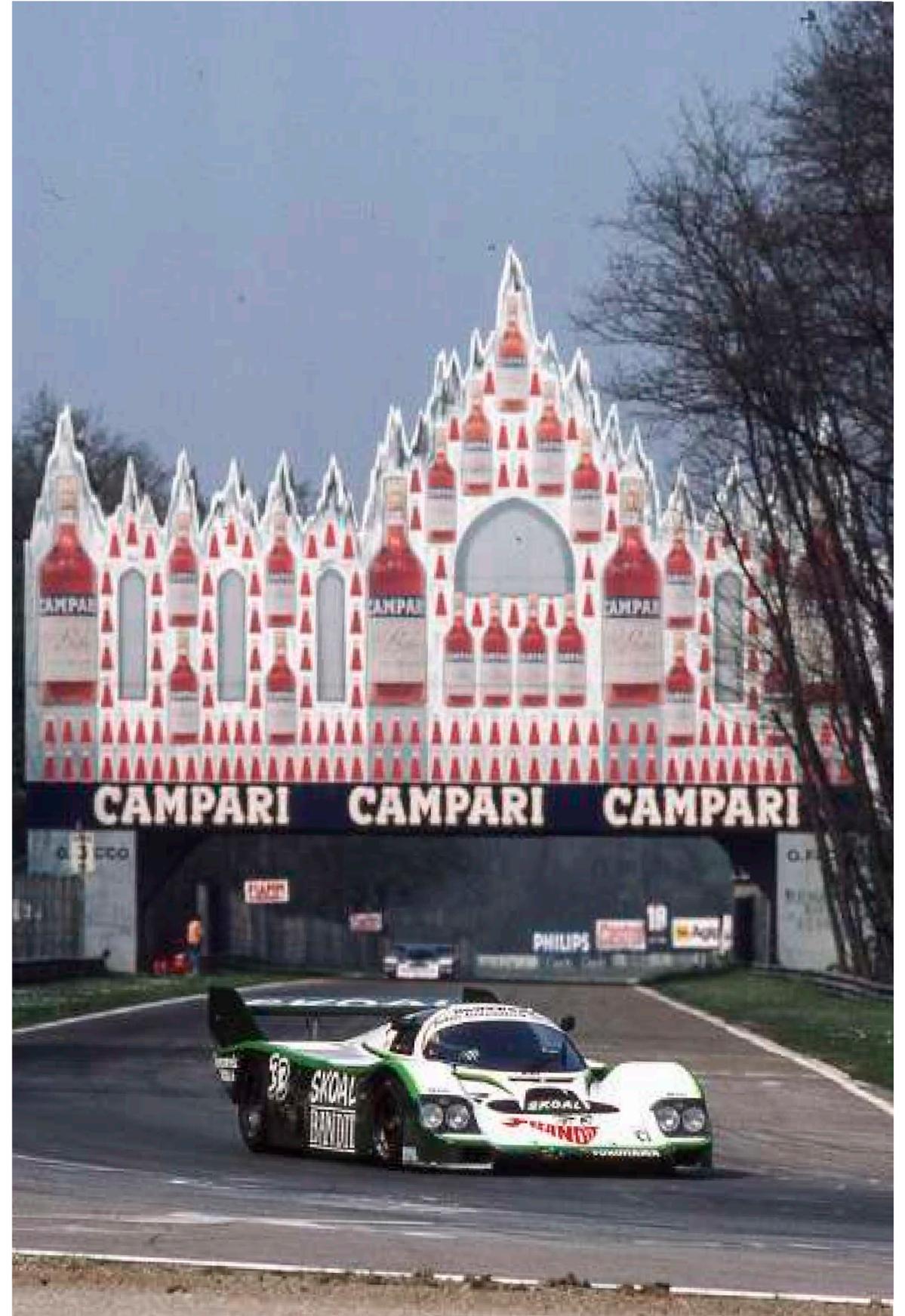
Malcolm Bryan

■ Thierry Boutsen already has his 956 114 Skoal Bandit in fourth place at the start of the 1984 Monza 1,000Kms.

Malcolm Bryan

■ The Cathedral of Speed: Boutsen, sharing with Hobbs, experienced gear-selection problems early in the race and the car dropped out before half distance.

Malcolm Bryan





■ Guy Edwards prepares to take over from Rupert Keegan as the no. 55 956 110 crew pounces to refuel and change wheels in the spring sunshine.

Motorsport Images/LAT



■ Guy Edwards was driving 956 110 at Monza when a brake assembly failure caused a rear wheel to come off.

Malcolm Bryan



■ JFR's 956 102 ran in Deborah Cosmetics livery at Monza for pay drivers Renzo Zorzi and Giorgio Francia, but suffered engine failures in both qualifying and the race.

Motorsport Images/LAT

Thierry Boutsen posted fifth fastest time on a second engine borrowed from the factory, before changing to another for the race. At this time JFR, like most customer teams, was obtaining its usually reliable 24-valve engines direct from Weissach, so had nothing to do with their preparation.

After an agreement between leading teams not to use qualifying tyres, Stefan Bellof took pole from Mauro Baldi's Lancia LC2, while the other Lancia suffered a Speedline wheel breakage that put Riccardo Patrese into a barrier. The repaired (or replaced, suggested some, although spare cars were no longer permitted) Lancia reverted to 1983 wheels and tyres.

Come the race, Stefan Bellof and Derek Bell made the running, despite a mid-race puncture, and led from start to finish, winning from Jacky Ickx and Jochen Mass in a Rothmans Porsche 1-2, with Mauro Baldi/Paolo Barilla third for Lancia.

As for JFR, Zorzi had a second engine failure just 14 laps into the race. The Boutsen/Hobbs entry struggled with gear-change difficulties and expired at half distance with an oil pump failure that seized the gearbox.

That left the Edwards/Keegan Bandit as the sole JFR entry, but Guy went off terminally at the second chicane after a rear brake assembly failure lost the car a rear wheel, leaving it stranded deep in the catch-fencing. Although unhurt, Edwards was starting to consider his safety.

'There was nothing I could do about it,' he said. 'At those speeds any failure puts you off the road, and you're just a passenger. It got me thinking that my luck couldn't last forever.'

Joest too was out with engine failure, Brun's lead car had been crashed, and the Lancia of Patrese (partnered by Bob Wollek this year) had a big pits fire after a turbo failure. Just 14 of the 35 starters finished, only for the cars in first and third places to be disqualified for being 2kgs and 3kgs underweight respectively.

Before the race, Peter Falk had verified at Weissach that both factory cars weighed 855kgs with empty tanks, so he protested on the grounds that the Monza weighbridge was not certificated. It was to be July, long after Le Mans, before an appeal was heard, and Bellof and Bell declared winners; Lancia was given back its third place, even though it had not protested its exclusion.

Results

Monza 1,000Kms (I), 23 April 1984

DNF Rupert Keegan/Guy Edwards, 956 110 (no. 55), brake assembly, Q9, Skoal Bandit, Yokohama

DNF David Hobbs/Thierry Boutsen, 956 114 (no. 33), transmission, Q5, Skoal Bandit, Yokohama

DNF Renzo Zorzi/Giorgio Francia, 956 102 (no. 34), engine, Q12, Deborah, Yokohama



■ Pre-Silverstone, Fitz poses for the camera in his workshop based at the circuit.

Motorsport Images/LAT

■ Yokohama's European racing manager, Bert Baldwin, prepares to check tyre pressures on 956 114; the team used both Yoko and Goodyear in 1984.

Malcolm Bryan

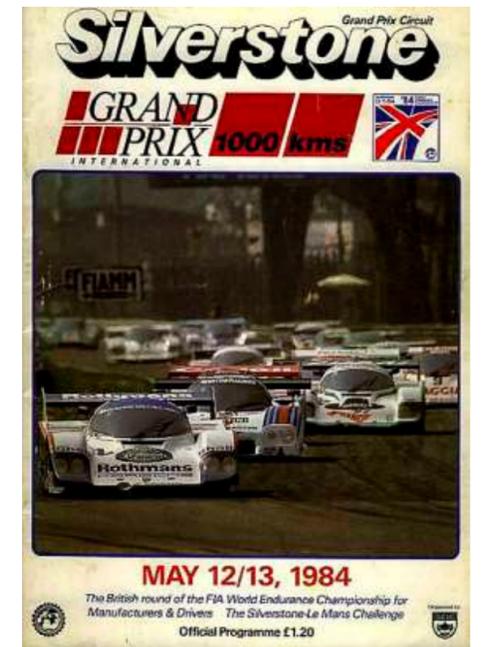
Silverstone 1,000Kms

13 May 1984, FIA World Endurance Championship, round 2

This year, with the new Nürburgring Grand Prix circuit not yet ready, this British race served as the shakedown for Le Mans.

After the Monza fiasco, Silverstone could only be better for JFR, although Hobbo and particularly Boutsen were complaining about the performance of their Yokohamas, which were 2–3 seconds a lap slower than Dunlops. This time Australians Peter Brock and Larry Perkins were the rent-a-car drivers, running as Team Australia, managed by Australian Greg 'PeeWee' Siddle, in preparation for Le Mans. They were on Dunlops, and a pre-race weigh-in showed their car to be 870kgs.

Again there were four 956 engine failures in qualifying, but only for the high-compression (8.5:1) factory cars — perhaps the Monza fuel had not been to blame after all? The front-running customer teams, now joined by Kremer, which



THE 1984 SEASON



■ As Guy Edwards climbs out, Rupert Keegan prepares to get in; they took 956 110 to a creditable third place at Silverstone behind the factory and Joest.
Motorsport Images/LAT

had missed Monza on financial grounds, quickly remapped injection systems to reduce the chance of it happening to them. 'We had an ongoing battle with Porsche over the cost of the Monza rebuilds,' recalls Fitz. 'We blamed the factory for the failures; we never did pay.'

This all played into the hands of Lancia, who had abandoned the gentlemen's agreement about not using qualifying tyres, and Patrese/Wollek duly annexed pole position from Ickx/Mass. In the JFR ranks, Hobbs qualified fifth, Edwards 10th and Perkins 11th.

Neither of the Rothmans Porsches had been set up properly, the factory team having been too busy changing engines, and in Bell's words both were 'evil-handling' in the race and slowly dropped back. When the lead Lancia developed a misfire (soon after both of its sister cars were similarly afflicted), Jonathan Palmer moved to the front in the GTi Engineering Canon 956, as Bellof had to stop to secure a loose front wheel, one of four among 956 teams during the race.

Palmer was forced to surrender the lead when he had to stop for a split oil pipe to be replaced; owing to the pipe's inaccessible location, with bodywork having to be removed to get to it, 20

minutes were lost. This elevated Hobbo to second but then the Monza gear-selection gremlin — blamed on a slipping shift linkage — struck again, and as he pitted for 22 minutes of repairs the sister Edwards/Keegan Bandit took over the runner-up placing.

Edwards/Keegan spent much of the race fending off the New Man Joest car of Klaus Ludwig/Henri Pescarolo, but then Pesca and Keegan collided at Woodcote, Rupert spinning and immediately pitting with a broken wheel. The JFR car resumed in fourth place, Brun's Oscar Larrauri having passed as well, but the Argentine driver's engine blew with 45 minutes remaining and Edwards/Keegan returned to third.

Mass/Ickx won by two laps from Ludwig/Pescarolo and Edwards/Keegan, while the second Rothmans Porsche languished in 10th place after suffering an oil cooler split. All three JFR cars made it to the chequered flag: after the linkage repairs Hobbs/Boutsen came back to finish eighth and the Team Australia car was classified 21st, having lost 60 laps in the pits for prolonged suspension repairs.

With the Team Australia assault costing a rumoured A\$400,000, Perkins and 'Peter Perfect'

■ Silverstone neighbours: GTi Engineering and JFR fight it out on the British Grand Prix circuit's wide vistas.
Malcolm Bryan



■ Hobbo rides the Copse kerbs in 956 114 on the way to eighth place after a stop to repair a gearshift problem.
Motorsport Images/LAT





■ Team Australia hired 956 102 for Larry Perkins and Peter Brock in preparation for Le Mans but a suspension breakage caused a prolonged delay.

Motorsport Images/LAT

needed as much track time as they could prior to the big one in June. Australian journalist Peter McKay wrote: 'Perkins was less than amused to be told that a lower wishbone part which had sheared was a known weak point. He pointedly asked JFR why he hadn't been told.'

'That suspension breakage came after we had switched to an independent fabricator, because the factory parts were so expensive,' says Fitz. 'We ran the parts for the first time on the Australian car at Silverstone, and they collapsed. Needless to say we quickly went back to using factory parts.'

David Prewitt particularly remembers this race: 'I had a nice letter from Guy afterwards, thanking me for running such a good car to third place. That was very special.'

Following Silverstone, 956 110 was sold, to Paul Vestey, so that JFR could buy a 962.

'It was the best one to sell,' explains Fitz. 'It was marketable because it had won us the two

races, Brands Hatch and Elkhart Lake, and given us a second at Mugello.

'In those days you couldn't afford to be sentimental, and the Brands Hatch and Elkhart Lake CanAm wins didn't seem such a big deal at the time. We were running to a budget, we no longer had the Dominelli money, and we needed the money to buy 962 105 — simple as that.'

Results

**Silverstone 1,000Kms (GB),
13 May 1984**

3rd Rupert Keegan/Guy Edwards, 956 110 (no. 55), -5 laps, Q10, Skoal Bandit, Yokohama
8th David Hobbs/Thierry Boutsen, 956 114 (no. 33), -13 laps, Q5, Skoal Bandit, Yokohama
21st Larry Perkins/Peter Brock, 956 102 (no. 34), -50 laps, Q11, Team Australia/Bob Jane T-Marts, Dunlop

Le Mans 24 Hours

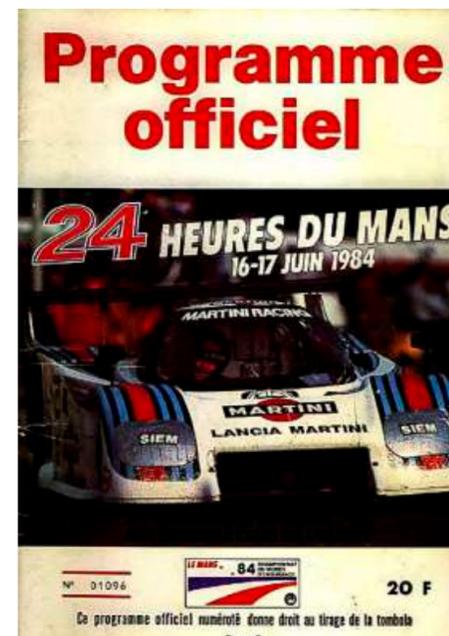
16-17 June 1984, FIA World Endurance Championship, round 3

John Fitzpatrick Racing ran three cars at Le Mans — its two remaining 956s, and its latest addition, the first 962 to be seen in Group C trim. Fitz had bought a 'hybrid', purchasing chassis 962 105 to which Kundensport had grafted on an 8.5:1 compression 956 engine and rear end, anticipating the 1985 rules.

As 956 chassis construction had by now stopped, the new car had to have a 962 monocoque, and was effectively the first 962C to be seen (although not called as such), pre-empting the factory cars by nine months. An IMSA GTP 962, the first to be seen in Europe, was also in the field as American Preston Henn, whom JFR had assisted the previous year, entered his Swap Shop 962 104.

There were no factory Porsches at Le Mans after Weissach's announcement in March that it would boycott the race in protest against FISA's change of mind about the agreed fuel allowance reduction. That left the door open for Lancia, who despite joining Porsche in protesting, did nothing further about it.

Lancia came to La Sarthe better prepared than at any time in the previous three years, having tested for 24 hours after Silverstone, beefing up the transmission and improving lubrication to the KKK turbochargers. It later transpired that its two Martini cars were running 3-litre engines, backed by a third 2.6-litre Malardeau-sponsored factory entry, and Wollek's



LC2 was the fastest car in France that week.

Guy Edwards, Rupert Keegan and Brazilian Roberto Moreno were entrusted with the new Skoal Bandit 962. David Hobbs, Sarel van der Merwe and French Formula 1 driver Philippe Streiff had charge of 956 114; Thierry Boutsen was absent because his Formula 1 contract with Arrows required him to be at the Canadian Grand Prix. Larry Perkins and Peter Brock, who were among a total of seven Aussies driving at Le Mans this year, settled for a two-man crew for the Team Australia/Bob Jane T-Marts 956 102.

■ Phil Walters and Tony DiGinero carry out a routine engine change for 956 114 on the Friday of Le Mans; the car would go on to finish a fine third in the hands of David Hobbs, Sarel van der Merwe and guest driver Philippe Streiff.

*Getty Images/
Bob Harmeyer*



■ **Next pages**

Assembled for the pace lap before the rolling start, two factory Lancias occupy the front row and two Joest New Man Porsches the second, with the fastest of JFR's three cars — the Hobbs/Merwe/Streiff Skoal Bandit car — sitting on the third row alongside the Richard Lloyd 956.

*Getty Images/
Frédéric Reglain*



THE 1984 SEASON



■ The no. 33 JFR car sweeps through the Esses during the intense heat that made the first stages of the 1984 Le Mans 24 Hours unusually tough for the drivers.
Motorsport Images/LAT

The Perkins/Brock bid was not without pre-race dramas, as Peter McKay explained: 'Delivery of Team Australia's only engine for Le Mans was delayed, and not secured until Perkins and mechanic Neil Burns made a breathless dash in old VW Kombi to Weissach. The cost of the engine was around \$75,000 but plans to have a spare fell in a heap because of Porsche's inability to supply.'

'So the lone powerplant arrived back at JFR's Silverstone workshop just two days before leaving for Le Mans, and team manager Greg 'PeeWee' Siddle and key members of the Holden Dealer Team, who had been drafted in for Le Mans, swung into action, installing the engine and its complicated plumbing. By now it was Saturday evening, and the team was due to leave for France on Sunday.'

'What followed will ensure that the serene little English village of Dadford won't forget their outrage as Perkins, at the wheel of the waist-high orange flash with menacing exhaust growl, trailed

Brock's road-going Opel Kadett GTE up and down the narrow lanes to run the motor in at 200km/h (120mph).'

Even without the Rothmans cars, Le Mans 1984 had an excellent entry by any standards. In addition to the three JFR cars, there were three Joest New Man Porsches (one of them owned by Dieter Schornstein), two Richard Lloyd 956s (one of them a camera car), and multiple entries from Brun, Kremer, Obermaier and Henn. To the joy of the huge British crowd, there were also ex-factory cars from Aston Martin (the Viscount Downer-run Nimrods) and Jaguar (the beautiful American Group 44 XJR-5s). The Japanese invasion was spearheaded by Mazdaspeed with its ear-splitting rotary-engined 727s.

Lancia, unchallenged by Weissach, annexed the front row of the 54-car grid, Joest claimed row two, and the JFR 956 of Hobbs shared row three (after an engine change due to a camshaft issue) with the Palmer/Lammers Canon Porsche. Edwards and Keegan qualified only 16th, finding



■ JFR's new 962 had its first race at Le Mans, in Skoal Bandit colours driven by Guy Edwards, Rupert Keegan and Roberto Moreno.
*Getty Images/
Bob Harmeyer*

■ Le Mans proved to be a nightmare for the no. 55 Skoal Bandit 962: on Saturday evening Keegan crashed twice in the space of two corners after going off on someone else's oil.
Motorsport Images/LAT





■ Hobbo hands over to Sarel van der Merwe as the JFR crew refuels and checks tyres and brakes; the South African had won the Daytona 24 Hours earlier in the year.
Motorsport Images/LAT

■ The magic of Le Mans: the Hobbs/Merwe/Streiff JFR car exits Mulsanne corner in the evening sun, the signalling pits to the right, as it starts the run down to Indianapolis.
Motorsport Images/LAT

that the shorter, high-downforce nose of their 962 gave stability problems at high speed, making it more difficult to drive than the better-balanced, shorter-wheelbase 956.

There were a couple of incidents between the JFR and Brun 956s during practice, and the Swiss team suffered damaged nose sections as a result. For a short time rivalry was forgotten as the Warsteiner Brun car wore a Skoal Bandit nose to check the fit, should it be needed during the race; that brief interlude provided a modeller's dream, a Skoalsteiner Porsche! As it turned out, the loaned nose was not needed, and the two cars ran to third and fourth places.

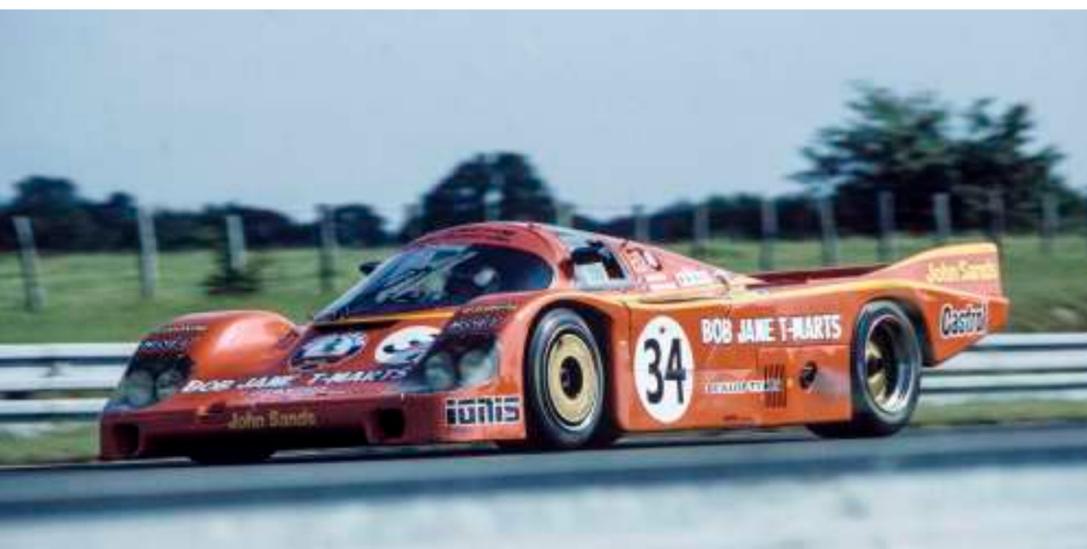
Lancia should have had it all their own way, but during the opening laps of one of the hottest Le Mans on record they were led by Frenchman Roger Dorchy's 'kamikaze' WM Peugeot. The home team had concentrated on top speed rather than handling, and indeed the WM led until it turned left, instead of right, into Mulsanne

corner on its fourth tour, and its moment of glory was over.

The Lancia and the Porsche teams then went hard at it for the rest of the first hour, Pescarolo having to stop early with low fuel pressure. 'But David Hobbs was the real winner of the opening stint,' recalls János Wimpffen in his book *Time and Two Seats*. 'His 956 had started the race on unbedded brake pads, and after a cautious few laps he started by rocketing back from 18th to sixth.'

Kremer's new Kenwood 956, in the hands of 1983 winner Vern Schuppan with fellow Aussie Alan Jones and France's Jean-Pierre Jarier, soon passed the Lancias. It was to lead for the first five hours, from Bob Wollek's Lancia and the Hobbs Skoal Bandit 956, before tangling with Dorchy's now-rebuilt WM and heading to the pits for a front-end rebuild itself.

The Palmer/Lammers GTi Engineering Porsche had been in the leading group, but broke its rear



■ Team Australia refuels 956 102 in the sweltering heat, Larry Perkins having just handed over the JFR car to Peter Brock.

Motorsport Images/LAT

■ JFR's Australian entry was eliminated when Larry Perkins crashed at the Esses in the early hours of Sunday after misjudging a pass of some backmarkers.

Motorsport Images/LAT



■ The no. 33 JFR car made it through the night, occasionally leading the race, only to hit a setback soon after dawn when the engine began to misfire.

Motorsport Images/Sutton

suspension, just as at Monza, as well as losing its rear bodywork somewhere out in the dark countryside, and went out during the night after lengthy repairs.

On lap 72 Keegan in the Skoal Bandit 962 was one of a number of drivers, including Stefan Johansson in the Joest Porsche, who crashed at Indianapolis on dropped oil. The impact punched a front suspension pick-up on the JFR car into the chassis.

'There was a lot of oil down on the road,' says Rupert. 'I crashed, then got the car going again, but my seat belts were off. I braked for the next right-hander, Arnage, but the car turned straight into the wall. I bounced out of the seat and found myself sitting on the passenger side!' He eventually managed to get the car back to the pits, only to retire.

'It had all been looking very good,' rues Edwards. 'Here was our chance to win Le Mans. The eventual winners, Joest Racing, were two laps behind us at the time.'

As for the Team Australia car, efficiently managed by Siddle, Perkins started the race but stopped early suffering from heat exhaustion, despite wearing a refrigerated 'cool cap'. Then, with Brock aboard, the car shed a wheel.

'I was in the Porsche Curves when the wheel came adrift,' recalled Peter. 'I thought, gee, this feels very dodgy under braking. Very heavy, and lots of vibration. Next thing, there's a thump and I'm on three wheels. I just kept my boot in, accelerated past the wayward wheel, and drove very gently back to the pits.' Repairs cost 28 minutes.

Trying to make up for the lost time, the

THE 1984 SEASON



■ After the mechanics found that a dropped valve was causing the Hobbs/Merwe/Streiff car to misfire, one cylinder was disabled to allow it to continue, albeit down on power and with a flat-sounding exhaust. Motorsport Images/Sutton

■ Despite its engine trouble, 956 114 secured third place at the finish in front of 300,000 spectators; part of the nose had to be taped up after collecting Aston Martin Nimrod debris at the Mulsanne kink at quarter distance.

Malcolm Bryan

Aussie drivers at one stage ran fifth but then the car broke a rear rocker arm in the Mulsanne kink, almost putting Perkins off the road at 350km/h (215mph). 'Spectators watching from the pit balconies applauded the Team Australia and JFR mechanics whose fast actions got the car mobile again, this time in just 14 minutes,' reported McKay.

Early on Sunday morning, on lap 146, Perkins went into the catch-fencing at the Esses, and this time the Aussies' race really was over. 'I'm sorry Pete,' Larry told his team-mate on his return to the pits. 'I threw away five months' work in three seconds.'

Perkins later explained what happened: 'I came up fast on three slower cars, one went to overtake another and I went for the third lane. I didn't allow enough room and ran off the road. I wasn't tired so I don't have a good excuse. I should have recognised a dangerous situation and backed off, but I was trying to keep up a good pace.'

The third JFR car of Hobbs/Streiff/van der Merwe was running strongly in third place when the two factory Aston Martin Nimrods of John Sheldon and Drake Olson crashed out at

350km/h (215mph) on the Mulsanne shortly after quarter distance. Dentist Sheldon escaped with burns, although a marshal was killed by debris, which Olson then hit. That brought out the safety car for an hour, as wreckage was cleared and the barriers rebuilt, causing the field to bunch up behind the two Lancias.

Streiff in 956 114 ran over some of the debris, damaging not only the nose and suspension, but also punching a hole in the floor behind the pedal box. Despite this, by nightfall Hobbo was out in front, having taken the lead when the fastest Lancia, which had posted 137 laps in command, had a suspension breakage. The Italian mechanics fixed this in only four minutes, but it was long enough to drop the car to third place.

The lead changed several times between the Bandit and the Joest cars after the Lancias stumbled, the Barilla/Heyer/Baldi car, which had led for 29 laps, slowed by gearbox trouble before going out with engine failure. Wollek then lost a further 50 minutes when fifth gear went AWOL, and dropped to eighth place.

Now it was the surviving JFR car's turn to hit trouble: 956 114 developed a misfire, which



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Our damaged engine lasted until 6am on Sunday before it gave up the ghost, and for the next 10 hours we drove flat out on five cylinders – that’s how strong those engines were. Fitz was furious. We should have won. 📌

Le Mans may be the shortest night of the year, but Hobbo makes sure he catches up on his sleep between 230mph stints.

Malcolm Bryan

neither black box nor spark-plug change could rectify; eventually the cause was diagnosed as a dropped valve.

Hobbo takes up the story: ‘We put in a new engine after qualifying, as you did for the race, and I went out in the morning warm-up and had the throttle stick wide open as I arrived at Dunlop. So I had to do a whole lap on the ignition key, came in and they found a piece of paper towelling stuck in the plenum chamber inlet vent. Obviously it had been left in there by a mechanic.

‘I surmised that because the butterflies were wide open, the fuel wasn’t in sync and had burned the valve. But our damaged engine lasted until 6am on Sunday before it gave up the ghost, and for the next 10 hours we drove flat out on five cylinders — that’s how strong those engines were. Fitz was furious. We should have won.’

With their five-cylinder engine, Hobbs & Co continued in third place. The leader now was the Pescarolo/Ludwig New Man Porsche, despite a

rear suspension failure that the Joest crew fixed in just under five minutes. Schuppan’s Kremer car was second at this point, but that too blew a piston, and would sit in the pits until the closing minutes, before chuntering round to claim sixth place.

Attrition was high in the extreme heat of 1984 and by noon on Sunday the track was beginning to look a little empty, with just 21 cars still circulating. But there would be no more dramas and the Joest New Man 956 took the win — Pescarolo’s fourth and Ludwig’s second.

Preston Henn’s 956, in which John Paul Jr played a starring role driving two-handed with Jean Rondeau, finished second, two laps down, beating Hobbs, van der Merwe and Streiff, who came home to a well-earned third place, still running roughly and nine laps down, delighting Skoal Bandit. The French media was quick to note, ‘David Hobbs was already racing when Streiff was a seven-year-old in shorts!’

Hobbo recalls: ‘Sarel was really quick, but



Philippe not so quick, I don’t know why. Perhaps because he’d been in Formula 1 he was used to complaining and getting changes made that he wanted. He’d be moaning about the 956, but Sarel and I would look at each other and say to him, ‘Just drive it.’ But he was a nice enough chap.

‘Sarel and I got on extremely well, and we were very evenly matched as drivers. He had come to us off the back of his Daytona 24 Hours win in January in the March. We went on to drive the Rick Hendricks Goodwrench Corvette together in IMSA GTP.’

Paul Vestey’s 956 110, purchased from JFR before Le Mans, was run by Charles Ivey, resplendent in black-and-silver Rollei camera colours, for Chris Craft, Alain de Cadenet and Allan Grice. It was up to 11th place when the engine failed at 9.15am on Sunday morning out at Mulsanne corner; it was 956 110’s last contemporary race, afterwards joining automobile enthusiast Jamey Mazzotta’s private collection in California. This is the car that eventually came

back to Britain through Henry Pearman and is featured in the special photography in this book, along with 956 114.

The factory Porsches may not have been at Le Mans, but its customers filled the top seven places and saw off a Lancia onslaught, and factory Aston Martins and Jaguars too. It was Porsche’s ninth Le Mans victory — by default, perhaps — but Weissach was happy to take it however it came.

The 1984 Le Mans was 956 110’s last race, now owned by Paul Vestey and run in Rollei colours for Alain de Cadenet, Chris Craft and Allan Grice; the engine gave up on Sunday morning.

Motorsport Images/LAT

Results

Le Mans 24 Hours (F), 16-17 June 1984

3rd David Hobbs/Sarel van der Merwe/Philippe Streiff, 956 114 (no. 33), -9 laps, Q6, Skoal Bandit, Yokohama

DNF Rupert Keegan/Guy Edwards/Roberto Moreno, 962 105 (no. 55), crash, Q16, Skoal Bandit/Newsweek, Yokohama

DNF Larry Perkins/Peter Brock, 956 102 (no. 34), crash, Q15, Team Australia/Bob Jane T-Marts, Dunlop

Norising

1 July 1984, 200 Meilen von Nürnberg and Norising Trophäe

The first Sunday of July was the 200 Meilen, the first round of the Deutsche Rennsport Meisterschaft at the Norising, around Hitler's Nazi rally stadium in Nürnberg. JFR sent two cars: 956 114 was for Thierry Boutsen, entered in Sachs colours (the Skoal Bandit contract was for the WEC only), and 956 102 was hired by Austrian Franz Konrad, who brought his Nigrin car-care sponsorship.

Both cars were on Goodyear tyres, as Yokohama's deal was confined to the WEC. 'It was a good opportunity to see how the Goodyears performed, as our drivers were not happy with the Yokohamas,' noted Fitz.

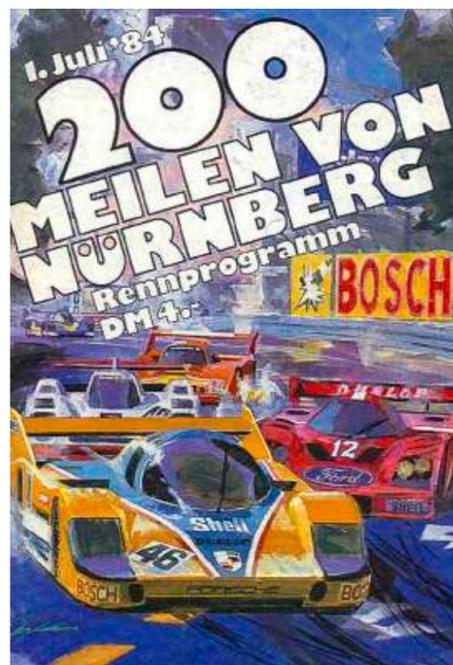
For the feature race in the morning Boutsen started sixth on the 15-car grid and won by 3.5 seconds after an hour-long fight with Kremer's Manfred Winkelhock and Brun's Stefan Bellof. Thierry recalled it as one of the hardest races he had experienced: 'There was no relief from pressure from start to finish.'

Konrad, who qualified two places behind Boutsen, fell by the wayside near the end when 956 102 ran out of fuel but was still classified ninth — helpful when prize money was paid to the top 10. Notably, all four 1984 European 956s (from JFR, Kremer, Joest and Brun) were among the 10 956s present.

The afternoon's non-championship Trophäe

■ For the second of two races at the Norising, the Trophäe event, Thierry Boutsen and Franz Konrad line up together on the fourth row of the grid, both 956 114 (Sachs) and 956 102 (Nigrin) in completely different livery from their Le Mans outings two weeks earlier.

Karl Jennings



race also lasted for one hour, but with a bigger entry. Boutsen qualified seventh with Konrad again eighth, but both cars were eliminated: the Sachs entry broke a wheel mid-race, forcing Boutsen's retirement, while Konrad went out after colliding with Klaus Ludwig's Zakspeed Ford C100 when it spun. Winkelhock was the winner from Jonathan Palmer's Canon Porsche, with Bellof again third.

Results

Norising (D), 1 July 1984

200 Meilen von Nürnberg

1st Thierry Boutsen, 956 114 (no. 34), Q6, Sachs, Goodyear

9th Franz Konrad, 956 102 (no. 33), out of fuel, Q8, Sachs/Nigrin, Goodyear

Norising Trophäe

DNF Thierry Boutsen, 956 114 (no. 34), broken wheel rim, Q7, Sachs, Goodyear

DNF Franz Konrad, 956 102 (no. 33), collision, Q8, Sachs/Nigrin, Goodyear



Nürburgring 1,000Kms

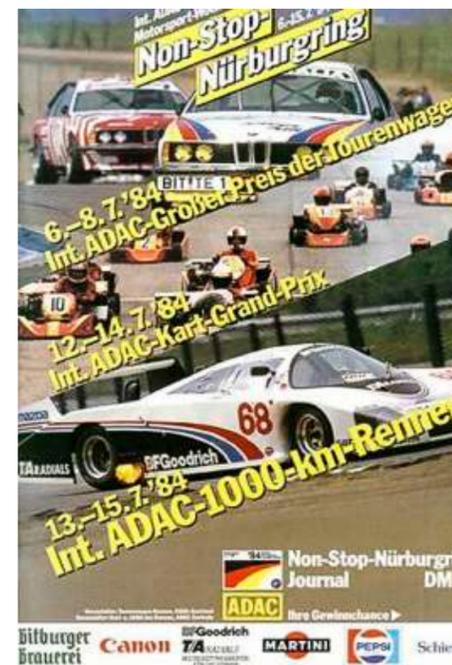
15 July 1984, FIA World Endurance Championship, round 4

Although the Yokohama tyre contract had helped to fund JFR's Group C campaign, the Japanese tyres were still being outperformed by Dunlop and Goodyear by up to three seconds per lap. In qualifying for the Nürburgring 1,000Kms, which took place on the 4.5kms (2.8 miles) Neue Grand-Prix-Strecke, a shadow of the fabled Nordschleife, Boutsen was unable to better 10th spot.

Fitz bought a set of Goodyears for Thierry to try in the final unofficial session, after qualifying. 'We were doing so badly, I took the decision to buy them to see if they worked better,' explains Fitz. 'I had been given an ultimatum by David and Thierry, that if they had to stay on Yokohama tyres, they weren't going to start, so I didn't have any option.'

With the new rubber on 956 114, the Belgian immediately improved by three seconds, setting the fastest lap of the weekend, quicker even than the factory cars.

After Fitz sat down at dinner that night, Yokohama's Bert Baldwin approached him, extremely upset by the decision to run the no. 33 car on Goodyears for the race. 'I told him that I was enacting the performance clause in the contract; Bert was in no position to argue, and the proof of our claim that the Goodyears were superior came in the race when Thierry was leading by 90 seconds at one stage.'



Bellof claimed pole at the head of a factory 1-2, with Brun and GTi Engineering on the second row. Behind them were the factory Lancias and the rest of the customer Porsches. A notable new name was Ayrton Senna, contesting his first (and only) sportscar race with Henri Pescarolo and Stefan Johansson in 956 104 (sister car of Joest's Le Mans-winning (956 117), which was ninth on the grid, alongside the Boutsen/Hobbs

■ Formation flying by the Bandits at a wet Nürburgring: Boutsen's no. 33 was on superior Goodyear tyres for this race and it made a big difference.

Motorsport Images/LAT



THE 1984 SEASON

car. Edwards/Keegan qualified 962 105 14th — but they were stuck with the Yokohamas. Franz Konrad in 956 102 qualified 13th but did not start the race.

Bellof led before Hans Stuck's Brun car went ahead, followed by Jonathan Palmer and then Boutsen, who, relishing his new tyres, had quickly disposed of the Lancias. The lead was to change several times as teams hit problems: delays changing brake pads for Bellof's Rothmans Porsche and for GTI, a pit fire for Lancia, and a crash for Stuck when he collided with a C2 Alba. And then, as the inevitable Eifel rain arrived, the Goodyear wets came into their own.

Boutsen inherited the lead, but only by default, as a problem with the circuit's pumped fuel supply meant that he could take on only 65 of the 100 litres. 'Like Le Mans, we had to take the organisers' fuel,' explains David Prewitt. 'It was delivered through normal filling station pumps: you could even see the cash counter going around along with the litres being delivered! Just as Thierry came in there was an electrical failure for a lot of the pits, ours included. They did get the power back on, but by then Hobbo had already returned to the track.'

The Briton rejoined ahead of the pack, but JFR was aware that the car would need an extra fuel stop late in the race. The lead increased to 90 seconds after Bellof had a Denloc wheel jam at a tyre change. But when the Skoal Bandit came in for its penultimate pit stop, the engine refused to fire up, and Bellof swept past into the lead.

Boutsen eventually got it started, and gave

chase, but now he had a brake problem, and in any case he was approaching his maximum four-hour driving time; he handed back to Hobbo, who took on the missing 35 litres before rejoining just three seconds behind Bellof in the Rothmans car.

'Hobbo was about to make a last-ditch attempt to take the lead from *the* sportscar driver of the moment, when Angelo Pallavicini moved off line in an old 930,' noted János Wimpffen. 'It bent the 956 enough (a turbocharger was knocked off) that he do could little else than watch Bellof disappear.'

Hobbs lists the race as one his two biggest disappointments. 'We led most of the way, but then we got bugged up by the pit fuel pump. Then we had terrible brake trouble; when Thierry got out he told me the brakes were pretty shot. I found they were completely shot — there was a lot of foot-pumping going on.'

'When I was going downhill to the bottom Dunlop hairpin, I could see the Rothmans car going up the other side, so I knew we were nearly a lap ahead. Everything was just fine; we had the Goodyear tyres again, and we were running a differential. Those 956s came without diffs, what the Americans call a spool, a locked rear axle, which Mark Donohue had developed for the 917/30 CanAm. But we had put in a Weismann [Salisbury in Europe] diff after I spoke to Fitz about it, because we thought it was going to rain, and a diff would make the car much easier to handle. So that too gave us an advantage over the factory cars.'

'But the bad thing was the fuel. The pit pump

stopping working because of the pitlane electrical failure, and I'm sat in the car while the crew are hitting it like a vending machine, hoping it's going to work. Fitz said I should go off and do another couple of laps, but an extra stop could have been the kiss of death. That's why we lost the race.'

Bellof's winning margin after six hours — the race not making the full 1,000Kms because of the rain — was just 15 seconds over Hobbs, after one of the best races of the season. Had it not been for the refuelling glitch, which was no fault of the team, Hobbs and Boutsen might well have won.

Lancia salvaged third place, one lap down, for Alessandro Nannini and Paolo Barilla, struggling with a faulty ECU misfire. The second Skoal Bandit finished 11th, three places behind Senna's car.

'It was a great race, and we could have won but for the refuelling problem,' recalls Fitz. 'It was a turning point for us: we invoked the Yokohama contract performance clause, and we would be on Goodyear from then on.'

Guy Edwards's take on it was somewhat different. 'The Nürburgring was a non-event for us, as we struggled home to 11th place in a wet race on uncompetitive Yokohama tyres.'

This would mark Lancia's final WEC Makes appearance of the season, as the Italian team was not scheduled to race at Mosport Park or Fuji; Porsche AG had, in any case, already claimed its second successive Makes title with four wins.



Results

Nürburgring 1,000Kms (D), 15 July 1984

2nd David Hobbs/Thierry Boutsen, 956 114 (no. 33), -15 seconds, Q10, Skoal Bandit, Goodyear

11th Rupert Keegan/Guy Edwards, 962 105 (no. 55), -14 laps, Q14, Skoal Bandit, Yokohama

DNS Franz Konrad/David Hobbs, 956 102 (no. 34), Q13, Skoal Bandit, Yokohama

■ Even Bitburger 'Eifel champagne' can't make up for the disappointment after a race that Boutsen and Hobbo should have won but for two pit-stop hitches.

Motorsport Images/LAT

■ While the sister car changed to Goodyear tyres, Keegan/Edwards were stuck with Yokohamas, which harmed their race.

Malcolm Bryan



Diepholz

22 July 1984, Deutsche Rennsport Meisterschaft, round 3

A week later, still in Germany, JFR ran just one car in the third round of the Deutsche Rennsport Meisterschaft at Diepholtz, the fast Luftwaffe airfield circuit near Osnabrück, taking 956 102, which Franz Konrad had qualified but not raced at the Nürburgring the previous weekend.

Konrad was again the pay driver, bringing with him Nigrin and Sachs sponsorship, and after qualifying third, he chased the Joest New Man entry of Jochen Mass throughout the one-hour sprint, finishing second, 4.8 seconds behind. Third was Bavarian Prince Leopold von Bayern in the Warsteiner Kremer Porsche.

Result

Diepholz (D), 22 July 1984

2nd Franz Konrad, 956 102 (no. 33), -4.8 seconds, Q3, Nigrin/Sachs, Goodyear



Brands Hatch 1,000Kms

29 July 1984, FIA World Endurance Championship, round 5

■ Belting through Stirling's during practice for the Brands Hatch 1,000Kms, Thierry Boutsen shakes down 956 114 in case it should be required for duty. It was not, but his own 956 102 collided with Jochen Mass's factory car in the race, so he jumped into 962 105 to finish third with Edwards and Keegan.

John Brooks

It was now back to Brands Hatch, where Fitz and Derek Warwick had beaten the factory Porsches and Lancias a year earlier; again it was a WEC Drivers-only round, but with second and third places at the Nürburgring and Le Mans, Hobbo and Boutsen were not yet out of the title hunt. All three JFR cars were now on Goodyears, the tyres that had helped the team to the win here in 1983.

Boutsen was also in the running for the Deutsche Rennsport Meisterschaft title; Brands Hatch, for some obscure reason, was a round of that too despite being in Britain, so the Belgian had double reason for a good finish. He was lying third to Bellof and Mass after his Norisring win and Nürburgring second place, although he had missed Diepholz, where Mass won.

Lancia brought two cars, again with 3-litre engines, but the factory Porsche squad was absent. This race was not on their schedule and in any



■ Guy Edwards, identifiable by the JFR sponsor's identity on his helmet, steers the third-placed 962 105 through Paddock Hill Bend at Brands Hatch during his last race for Skoal Bandit.
John Brooks

■ Thierry Boutsen brakes 956 102 into Druids hairpin before he and Mass collided, resulting in a long delay for repairs.
Motorsport Images/LAT





■ Owing to the damage incurred on his no. 33 956, Boutsen joined Edwards and Keegan in the no. 55 962 105; here Fitz briefs Thierry as Guy hops out.

Malcolm Bryan

case Canada's WEC round at Mosport Park was only seven days away — so Drivers' title contenders Bellof and Mass were forced to find other seats. Bellof joined Harald Grohs in the Brun 956 while Mass paired with Henri Pescarolo in the Le Mans-winning Joest 956, now in Blaupunkt colours.

These two Porsches, along with the GTi Engineering Canon 956, now running a big front wing for extra downforce, set the pace in qualifying, Jonathan Palmer taking pole for GTi. The Skoal Bandit cars qualified fifth and sixth, Hobbs in 956 102 (the car now weighed 875kgs) and Keegan in the 962 105 hybrid used at Le Mans (859kgs); although 956 114 was briefly run as a T-car, it was ready for air-freighting to Canada on Monday morning along with the 962.

Palmer and Lammers made the race their own, leading from start to finish, while Mass moved the Joest car into second ahead of Bellof. Then he and Boutsen collided, both losing considerable time in repairs, and Boutsen — chasing DRM points — jumped into the Keegan/Edwards car, which was by now running third, after Barilla had crashed out the Lancia he shared with Bob Wollek.

Boutsen closed on Pesca only to have fuel-pressure problems in the closing laps, and had to be content with third in the Skoal Bandit 962, but at least he had another podium. Edwards

finished both third and sixth, Guy having joined Hobbo in the 956 during the driver switch. They recovered from that car's delay to finish sixth, although 27 laps down on the runaway Canon car.

It was to be Edwards's final race for Skoal Bandit, although not for JFR. 'At this stage, although mentally and physically low from a continuing virus, I had enough energy and time to make a career change. I had only ever raced because I enjoyed it totally. Without that enjoyment, there was no point in hanging around, so I quit there and then. I had ended my career driving a car that was tops in its day with a "frame" result, as we had finished third.'

Guy would go on to secure further major sponsorship deals; among them, Silk Cut Jaguar was looming.

Results

Brands Hatch 1,000Kms (GB), 29 July 1984

3rd Thierry Boutsen/Rupert Keegan/Guy Edwards, 962 105 (no. 55), -4 laps, Q7, Skoal Bandit, Goodyear

6th David Hobbs/Thierry Boutsen/Guy Edwards, 956 102 (no. 33), -16 laps, Q5, Skoal Bandit, Goodyear

T-car 956 114 (no. 34)

Mosport 1,000Kms

5 August 1984, FIA World Endurance Championship, round 6

This WEC round in Canada, at Mosport Park, was JFR's first outing in North America after the closure of its San Diego operation. 'The owner of the track, Harvey Hudes, had always been good to us since IMSA days, and paid us significant start money,' recalls Fitz. It was just as well, because only 14 cars made the trip for the WEC's first North American fixture, joined by three local IMSA GTO cars.

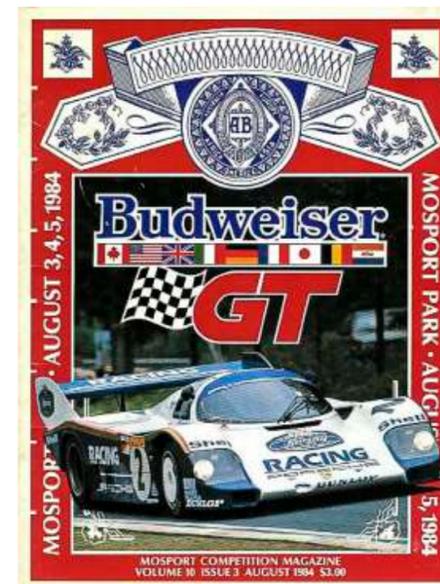
The Mass/Ickx factory Porsche took pole, but qualifying was a disaster for the Skoal Bandit squad: a Momo spoked wheel broke on Keegan's 962. 'I went into a massive spin at 170mph as I was going through the fast downhill left-hander,' recalls Rupert. 'The rear bodywork detached, but luckily I didn't hit anything — a scary moment.'

The damage was bad enough to render the car a non-starter, so Keegan joined Hobbs and Konrad in the 956, which was immediately fitted with BBS wheels; Irishman Michael Roe, who was dominating that year's CanAm, had been due to race with Hobbo but was no longer required.

The race was very low-key. The two factory Porsches sprinted away until the Bellof/Bell car's alternator bracket broke, forcing frequent stops for battery changes. That let the JFR car into second, after a fight with Bill Adam at the wheel of a Kremer 956 that ended when its gearbox overheated. The Brun 956 also went out with a seized gearbox, leaving only one other 956 on the track. This was 956 008 (incorrectly run with a 007 plate), a factory car that had been on loan to Rothmans for use first as a show car and then, during 1984, as a camera car. After Roland Kussmaul had crashed it at Weissach prior to the 1983 Spa 1,000Kms, it had been repaired by Richard Lloyd's GTi Engineering team, which was running it this weekend for Pink Floyd drummer Nick Mason with Vern Schuppan.

The Skoal Bandit 956 was almost a retirement when it also lost a wheel, the team having allegedly overlooked the need to recalibrate its wheel-nut guns to a higher torque setting for the BBS wheels. But Konrad, who was driving at the time, made it back to the pits and thereafter kept second to the end, behind the Ickx/Mass 956. Just to underline what a poor showing for the WEC Mosport had become, a Group C2 Alba was third overall, ahead of the ailing Bellof/Bell Porsche.

Fitz recounts an amusing finale to the weekend. 'Harvey Hudes always paid us in brown envelopes, and we were due \$20,000 for the two cars. I collected my envelope and was already on my way



to Toronto airport when a car came up behind, flashing its lights for me to stop. It was Harvey, out of breath, and he asked me to check the still-sealed envelope. We counted the money and it was \$40,000 — he had paid us double. He had discovered his mistake only when he ran out of money before he had paid all the teams.'

Results

Mosport 1,000Kms (CDN), 5 August 1984

2nd David Hobbs/Rupert Keegan/Franz Konrad, 956 114 (no. 33), lead lap, Q4, Skoal Bandit, Goodyear

DNS Rupert Keegan/Franz Konrad, 962 105 (no. 55), qualifying crash, Skoal Bandit, Goodyear

■ After a wheel breakage in qualifying at Mosport wrecked Keegan's 962 105, he joined Hobbo and Franz Konrad in 956 114 and they finished second.

Malcolm Bryan



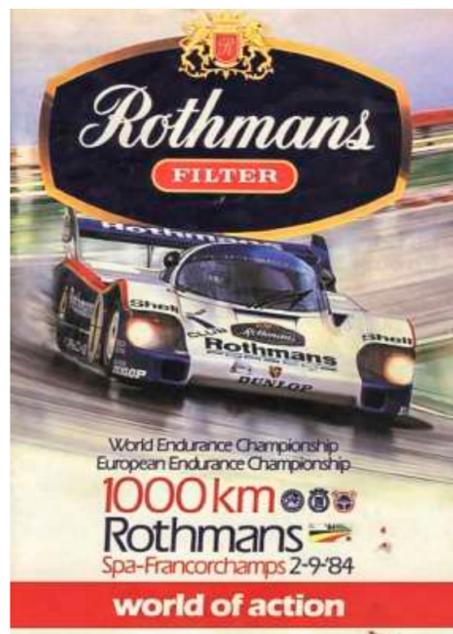
Spa 1,000Kms

2 September 1984, FIA World Endurance Championship, round 7

Returning to Spa was a breath of fresh air for the WEC teams — a full entry on one of the world's finest circuits. There were no factory Lancias, but three Rothmans Porsches (the third for John Watson and Vern Schuppan) were present, and two camera cars: one was 956 008, again being run by GTi Engineering in Rothmans colours, this time in the hands of former British Formula 3 Champion Johnny Dumfries and team owner Richard Lloyd; the other was JFR's 956 102, now in Marlboro colours for Pierre Yver, used to film the start and a limited number of laps.

Applying lessons learned at Brands Hatch, most of the customer Porsches now sprouted nose wings or revised rear wings in an effort to dial out the 956's inherent understeer. Weissach showed no interest at all in these tricks; the word was that the factory cars already enjoyed an aerodynamic advantage by using a one-piece underbody; customer cars had a two-piece underbody, which slightly interrupted the ground effects.

But the factory certainly took notice when Thierry Boutsen planted the JFR 956 on pole for his home race. The car was running a 3-litre mechanical injection motor built by Charles Ivey



Engineering, which by now was preparing the JFR team's engines, and sported a single-element front wing and gurney-strip side skirts. There was also a front wing for the Skoal Bandit 962, which Keegan and Konrad qualified eighth.

Another entry of note was a GTi 956 clone

■ Hobbs rounding La Source in JFR's first race with a front wing, an initiative pioneered by GTi at Brands Hatch; it worked at Spa as Boutsen, running with a 3-litre engine, put the car on pole.

Motorsport Images/LAT



■ During the Spa race Boutsen damaged 956 114's nose and undertray at the Bus Stop; as a consequence he had to circulate for a spell with a wingless replacement nose until the bewinged one could be refitted after repairs.

Malcolm Bryan



■ Franz Konrad at speed in 962 105; by now JFR's distinguishing features for this car's front end comprised diagonal tape on both headlight cowls as well as a different colour scheme on the front wing.

Motorsport Images/LAT



■ Rupert Keegan leads third-placed Hans Stuck in the Brun 956; a tool kit came loose in the no. 55 Skoal Bandit's cockpit, then overheating caused its retirement.

Motorsport Images/LAT

— GTi-106B — with an aluminium honeycomb chassis designed by Nigel Stroud and F1-type adjustable suspension, built in-house by Lloyd's GTi Engineering at Silverstone for Palmer and Lammers. The car lasted only five laps before its gearbox casing cracked.

The early part of the race saw the factory cars of 'BEL' (Bellof/Bell) and 'MIX' (Mass/Ickx) — these acronyms were now being used by Porsche in its pit boards — fighting it out with Boutsen, until the JFR car incurred damage to its nose and undertray when a sticking throttle forced it over the Bus Stop kerbing. Boutsen had to make an unscheduled stop to have the throttle assembly rebuilt and for a replacement nose section; this old-style nose adversely affected the handling until the repaired new-style item could be refitted at the next scheduled stop.

Hans Stuck, driving the Brun 956, inherited third, while fourth was being fought out between Brun's Oscar Larrauri and JFR's Rupert Keegan, until the Argentine driver spun. Then the Skoal Bandit 962's tool kit came loose and started rolling around the cockpit. 'I was considerably distracted,' recalls Rupert. 'Spanners were rolling up and down under the pedals.' The car eventually retired with overheating, the car refusing to restart after a pit stop.

The three factory cars were now misfiring, put down to running too lean a fuel mixture,

and both Mass and Watson lost time while the Bosch Motronic was reprogrammed. That let the 'BEL' car go ahead, but in second place now were Boutsen and Hobbs, having driven back from their delays.

The JFR men stayed there for the next two stints, only for Boutsen, after four hours of racing, suddenly to lose oil pressure at Les Combes. After parking here, as far away from the pits as you can get on the Ardennes circuit, he had to walk back. But JFR had once again showed it had the fastest customer Porsche out there.

Even the lead car was now afflicted by the misfire, but Bell kept it out in front, despite Ickx's best efforts. Bell won by 57 seconds, the Rothmans cars finishing two laps ahead of the two Brun cars of Stuck/Grohs and Larrauri/Sigala.

Results

Spa 1,000Kms (B), 2 September 1984

DNF David Hobbs/Thierry Boutsen, 956 114 (no. 33), oil pressure, Q1, Skoal Bandit, Goodyear
DNF Rupert Keegan/Franz Konrad, 962 105 (no. 55), overheating, Q8, Skoal Bandit, Goodyear
DNF Pierre Yver/Franz Konrad, 956 102 (no. 34), withdrawn (camera car), Q13, Marlboro, Goodyear

Imola 1,000Kms

16 September 1984, FIA World Endurance Championship, round 8

The final WEC race in Europe was at the Bologna circuit of Imola. It counted only for Drivers' points, but nonetheless attracted a strong 25-car entry, pitting the factory Porsches and Lancias against each other for the last time in 1984 — this was, after all, Lancia territory. But the paddock buzz was about Jaguar's announcement that it was returning to the world sportscar racing stage with a 1985 factory Group C programme.

Jochen Mass arrived here with a 10-point lead over Stefan Bellof. Derek Bell had already dropped out of the title fight and was racing in IMSA GTP at Michigan with Al Holbert. So there was just one Rothmans Porsche at Imola, for Jacky Ickx and John Watson, and Weissach did nothing to help their chances by giving them the still-experimental PDK transmission for the weekend. Three of the gearboxes broke in practice, and it was only a sudden rainstorm that let the Belgian put the car 22nd on the 28-car grid.

Pole went to the Martini Lancia of Bob Wollek

and Riccardo Patrese, using a high-compression qualifying engine (reputedly giving 1,000bhp!) and a front wing. The Brun 956 of Bellof and Hans Stuck (who had hitched a ride with the team) lined up second, the Lancia of Alessandro Nannini/Paolo Barilla claimed third, with the Oscar Larrauri/Massimo Sigala Brun Gaggia Porsche fourth.

JFR had reverted to the 2.65-litre Motronic engine for Thierry Boutsen, but the Belgian was not happy with its performance and before the race the team reinstalled the 3-litre it had used to such good effect at Spa until it lost oil pressure. Rupert Keegan and Franz Konrad had 956 102, which Rupert qualified 13th.

As expected, the Lancia hare of Patrese shot off into the distance, leaving Stuck and Jonathan Palmer in the GTi 956 to squabble over second, shadowed by Boutsen. But two laps later Patrese was in the pits with brake problems. At this point team manager Cesare Fiorio wheeled out from the paddock a third Lancia — which fortuitously had been qualified — and sent out Barilla to save Italian face.

■ David Hobbs laps a gaggle of tail-enders in 956 102, joining Keegan and Konrad after his own car lost its engine. They finished eighth after brake problems.

Motorsport Images/LAT





■ At Imola 956 114 qualified fifth but Boutsen was unhappy with the 2.65-litre engine's performance; the team reinstated the Charles Ivey-prepared 3-litre unit for the race but it lost a piston after just 14 laps.

Karl Jennings

Patrese's brakes were repaired sooner than expected, so he rejoined and Barilla was called back in — only for Nannini's car to blow its engine four laps later.

'So a confused Barilla was sent back out yet again, and now the crowd favourites were circulating nearly dead last,' wrote János Wimpffen. 'Then the spare car had a colossal accident, which left Barilla unhurt, but the circuit was littered with debris, some of which delayed the Joest Blaupunkt car of Hans Heyer when he ran over it.'

The sole Rothmans Porsche had fared no better as Ickx's race lasted just two laps, when its fourth

PDK gearbox of the weekend seized. Although the Belgian had been loyal to Porsche for much of his career, this experiment was severely testing his patience.

JFR's cars also began ailing: Boutsen's went out on lap 14 with a piston failure in its 3-litre engine and Keegan was delayed by a long stop to fix a brake problem.

The leading Brun car came under attack from Palmer in the Canon Porsche but after a slow handover from Stuck to Bellof the British-entered 956 went ahead, now with Lammers at the wheel. Bellof was having none of that and barged past the Dutchman, quickly establishing a 30-second

advantage. But that vanished when Stuck, back in the driving seat and on new brake pads, came across a wayward GTX car and bounced heavily over the Tamburello kerbs. A precautionary visit to the pits for a quick check dropped him to sixth, but he and Bellof soon made it back up to second, as Palmer and Lammers were now having to conserve fuel. Several 956 teams, including GTi, were using up more fuel than scheduled owing to suspected Bosch Motronic glitches.

Urged on by Brun's team manager, Peter Reinisch, Bellof attacked Palmer at Acque Minerale, and made the pass to give Stuck his first Group C win. Bellof took maximum driver points, but not yet the championship lead, as Mass, Pescarolo and Heyer came home third for Joest, two laps down, and that meant Mass was still just ahead.

Back in eighth place was the surviving Skoal Bandit, nine laps down after the brake setback, Keegan and Konrad having been joined by Hobbs after Boutsen's early retirement.

Konrad was another driver Hobbo rated. 'I was normally quicker than him but he was a good driver. He and I got on well. Old Franz was a good guy and we had a lot of fun with him.' Konrad was equally impressed with Hobbo!

Results

Imola 1,000Kms (I), 16 September 1984

8th Rupert Keegan/Franz Konrad/David Hobbs, 956 102 (no. 55), -9 laps, Q13, Skoal Bandit, Goodyear

DNF David Hobbs/Thierry Boutsen, 956 114 (no. 33), engine, Q5, Skoal Bandit, Goodyear

Nürburgring Supersprint

23 September 1984, Deutsche Rennsport Meisterschaft, round 6

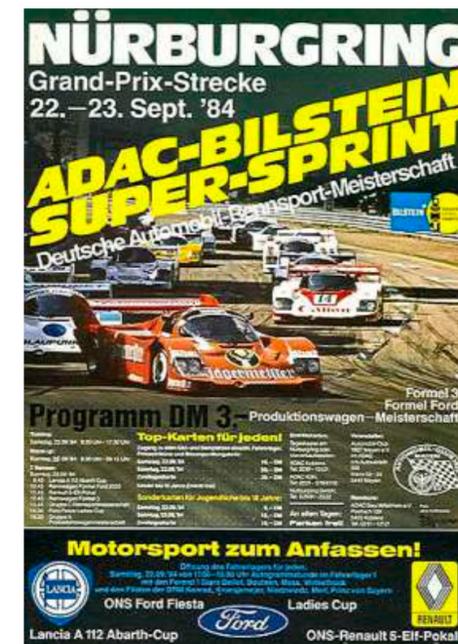
It was back to the new Nürburgring for the second time within two months, for the final round of the six-race Deutsche Rennsport Meisterschaft, in which Thierry Boutsen still had an outside chance of second place against Jochem Mass.

JFR took the two Skoal Bandits, 956 114 for the Belgian and 962 105 for Franz Konrad, both cars still sporting their front wings. Franz should have run 956 102 in Nigrin livery but the money didn't turn up, so he was put in a Skoal Bandit car — which, recalls David Prewitt, 'turned out to be the right decision'.

Boutsen qualified second, splitting Bellof (Brun Jaegermeister) and Mass (Joest Blaupunkt), with Konrad fourth on the 21-car grid, which included eight Porsches and the Zakspeed Ford C100s.

Championship leader Bellof led the wet one-hour sprint from the start, with Boutsen, Mass and Konrad strung out behind. Those on Goodyear rain tyres were expected to have an advantage and Dunlop-shod Mass indeed started to drop back, eventually retiring. Such was Bellof's pace that he won by 52 seconds from the JFR pair, who were separated by the narrowest of margins, Konrad finishing just ahead of Boutsen, by just 0.3 second.

Bellof's win confirmed his Deutsche Rennsport Meisterschaft title, with Mass second and Boutsen third. The Belgian's position was unaffected by being beaten at this last round by Konrad, who ended the season seventh after two second places.



Results

Nürburgring Supersprint (D), 23 September 1984

2nd Franz Konrad, 962 105 (no. 4), -52.0 seconds, Q4, Skoal Bandit, Goodyear

3rd Thierry Boutsen, 956 114 (no. 3), -52.3 seconds, Q2, Skoal Bandit, Goodyear

T-car: Franz Konrad, 956 102 (no. 4T), Nigrin, Goodyear

Sandown Park 1,000Kms

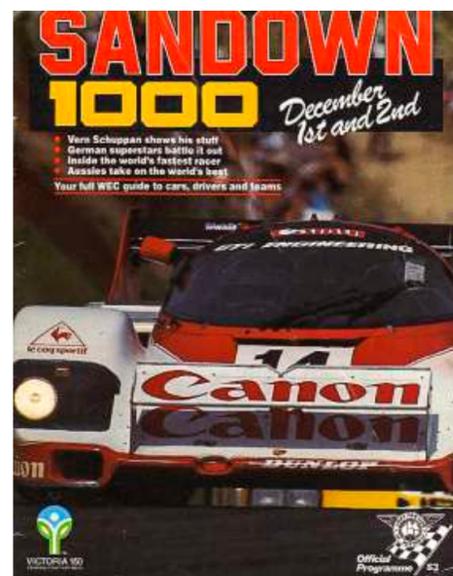
2 December 1984, FIA World Endurance Championship, round 11

Having vowed never to return to Japan after the disastrous 1983 visit, Fitz and Hobbs missed the Fuji 1,000Kms, and it was not on the Skoal Bandit schedule. Rothmans Porsche took a 1–2 from the Japanese-entered Trust Engineering 956 of Hans Stuck and Vern Schuppan.

Then everyone except Martini Lancia and the Dieter Schornstein-owned Joest New Man 956 boycotted the next race, the Kyalami 1,000Kms, in a dispute over travel expenses, allowing the Italian factory to conclude its season with a faultless but hollow 1–2 victory.

That left just Australia's WEC season finale, which attracted a 30-car entry in the heat of the southern hemisphere's summer. JFR took all three cars: 956 114 for Hobbs/Boutsen and 956 102 for Keegan/Konrad in Skoal Bandit colours, and 962 105 for Australians Colin Bond/Andrew Miedecke in Bob Jane T-Marts livery. Porsche AG also brought three cars for sponsor Rothmans, to make amends for missing the Le Mans 24 Hours.

The race was held at Melbourne's horse racing track, Sandown Park, which had been named



after the British course in Surrey. Twenty years earlier, in 1964, Fitz had raced a works Mini here with Paddy Hopkirk. Now the track, set around a lake, had been upgraded to FIA standards with a A\$4 million federal grant in a bid to attract an Australian round of the Formula 1

■ On the grid at the Sandown Park circuit, set in the middle of Melbourne's horse-racing venue, with the Keegan/Konrad Bandit mid-grid.
Malcolm Bryan



World Championship, but Melbourne lost out to Adelaide, which won it for 1985. The circuit lacked for little, with covered grandstands and facilities that were superior to most venues, but it was tight, slow and bumpy, hardly ideal for the long-legged Group C cars.

The one thing it did lack, however, was spectators: Melbourne was hosting not only the Australian Open tennis tournament that weekend, but also test cricket (Australia versus West Indies), so motorsport had little chance. Those Aussie fans who did turn up had the added attraction of two Formula 1 World Champions in two of the four Porsches in Rothmans colours, Alan Jones joining Vern Schuppan, and Sir Jack Brabham (in his first race for 14 years) paired with Johnny Dumfries in 956 008, which was being run as a camera car by Richard Lloyd Racing. It was not lost on the media that the young British earl was teamed with the sexagenarian Australian knight.

The regular pair of factory cars saw Bell rejoining Bellof to help his Drivers' title bid, and Ickx back with Mass. Bellof and Mass were separated by just three points.

During practice there was much experimenting with wings front and rear. Behind the three factory cars of Bellof/Bell ('BEL'), Mass/Ickx ('MIX') and Jones/Schuppan, Boutsen/Hobbs

qualified fourth, best of the privateers. The two Ks, Keegan and Konrad, qualified ninth. The Bob Jane car had a front wing too, adding 7kgs to take 962 105's weight to 866kgs.

The field was led on the formation lap by none other than Tim Schenken, Fitz's former San Diego team manager, now race director of CAMS, the Confederation of Australian Motor Sports.

Things immediately went wrong for Mass when a Group B car blew its engine on the formation lap, and his 956 spun wildly off the circuit on its oil, letting the whole field past. Bellof led Jones and Boutsen, but the Belgian quickly put his car into second, even as Mass was carving through the field, and by the first round of fuel stops Mass had passed Jones for third.

By mid-race, it was still a Rothmans 1–2, Bell from Ickx, with Hobbo now pressuring Jacky, and quickly passing him for second. Then the track literally started to come apart. The massive ground effects of the Group C cars were sucking up the new tarmac in the 35-degree C heat, and punctures followed.

When a C2 car crashed, bringing out the safety car, the field bunched up, to Hobbo's delight, as he was now on the tail of Bell. At the green, wrote Wimpffen, 'The attack was on; twice the works car held off, but Hobbs found a way past, kicking up

■ At Sandown Park JFR ran the Bob Jane T-Marts car for Colin Bond and Andrew Miedecke, seen here in company with the Rothmans Porsche pair.
Malcolm Bryan



■ Front wings went in and out of vogue: at Sandown Park, Franz Konrad took 956 102 to ninth place after a rash of punctures.

Malcolm Bryan

a cloud of dust on the outside of a turn... When the next round of stops was done, Boutsen now had 10 seconds in hand over Bellof, with Mass nearly half a lap the poorer.'

But Bellof was not championship leader for nothing, and over 10 laps he closed on the JFR car, passing it and then pulling away as both the JFR and 'MIX' cars pitted with punctures. Boutsen/Hobbs kept second, until an ignition coil failure ended their season.

'BEL' took the win after six hours — nowhere near the scheduled 1,000Kms, so low was the average speed — from 'MIX', with Palmer and Lammers the best of the rest in the GTi Porsche. The Australian crew brought the JFR 962 home in sixth, with Keegan/Konrad ninth after a rash of punctures for 956 102.

'That was my last race with Fitzpatrick,' recalls Keegan. 'I really enjoyed the 956, and driving with Guy and Franz. Guy could be amazingly quick over one lap; Franz was very good, as quick as Thierry. I drove with Thierry a couple of times, and I think if he and I had driven together regularly, we could have had much better results.'

'I remember this as my other biggest disappointment,' says Hobbo, 35 years later. 'We had the differential in again at Sandown, and I passed Derek Bell; it was one of the greatest

moments of my career passing Derek Bell. He won Le Mans five times, and I thought, "Put that in your pipe and smoke it!" And then a bloody wire dropped off the coil.'

'This was probably our best race,' agrees Fitz. 'We were in the thick of it throughout, and David and Thierry were really on form. We were incredibly unlucky that we lost the electrics right at the end as we could have won. We were always a step behind on development to the factory cars, so that was a really good race for us.'

It was a good weekend for the JFR crew too, making the most of the end-of-season fun. 'As well as the usual cork hats, the boys had been driving around all week with a blow-up doll in the front of the crew bus,' recalls Prewitt. 'After the race,

■ This was probably our best race. We were in the thick of it throughout, and David and Thierry were really on form. We were incredibly unlucky that we lost the electrics right at the end as we could have won. ■

they took it out and were kicking it around in the garage when it flew out of the door, and floated into the Rothmans hospitality marquee, which was still busy, and settled among a group of kids. You have never seen a crew disappear so quickly — they were nowhere to be found.'

For Skoal Bandit, it was not just the end of the season, but the end of their WEC sponsorship, as there had been reports in Britain about the adverse effects of their product on health. Although the government had given a £193,000 employment grant towards a factory in East Kilbride, Skoal Bandit was eventually banned in Britain.

The three-year programme was over after just one year, so Fitz had to look for backing for his team yet again.

Results

Sandown Park (AUS), 2 December 1984

6th Colin Bond/Andrew Miedecke, 962 105 (no. 34), -8 laps, Q11, Bob Jane T-Marts, Goodyear

9th Rupert Keegan/Franz Konrad, 956 102 (no. 55), -12 laps, Q9, Skoal Bandit, Goodyear

DNF David Hobbs/Thierry Boutsen/Franz Konrad, 956 114 (no. 33), coil, Q4, Skoal Bandit, Goodyear

1984 FIA World Endurance Drivers' Championship

1	Stefan Bellof	138
2	Jochen Mass	127
3	Jacky Ickx	104
4	Derek Bell	91
5	Henri Pescarolo	81
6	Jonathan Palmer	75
	Jan Lammers	75
8	Hans Stuck	54
9	Paolo Barilla	49
10	David Hobbs	48
11	Walter Brun	47
12	Rupert Keegan	44

1984 Deutsche Rennsport Meisterschaft

1	Stefan Bellof	80
2	Jochen Mass	51
3	Thierry Boutsen	47
4	Jonathan Palmer	45
	Jan Lammers	45
6	Leopold von Bayern	41
7	Franz Konrad	35
8	Henri Pescarolo	30
9	David Hobbs	24
10	Manfred Winkelhock	23

■ Sporting a bigger front wing than that used at Imola, David Hobbs judged Sandown Park as one of his best races — until a 50p wire failed on the ignition coil.

Motorsport Images/LAT

Part 4
Later life



■ All five of the John Fitzpatrick Racing Group C Porsches have survived to this day, two of them – including this JDavid 956 110 – in the hands of Henry Pearman.

Matt Howell

THE COLLECTOR



Henry Pearman, a major player in ensuring the continuing success of Group C cars, has collected, raced and promoted them since the late 1990s. Over the years his avid accumulation of Group C Porsches has led to the creation of his famous Historic Porsche Collection, but he has also acquired Jaguar, Nissan and Toyota Group C cars.

His Group C Porsches include six ex-works cars, two John Fitzpatrick Racing 956s and a pair of 1989 Richard Lloyd Racing 962Cs, but there are also five Jaguars and a 1988 Toyota 88C. The current Group C total is 17 cars and at his peak he had 21; over the years there have been 34 in all and he has been directly involved in selling 19.

‘Collecting can easily become an obsession, even an “illness”, and seriously grabs hold,’ says Henry. ‘It first started when I was 11 and during school holidays I used to visit the Pantiles, in Tunbridge Wells, where there was a stamp shop. Life was far easier when I was collecting stamps!’

As well as collecting, the thrill of driving and racing selected cars over eight seasons in the ever-growing Historic Group C racing series was another attraction and Henry was the 2008 champion at the wheel of his Richard Lloyd Racing 962 201 GTi.

■ This view of Henry Pearman’s collection of Group C cars puts one of his favourites, the John Fitzpatrick Racing 956 114 in Skoal Bandit livery, on pole position. Henry fell in love with this car when, aged 21, he visited Le Mans in 1984 and saw it finish third overall.

James Lipman



■ A memorable moment for young Henry Pearman came when John Fitzpatrick Racing's 956 110 famously defeated the factory team at Brands Hatch in 1983; he was there and afterwards collected magazine reports of the occasion.

Early days

Born in 1963, Henry grew up in Kent, and became mad about cars and motorsport as a child, with a particular fascination for Jaguar E-types from the age of just five. When he was 12 he became the youngest member of the Tunbridge Wells Motor Club, where garage owner Duncan Welch took him under his wing.

'My mother's Austin A40 had broken its diff,' Henry recalls. 'Duncan said he had a diff and would give it to me on condition that I learned to fix the car. So I bought a socket set and started working on cars when I was 13. Soon Duncan took me to events, including as passenger/bouncer in trials, and we marshalled at Lydden Hill.'

'By the time I was 15, I'd saved enough to buy an abandoned Mk1 MG Midget, with side screens. Duncan had radically modified a similar car for the classic Lands End Trial and we used to travel to Lydden in his Frogeye Sprite, so it had to be this kind of early-style car for me. I negotiated a price of £25 and paid for it with saved-up pocket money, all in coins, and Duncan kindly towed it home. Instead of revising for O-levels, I spent my time getting the car up and running, and learning all about its A-series engine.'

'When I was 15 I also entered *The Observer*/TVR Young Driver of the Year competition, which Noel Edmonds featured on BBC TV's Saturday

morning programme *Multi-Coloured Swap Shop* (not Preston Henn's!). I was lucky enough to win the south-east regional final, and then finished fifth overall in the national final at Donington Park in a TVR 3000M — so it seems I could drive all right by then! And a few years ago it was a real thrill when Noel bought an E-type V12 from us.'

After O-levels, Henry did a three-year diploma in automobile engineering at West Kent College. He soon discovered that a year above him was David Epstein, son of Jackie Epstein, who ran the Brands Hatch racing school. Periods of work experience at Brands for his college course saw him tend Formula Fords and ShellSport Sunbeam Tis, and he travelled there on his tuned Garelli Tiger Cross moped as he was too young to drive.

Further work experience at Martin Sargeant's Rolls Royce/Bentley specialist at Goudhurst, Kent, took Henry's mechanical skills further. Around this time he bought an aluminium-bodied Austin Seven Special that some fellow students had spotted in a garden with a tree growing through its middle. He joined the 750 Motor Club on the strength of that, and in the winter of 1982 he went with long-time college friend Roger Collingwood to a local talk given by Derek Bell.

'There were only 30 people and here was this Le Mans winner inspiring us all — but I was too shy to speak to him afterwards! But now I

own some of his original race cars, and raced the actual Porsche 956 that made him 1986 world champion! I never did finish the Austin Seven.'

Henry's true love was the E-type and he bought his first one as a restoration project when he was 18, having exchanged it as 'work in progress' for a 1071 Mini Cooper S that he had just fully restored, to a very high standard. 'By now I had an obsession and everything had to be perfect.'

After Henry's graduation in July 1982, Sargeant employed him full-time. His best job was carrying out the entire painting process on a prototype Rolls-Royce Phantom II, from initial preparation through to painting and hand polishing the cellulose paint. 'Martin was a total perfectionist who really took me under his wing and I had a fantastic time learning from him.'

Enter Group C

Thus far Henry's desire to go to the Le Mans 24 Hours had been thwarted by June exams, but in September 1982 he saw sportscar racing for the first time at the Brands Hatch 1,000Kms with Roger Collingwood, who was now working at the circuit. In pouring rain they watched Porsche win the first title against Lancia. 'I shall never forget our first sight of Group C cars in action — the speed, the flames coming from the turbochargers, the thrill of it all. I fell in love with it on the spot.'

Henry and Roger made their first pilgrimage to Le Mans in 1983. They did the trip on a shoestring, driving through the night in a gutless VW Golf using *route nationales* to save on *autoroute* tolls, and camped when they arrived. 'We watched at the stretch from the Esses to Tertre Rouge. There was no Radio Le Mans then, nor spectator screens, so we listened to David Waldron's English bulletin on the PA, every hour on the hour. The Esses was a great place to watch, cars coming over the crest under the Dunlop bridge, engine revs rising at the peak, then left and right, and at Tertre Rouge you could see them disappear down the Mulsanne. And, of course, the Rothmans Porsches won with a 1-2 and we were at the finish line when the winning car seized up as it crossed. I was totally hooked!'

A few months later Roger and Henry were in the thick of it at Brands for the 1,000Kms, helping the pit signaller for the Preston Henn Porsche 956 that Divina Galica was sharing with David Sutherland and Henn himself. After the car was taken out by a Lancia at half-distance, Henry became absorbed in the superb performance of the JDavid 956 110 driven by Derek Warwick and John Fitzpatrick, and joined in with their victory celebrations. 'I never imagined that one day I would own that car!'

Friendship with Roger led to a significant

career move for both of them. A neighbour of Roger's, Keith Warren, was planning a new Ferrari specialist business and Henry and Roger were offered a share of the ownership to join him in setting it up, together with ex-banker Richard Evans. Thanks to the efforts of the four of them, Kent High Performance Cars at Sutton Valence duly had its grand opening early in 1984, complete with Land Speed Record holder Richard Noble's Thrust2 on the forecourt. Henry, still just 20, looked after sales and marketing.

The quartet went to Le Mans in 1984 in Keith's Jaguar XJ6. 'It was another Porsche win, but this time for Joest with no factory cars present. Leaning over the hay bales at the famous café to see and hear the cars flash past right in front of us at over 230mph on the Mulsanne straight, not even lifting for the kink, is something that will stay with me forever. That was an incredible year, with the lead changing three or four times a lap in the first few hours — Canon Porsche, Skoal Bandit Porsche, New Man Porsche and the spectacular Martini Lancia.'

'Jaguar were there for the first time with the Bob Tullius car. They had full hospitality, so Keith — an animated and persuasive guy — blagged our way in. But the JFR Skoal Bandit Porsches were the stand-out cars for me, with their fabulous livery, and it was a British Porsche team, the one that had won that amazing race at Brands.'

Quite quickly Henry and Roger found that Kent High Performance Cars was not going as well as expected for them financially, and in August 1984 they left. 'So on my 21st birthday I was unemployed. But the experience confirmed three fundamental rules in life my father had taught me: always tell the truth; always do what you say you are going to do; and always treat

■ This Nicholas Watts painting, showing the winning Jaguar XJR-9 leading the second-placed Porsche 962 010 at Le Mans in 1988, is Henry's favourite: 'This scene of these wonderful cars on the Mulsanne at night, with the moon out, totally captures all that I loved about that fantastic year at Le Mans!'

James Lipman





■ Partnered by Gordon Cruickshank of *Motor Sport* magazine, Henry Pearman won the 1989 Pirelli Classic Marathon against celebrated opposition. Third-placed Stirling Moss (MGB) is on left, second-placed David 'Piggy' Thompson (Lotus Cortina) on the right. Courtesy of Henry Pearman



people as you would like to be treated. These became important foundations of my subsequent business life.'

Through this period, Henry's fixation with cars intensified and quite a few passed through his hands, often found in *Exchange & Mart*, religiously studied at 6.30am every Thursday. An early MGB, a 1,275cc Mini Cooper S, an MGB GT V8 and a Triumph TR6 were at the 'ordinary' end of the scale, while a troublesome De Tomaso Pantera proved to be a mistake and a Gordon Keeble gave him his first track experience, at Goodwood. He also bought a decent E-type, an S2 roadster, for £4,250. 'This period was my

introduction to borrowing money, to pay for a car I had agreed to buy before I had sold an existing car to raise the cash — this was to become a feature of my life!

Birth of Eagle

Before getting involved with Kent High Performance Cars, Roger and Henry had turned down an opportunity to work with Maidstone-based Lotus specialist Peter Coleman and his son Scott. Now they reconnected with the Colemans and agreed a short-term project, an Elan chassis change, but that never got finished by Henry. Within three days they had bought into the business, putting in £10,000 each to become two of four equal partners. A key attraction for Henry was that the company also owned two dismantled E-types awaiting restoration: one was an S1 4.2 roadster — his favourite — and the other a 3.8 coupé. To get the money together he had to sell his E-type and the Pantera, which, despite the full rebuild he had done, still landed him with a 45 per cent loss when he traded it to the back-street East London dealer who had sold it to him.

Roger ran the workshop, Peter specialised in bodywork and engines, Scott did trimming and Henry looked after buying, selling and marketing. During its first few years — a boom period for classic cars — the business grew substantially, with an increasing focus on E-types, but gradually



Henry's partners turned to other ambitions and sold their shares to him. It was all very amicable — and by 1988 Henry was sole proprietor of what had evolved into Eagle E-Types.

'Now I was keen to run with the "sky's-the-limit" approach I had grown up with throughout the 1980s — I had become a risk-taker! I was still living with my parents, so I had no obligations, and I was never afraid to borrow money, often very big sums that I could only ever pay back from future sales.'

In 1988 Henry entered an E-type roadster in a new long-distance historic car challenge, the first Pirelli Classic Marathon, which followed a gruelling 2,500-mile route around Europe. With his early mentor Duncan Welch as navigator, he finished a splendid fifth out of 130 entries, just a few seconds away from a podium place.

He entered again the following year, this time navigated by Gordon Cruickshank of *Motor Sport* magazine, and they were up against Pirelli's Famous Five: Paddy Hopkirk, Stirling Moss, Roger Clark, Timo Mäkinen and Ove Andersson. 'We messed up their planned PR campaign completely — because we won! We were in the top three throughout and on the famous Alpine passes we were running in company with Stirling. At the Stelvio Pass, where I was fastest, Paddy asked how I made an E-type go so fast, because the one he had owned, he said, handled like a pig!

Mind you, the brakes were almost on fire and the water temperature had soared, with water and steam pouring out of the radiator overflow.'

Not long before Henry had met Karen, his partner to this day, and soon after the Pirelli Classic Marathon victory they went on a rare holiday to Bavaria's Black Forest with a modern Porsche 911SC. So far most of Henry's motoring had been with older cars, but occasional experiences with modern performance cars — most notably a Golf GTi Mk1 that he drove to Le Mans in 1985 — had made an impression.

'That GTi was the first modern car I drove and it was a revelation. I realised just how much brakes, transmissions and suspension had improved. The Porsche inspired me too: you could drive it hard all day, everything still worked perfectly, and it never got hot. It made me think: imagine if we could give an E-type the same capability to be driven flat out for days, on all sorts of roads, with no problems whatsoever...

'I was always obsessive about things working properly, and was inspired to apply this to the cars we restored and sold, making sure they were perfect. But the real breakthrough came in cementing my relationship with Paul Brace during that first Classic Marathon, duelling for the podium with his ex-rallycross Porsche 911, which Paul had rebuilt from a wreck and starred in BBC TV's 'The Longest Challenge'. Together

■ A pair of Eagle-numbered Jaguar E-types near completion of their 4,500-hour rebuild process; the first such car was completed in 1994.

James Lipman



■ An Eagle Low- Drag GT and an Eagle Speedster pictured with Jeremy Clarkson during filming for BBC TV's *Top Gear* in 2011, the E-type's 50th anniversary year – he absolutely loved the cars.

Paul Brace

we decided we would make E-types that are really special. This is when our re-engineering, or “resto-creations” as *Motor's* Roger Bell later put it, first started.'

In the summer of 1989, Paul joined Eagle, which now had more than a dozen staff. Shortly after, his long-term colleague, Matthew Dewhurst, also arrived to specialise in body restoration and paintwork — in which he truly excelled. The company now had the perfect ingredients to make huge strides forward. But in the autumn of 1989 the market slumped and killed the classic car market stone dead.

'We carried on and always had plenty of work, but I took a pretty radical decision to move premises, to a farm tucked away in a valley in East Sussex, bringing with me just Paul and Matthew. This is where we remain to this day.

'Our first customer for a re-engineered E-type was John McLaren, who was the catalyst for our new policy of offering purely a fixed-price, ground-up restoration to better-than-new condition and without compromise. John had owned a S2 roadster that was supposedly restored but always needed more work. He asked if Eagle could restore an E-type not just to as-new condition but make it even better. I said we could, but added that it would take three or four times longer than normal. John said, “Let's do it then.”

'So this was Eagle E-type number one, which

John still owns today. We started the project in 1992 and delivered it to him in 1994. It was built up from that dismantled S1 4.2 roadster I had spotted when I first joined forces with the Colemans back in 1984.'

McLaren later joined Eagle E-Types Ltd as non-executive chairman with Henry, the major shareholder, as managing director, and both remain in those posts today. McLaren's background was in the city, with Deutsche Bank, but he left in 1996 to become a novelist — and made a great success of it with many best-sellers.

Eagle's procedure is to totally dismantle an original E-type and start again, dialling out all the weak points, strengthening the bodyshell and other areas that need improvement, then spending around 4,500 hours on each build, over 1,000 of them on bodyshell restoration alone. Each is a bespoke project, with the customer able to select the desired level of upgrade and specify any personal preferences.

The company completes just two such Eagle E-types a year, plus one of its Eagle Special Editions. Paul Brace has engineered and designed all of these Special Editions, including the Speedster, immortalised in 2011 by Jeremy Clarkson on *Top Gear*. At the time of writing the 49th Eagle E-type was in progress and the company was gearing up to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the first one, with a special event



centred at Goodwood House for 38 Eagle commissioning owners from around the world.

'The formula works because we build so few cars that they're super-exclusive, and we offer a fantastic one-to-one, totally bespoke relationship with each and every client. It's very important for our clients to be able to enjoy the experience and look back fondly at every stage, right from the first visit. It's extremely rare for anybody to sell one: they stay in families for years, generations even.

'We keep the original car and chassis number, but it also becomes its own branded and numbered restoration of a Jaguar E-type — by Eagle. But it is so much more than a restoration. It's the original car reprocessed and re-engineered. People ask if it affects the car's value: the answer is yes, but in a positive way. An Eagle E-type is a stand-alone car, not just a restored or modified E-type.

'Our relationship with Jaguar is really good: we have kept E-types to the forefront with top-quality restorations, so it's a win-win situation.

His first Group C car

During Eagle's gestation years, Henry's Group C enthusiasm intensified. He considers Le Mans in 1986, the first time the Silk Cut Jaguars ran at La Sarthe, as his best year there. 'It was very exciting. We went in a three-car convoy, with close friend William Tassell in his V12 E-type, Roger in the

Golf GTi Mk1 and me in a newly acquired Porsche 911 Turbo. We were all supporting the new Jaguars and the camaraderie was great; we always camped right by the Dunlop bridge, inside the circuit, and nothing was better than hearing the song of the V12 for almost a minute, down the Mulsanne.

Workload forced him to miss Le Mans in 1987, but the draw of a possible Jaguar win in 1988 was too great to resist. Porsche decided to have one last shot at the 24 Hours and built three special cars, purely for this race, in the striking colours of the German flag and Shell and Dunlop sponsorship.

'It was so tense and exciting, the absolute classic race of the entire Group C era. I always loved Porsches, but of course I supported Jaguar too and it was brilliant when they won. But I had mixed emotions, because I also went to cheer on Derek Bell and the factory Porsches. Again, I never dreamed that one day I would own one of those iconic cars, let alone all three.'

By the time Henry returned to Le Mans in 1989, when Mercedes won, he had decided that he must have a Group C car. Already he was acquiring components and when his friends were buying cracked Jaguar windscreens after practice he jokingly asked if he could purchase a complete car. 'To my absolute amazement, the answer was “yes”. TWR's Andy Morrison was selling two XJR-8s [1987 cars] for £650,000 each, and so I said I would like to try to have both — and then

■ In 2005 Henry Pearman acquired his second JFR car, the Skoal Bandit 956 114, here prominently on display while Henry (left) is interviewed by Andrew Frankel in 2012 for features in *Motor Sport* and *Purely Porsche* magazines. Moto GP and World Superbike motorcycles have become another collecting passion, with an ex-Troy Bayliss Ducati GP3 to the fore.

James Lipman



■ Models, posters... there is a place for all sorts of fascinating ephemera in the Historic Porsche Collection.
James Lipman

racing. Helped by Peter Coleman, he had done a few races at Lydden Hill in 1988 with a Formula Ford 2000 Van Diemen until work pressures intervened, but he resumed in 1995 for a happy three-year spell with a Porsche 911 3.2 Carrera in club events as part of Porsche specialist Mark Sumpter's Paragon team.

In 1999 Henry and Karen took a few days' holiday in Belgium at a favourite haunt, near Spa, and Henry could not resist popping over to the circuit to see what was going on. 'It was a track day and Siggie Brunn was running three 956s. One was the Skoal Bandit 956 114, which I had last seen at Le Mans in 1984. Martyn Konig had just bought the car and it was absolutely wonderful to see it again, especially as that livery is my favourite of the Group C era. Siggie himself was driving 956 108, and his son Philipp was in the reconstructed Fitzpatrick 956 102. I was offered a ride with Philipp, without belts, and I got out with the biggest grin ever. I knew I just had to have a 956, especially after spending so many years wearing out the famous "In-car 956" video!'

A few other chances to buy a Group C Jaguar came and went. At the 2000 Goodwood Festival of Speed, Henry went after an XJR-11 at the Bonhams auction. 'I had negotiated special terms to allow me to pay over a period, but the car went for over double the reserve and I was forced to pass. An XJR-12 then came up with a dealer, but as I was figuring out the finance, the price went up by 50 per cent. So I thought, OK, fate decrees that I'm not meant to have a Group C Jaguar.'

That autumn Dick Crosthwaite of restorers Crosthwaite & Gardiner took Henry to visit Tony O'Neill, who lived locally and had a collection of race Porsches. 'There in Tony's workshop was a 1986 Silk Cut Jaguar XJR-6LM sitting in front of a staggering line-up of eight Group C Porsches. The Jaguar was chassis 385, Win Percy's car at Le Mans, where it retired after a driveshaft joint failed at around midnight. After that it went straight into TWR's collection and didn't race again — so it was one of the very best examples. Tony got it from TWR because he was acting for an American buyer who wanted the 'best and most original' Group C Jaguar and this was the one TWR offered.

'I made a bid for it there and then, without even knowing the price; I knew that I would somehow sort out the money. Tony correctly needed to wait for the American to decide whether he wanted it, but luckily he didn't come back within the specified time frame — so it was mine... my first Group C car! Tony kindly gave me three months to raise the finance. A favourite quote I often repeat to myself is this: "Every negative is actually really a positive in disguise,

but it's just that sometimes the disguise is really good." Now, missing those other Group C Jaguars made perfect sense.'

In 2001 the 40th anniversary of the E-type was celebrated at Donington and there Henry first met Win Percy, the man who had raced his newly acquired Group C Jaguar. They got on so well that Henry invited him to the Classic Adelaide Rally, where Eagle was running a three-car team of E-types. During the event, conversation turned to the Jaguar XJR-11 with which Martin Brundle had won at Silverstone in 1990; it was available, and the deal was done on the spot — with a kindly agreed 18-month stage-payment programme.

'The Classic Adelaide Rally was also amazing as we spent the event on the road with another Porsche hero, Vern Schuppan, winner of that very first Le Mans I had attended, back in 1983. Vern is such a great guy and an enthusiast, and at each of the road stops on the rally I was hanging on his every word. It turned out that he was a real fan of Group C Porsches and had bought all of the ex-works Rothmans cars from the factory over a period before selling them on. And so I became absolutely determined to track down the whereabouts of all the ex-works team Porsches now in private hands.'

Early Group C Porsche purchases

The first Group C Porsche Henry owned came from Tony O'Neill, in April 2002. This was the Richard Lloyd Racing 962 201-GTi, the 1990 Le Mans car in pink Japanese Italiya Sports livery; it was incredibly original, with the scrutineer label still in place from that season's final race. He soon also persuaded Tony to part with another RLR Porsche, the original Canon-liveried 956 106 that, as a young fan, he had supported along with the JFR cars. This was the 1984 Brands winner, now in its later Brun Eterna livery, but Henry wanted to take it back to the original Canon colours.

'I figured that this pair gave me the book-end package of the story of the RLR Group C Porsche campaign. This desire to collect sets is possibly a throwback from childhood stamp-collecting!'

In August 2002 he visited Monterey and Pebble Beach for the first time. Viewing the auctions, he bumped into Adrian Hamilton, who said that the JDavid 956 110 was being sold by a big Porsche collector in California. This was the 1983 Brands Hatch winner, the actual car that beat the works Rothmans team when he was in the pits during the race. 'I said I would take it on the spot before I even asked how much it was — and, as ever, I would have to sort out later how to pay for it!'

By the end of 2002, the collecting bug was arguably getting out of control, with more of

O'Neill's cars making the short trip to Henry's premises to join a growing array of Group C jewels. 'Tony was very helpful in assisting with a stage-payment plan, and one day in December I sat with him until almost midnight and wouldn't leave until we'd agreed a package deal of three: the Brun 962 003-BM Hydro Aluminium car of 1989; the Kremer 956 115 Liqui-Moly (formerly Kenwood) car in which Vern Schuppan convincingly led Le Mans in 1984; and Tony's "special project" 962, which utilised 1987 ex-works 962C bespoke components and body. For this, I later located and fitted the engine from the 1987 Le Mans winner and even found that car's totally original doors, just as they finished the race, but these are kept on proud display.'

During 2003 Dick Crosthwaite made another significant introduction, this time to Murray Smith, who not only owned and raced the ex-RLR 962 200 — sister car to Henry's 201 — but also had an ex-works 956. This was 956 008, the Bellof/Mass car that led the first four hours of the first Le Mans Henry attended, back in 1983.

'I simply couldn't believe it. Back in the late 1990s I had noticed California-based dealer Fantasy Junction advertise a Rothmans Porsche and at the time I was staggered that there was a car in private hands at all. The simple fact was that, in period, you had to have won Le Mans for the Porsche factory in order to acquire an ex-works 956, so all the cars released went to Vern Schuppan, Jacky Ickx and Derek Bell. This was a car that went to Derek.

'Needless to say, I immediately started discussions with Murray in an attempt to acquire both cars from him one day. I managed to negotiate a long-term, stage-payment deal and we drove the Rothmans car together at the 2004 Goodwood Festival of Speed. I also bought 962 200 but soon had to sell it to a friend, George Purdie, when my somewhat pressing cashflow requirements got too much, but only on condition that I could have first option to buy it back later — which I finally did... in 2018!'

The crazy year

Looking back, Henry describes 2004 as 'a crazy year, in fact almost totally insane'. Besides running Eagle, he was not only accumulating Group C Porsches but also seeking other Group C cars, notably Jaguars, all the while juggling myriad stage-payment and finance deals, and racing his XJR-11 in Historic Group C events. On top of all this, he became even more engrossed in his mission to track down all the ex-works 956s and 962s.

A significant step in that quest came when Group C restoration specialist Trevor Crisp told him that all three Shell/Dunlop cars raced by



■ Just part of the collection in 2012: foreground left are 1989 Miller Porsche 962 and 1990 Castrol Jaguar XJR-12, both Daytona winners; at far right are 956 110 and 956 106; the three Shell/Dunlop Porsches are 962 010 (17), 962 007 (18) and 962 008 (19); the Rothmans Porsches are (from left) 962 004, 956 008 and 956 001; and the Silk Cut Jaguars are XJR-6LM (left) and 1990 Le Mans-winning XJR-12. James Lipman

the factory at Le Mans in 1988 were in America owned by Aaron Hsu and his brothers. It turned out that Hsu was prepared to sell 962 010, the one in which Derek Bell finished a close second to Jaguar, as well as a Jaguar XJR-9, but he was unresponsive to Henry's need for payment terms to allow the purchase of both cars.

'Aaron's opinion was that if you want to buy something, then just pay for it — if you don't have the money, you can't buy the car. I explained that I had managed to acquire all my cars to date without having cash on the day, and needed help time-wise. In the end I got it all together, spurred on by learning that a big American collector wanted 962 010. On two consecutive days I managed to get the finance company to pay for the XJR-9 and raised enough myself from the sale of other cars to pay Aaron in full for the Porsche. It was close — this time fate was smiling!'

Henry's brinkmanship seemed to know no bounds at this time. Very soon after learning about Hsu's cars, he heard that the very first works Group C Porsche, 956 001, as debuted at Silverstone in 1982, was available — irresistible! After another round of complex negotiations, he concluded a deal with the American owner, Champion Porsche, then the largest Porsche dealer in the world, for a manageable deposit with the balance due within three months.

Needless to say, Henry's numerous finance arrangements had maturity dates, and as 2005 began he faced a series of deadlines in quick succession. 'In the end the only option left was to fully remortgage our house and the business premises, which understandably didn't go down at all well indoors. I had the largest set of commitments I'd ever made and the challenge was well and truly on. Some people were expecting

me to default but I didn't — that guiding rule, "always do what you say you will do", is crucial.'

Early in 2005 he decided to go to America with his friend Mark Sumpter to check out 956 001 (at Champion Porsche in Florida) and 962 010 (at Rick Villate's premises in Atlanta), both soon to become his, and tied this in with a visit to the Daytona 24 Hours. Prior to the race, they attended a talk by Derek Bell — 'so like that 750 Motor Club event back in 1982 and I was still too shy to chat much!' Derek mentioned that the speedway's 'legends' demonstration that weekend included his 1989 Daytona-winning car, the famous Miller-sponsored 962 108 C-2 that is acknowledged as the fastest Porsche of the period thanks to Jim Busby Racing's development work. Straight after the talk Henry went to find the car and it transpired that the owner might be willing to sell and was looking to buy a Silk Cut Jaguar

to race — so Henry did a straight swap for his ex-Brundle XJR-11. Bingo! Actually Henry had rather fallen out of love with that Jaguar after seeing Brundle nominate it as 'The Worst Car I Ever Raced' in *Motor Sport* magazine.

The next challenge soon followed. While racing during 2004, Henry became friendly with Martyn Konig, who was campaigning that favourite Skoal Bandit 956 114 with great success (see Chapter 11). After an eye problem obliged Martyn to stop racing, he decided to part with his beloved car — an opportunity that Henry could not possibly let slide by. Martyn agreed a 12-month payment schedule and the deal was done.

'Just as my commitments were looking slightly more settled, in late 2005, Martin Brundle made contact to say that it suited him to part with a Jaguar XJR-6 I had helped him to acquire from TWR after it went bust a couple of years earlier.

This was the very first Group C Jaguar, the one that he had developed and then shocked the works Porsches on its debut at Mosport in 1985. Martin wondered if I knew anyone who might be interested — silly question! My chosen finance company paid Martin on 27 December so I had a slightly belated Christmas present.’

When finalising this deal, Martin said the Jaguar they both should have bought was the 1990 Le Mans-winning XJR-12, and about a year later its new owner, Aaron Hsu, offered it to Henry. The outcome, once it became clear that Hsu was happy to sell some Group C Porsches as well, was a complicated five-car deal — four for Henry and the iconic FATurbo 961 011 for his friend and now fellow Group C Porsche addict Mark Sumpter. Besides the XJR-12, Henry also got the sole remaining Castrol Jaguar, the 1990 Daytona winner, together with two ex-works 962Cs, the Rothmans 004 and the Shell/Dunlop 008. Aaron now fully understood Henry and generously offered terms for payment.

At around the same time Henry snapped up Tony O’Neill’s last two Group C Porsches, both ex-Brun cars, when they became available. These were the Jägermeister 962 006 BM, which used the same part-carbon bespoke John Thompson monocoque as Henry’s Hydro Aluminium 962, and the Repsol 962 163, a particularly original and little-used specimen.

Throughout all this, cars sometimes slipped from his grasp. Two significant ones, both ex-works 956s from 1983, eluded him within weeks of each other in 2007: someone else beat him to 956 007, which Stefan Bellof flipped spectacularly at the Nürburgring and was now a ‘show car’, while 956 003, that year’s Le Mans winner, sold at auction for a price beyond his reach.

Historic Group C racing

In 2002 Henry had his first race in a Group C car, at Snetterton with the Jaguar XJR-11 that he had bought the previous year. Prior to his purchase, Win Percy had been racing this Don Law-run car for its previous owner, and winning with it, so Henry decided to keep Win and Don on board.

‘It was the first time I had ever raced a turbo car. Win and I came out best in a big battle with the Aston of David Leslie and Paul Whight, even though I had a problem with the brake pedal after entangling my foot with the brake-bias cable. Afterwards Win proclaimed that I was a “superstar” — but it was just so easy to drive.’

After this Group C baptism, in 2003 Henry took the Jaguar to Spa, where Percy won with it, and Silverstone, where the starter motor failed during qualifying and could not be fixed for the race. That weekend Henry also brought along

‘For me, these wonderful Group C Porsches are still the best endurance race cars ever made and there’s so much you can do with them.’

his ex-Richard Lloyd 962 201 for its first race, but problems with intermittent cutting out and excessive tyre wear also sidelined it — but not before Win was able to have his first Group C Porsche experience. He qualified it on the front row and raved about how easy it was to drive at competitive speeds.

In 2004 Henry competed in the first Historic Group C event at Le Mans with the XJR-11, but three weeks before that he took it to Spa. ‘It was lashing down with rain in qualifying. I was heading up the long Kemmel straight when Paul Whight’s Aston hit me from behind at 170mph, going flat out; he hadn’t seen me as he pulled out to pass another car in a ball of spray. There was a lot of damage but I was fine, apart from being angry about such an unnecessary accident — the only one, thankfully, I have ever experienced. Paul’s car travelled the length of the straight after he hit me but he only hurt his ankle — which is a real testament to the safety of these cars.

‘I had also brought 962 201 for a track day to establish the cause of the cutting out and the Belgian stewards kindly let me run it in the race, starting from the back — my first race in a Group C Porsche! It was fantastic, just what was needed after the accident, and I managed to work my way through to fifth by the end, chasing Martyn Konig in the Skoal Bandit 956 for a while.’

Somehow Don Law got the Jaguar repaired in time for Le Mans, where Henry qualified fifth among 37 cars and finished seventh in the race, despite a stone holing the radiator. ‘That was very special, although initially I was shocked by the way the tramlines down the Mulsanne straight snatched the steering wheel from your hands.’

Jaguar outings at Brands Hatch and Donington followed, with ever-improving results in the two races at each venue. Brands brought fifth and fourth places, then in Donington’s first race Henry



went one better and stood on the podium — and, finally, the second Donington race saw him stand on the top step. ‘That was the perfect conclusion to a thrilling season.’

Early in 2005, while at Daytona, Henry learned that the owner of 962 108 C-2, the car in which Derek Bell won the 1989 Daytona 24 Hours, was interested in exchanging it for the XJR-11, so a straight swap was done. Consequently, Henry turned to ‘Pinky’, his trusty 962 201, for that season. The car was now running well after its earlier trouble, diagnosed as an ECU problem, and he drove it at Brands Hatch (sixth and eighth) and Silverstone (seventh and tenth).

Racing the Skoal Bandit

When Henry made his final payment on the Skoal Bandit 956 114 and took ownership, he was itching to race it — so this became his steed for 2006. ‘I had always wanted to race a 956 and now that dream came true. Siggie Brunn ran 956 114 for Martyn and it made perfect sense for him to continue to do so for me. The team drove over with its period transporter from Germany for the first round, at Brands Hatch.

‘The car was on crossply tyres, and I didn’t have enough confidence with its smaller 16-inch wheels and tyres, so I qualified some five seconds off Martyn’s last outing there. Mark Sumpter’s ex-Schuppan 962 had emerged from a ground-up rebuild by Trevor Crisp, and this was his debut Group C race. He set an incredible 1 min 23s to

qualify fourth while I started ninth with a 1m 29s. In the two races I found a second a lap to finish 11th and ninth overall, both times winning my class [for 956s and pre-1987 962s].’

The next round was at the Nürburgring — Henry’s first visit there. On arrival he was amazed to find a 956 that he had long admired in the next garage. This was the ex-Joest no. 8 New Man car that he had watched fighting for the lead at Le Mans in 1984, and seen again seven years later when he and Karen visited Peter Kaus’s Rosso Bianco sports car collection in Germany. The museum had recently closed and its contents sold, this 956 passing to an owner who had Alexander Seibold maintain and race it.

‘It was incredible to see this car again and I couldn’t wait to be out on track with it — two 1984 Le Mans cars together. It turned out that Alexander raced in the Porsche Cup and a lot of German pride was at stake, so he wasn’t happy when I was two seconds quicker in practice, and eighth on the grid to his ninth. My car was now on 17-inch front and 18-inch rear wheels with radial Dunlops and I felt much more confident.

‘Inadvertently I was now involved in the battle for the top German team honours and was instructed by Siggie to turn up the boost from 1.15 to 1.3 bar for the first two laps of the first race. I had worked out that it would be better to brake and turn in early for the very tight first corner, and as I did that I saw Nick Rini, who was alongside me on the grid in his Jaguar XJR-12,

■ Henry turned to Historic Group C racing in 2002 and for his first three years he competed with this Jaguar XJR-11, culminating in a first solo victory in his final race with the car, at Donington in 2004.

Linzi Smart



■ For his 2006 season of Historic Group C, Henry fulfilled a long-held ambition to race a Porsche 956, taking in events at Brands Hatch, Spa, Nürburgring and Paul Ricard with the Skoal Bandit; here he is at the season-opening British round, learning the ropes with the Sigi Brunn-prepared car.

David Dykes

brake late and go off with a host of people, smoke pouring off their locked wheels. I was fully “zoned in” with my head down and pressed on to finish sixth overall with a third class win.

‘I was on a real high on the slow-down lap — until I drove down the pitlane to be confronted by a furious Rini gesturing unpleasantly. As I parked he ran over to tell me he was going to smash me off the track the next day, as I had pushed him off at the first corner. That burst my balloon on the spot, especially as I knew I had been nowhere near him. Sigi, furious and unwilling to let it go, examined rubbed bodywork on various cars to establish the colour of paintwork and took photos — all very forensic. The next morning Penny Graham came to the rescue with photos she had taken of the incident and, guess what, I was already halfway to the next corner. At least Nick was very apologetic and it looked like our pending stock-car race was now off.

‘He and I again lined up side by side for the second race and this time I decided it would be better to back off to avoid any first-lap clash. We actually had a fantastic race-long battle, me locked onto his tail throughout, but he had the advantage with his 7.4-litre V12 engine and a car that was nine years younger. Near the end, Jim Mullen caught and passed me in his Spice, and was chasing Nick hard while I watched from a few lengths back. As Nick approached the hairpin at the far side of the circuit, I saw that he was on the wrong line and, sure enough, he spun and both

Jim and I sailed past. I recorded another sixth overall with the class win and my fastest lap was almost seven seconds ahead of Seibold’s — so I was honoured by an ecstatic Team Brunn. It was one of my best races in Group C.’

Spa came three weeks later. Seven years after Henry’s first 956 ride as a passenger with Philipp Brunn, he was due to have Philipp as his partner in the one-hour feature race. ‘Sigi had fitted some basic telemetry, the first time I had the luxury of data to pore over. In Friday qualifying I was 4.5 seconds off Philipp’s time, but still fast enough to record our class pole and eighth overall. From the telemetry he identified that I was losing half the time through Eau Rouge.’

Then Sigi discovered some traces of metal filings in the engine oil. He decided the engine had to be changed overnight and when the job was finished, just 40 minutes before the race, he wanted to test the car. With Henry following in his Range Rover, Sigi drove onto the public road to Stavelot (it was not yet closed for racing) and blasted off into the distance, then returned a few minutes later and confirmed that all was well.

‘That was stressful. Time was so tight that we drove the car straight to the collection area and out to the grid. Philipp started the race and flew, knocking two seconds off his qualifying time, and I jumped in after the mid-point. We were elated to finish fifth overall with another class win — and at last I had a trophy from Spa.

‘The following day, I drove solo for the



30-minute race and finished sixth. Afterwards we studied the telemetry: I had bettered Philipp’s qualifying time by almost a second and knocked over five seconds off mine. After quite a long pause, he said, “At Eau Rouge you appear to have gone faster and carried a higher exit speed than me.” Clearly I had an excellent teacher! Looking back now, it was an incredibly exciting and rewarding weekend — eventually.’

The Silverstone Classic followed. After the problem with his 956 engine at Spa, Henry felt he could not risk damage to Brunn’s spare and decided instead to race a V12-engined Jaguar for the first time, namely the XJR-9 he had acquired from Aaron Hsu at the end of 2004; he retired with oil pressure problems.

Back with the Skoal Bandit 956, the season finished at Paul Ricard with support races for the spiritual successor to Group C — the FIA GT Championship. Again Henry shared his car with

Philipp in the one-hour race and Philipp also did a shorter race.

‘I found Ricard a hard track to get to grips with, but Philipp really flew and qualified third overall. My best time, three seconds off his, put me fifth, and I was pleased to be closer to him than at Spa. In Philipp’s race on the Saturday he battled for the lead and finished an incredible second, just behind Chris Randall’s NPT1 Nissan. The next day he drove the first stint in our shared race and again he was quick, but when I took over the engine wouldn’t restart. We lost half a dozen laps before it decided to play ball, by which time I had no appetite to go flat out for no gain whatsoever. We finished sixth among just nine cars but kept a clean sweep of class wins. That would have secured us the ‘unofficial’ Group C/GTP overall endurance championship had the format been as used from 2008.’

Henry did not compete with the Skoal Bandit

■ During 2008, Henry’s last season of racing, he campaigned ‘Pinky’, the ex-Richard Lloyd Racing 962 201. He had a superb year with it, ending up as champion.

Linzi Smart

Results, Porsche 956 114, Historic Group C, 2006

3–4 Jun	Brands Hatch (GB)	Race 1 (30 mins)	Pearman	Q9	11th overall	1st in class
		Race 2 (30 mins)	Pearman	Q9	9th overall	1st in class
23–25 Jun	Nürburgring (D)	Race 1 (30 mins)	Pearman	Q8	6th overall	1st in class
		Race 2 (30 mins)	Pearman	Q8	6th overall	1st in class
14–16 Jul	Spa-Francorchamps (B)	Race 1 (one hour)	Brunn/Pearman	Q8	5th overall	1st in class
		Race 2 (30 mins)	Pearman	Q8	6th overall	1st in class
19–20 Aug	Paul Ricard (F)	Race 1 (30 mins)	Brunn	Q3	2nd overall	1st in class
		Race 2 (one hour)	Brunn/Pearman	Q3/Q5	6th overall	1st in class



■ Special gatherings in 2007 for the 25th anniversary of Group C included the Goodwood Festival of Speed, where 956 114 was one of four Pearman cars to attend, driven up the hill by Derek Bell, Vern Schuppan, Mark Sumpter, Murray Smith and, of course, Henry himself.

Motorsport Images/LAT

again, although he raced for two more years, now partnered by ex-Formula 1 driver Mike Wilds, whom he had first met during his Brands Hatch work-experience days. In 2007 they campaigned his newly acquired ex-Le Mans Nissan R90CK and in 2008, back with 'Pinky', they had a very successful year with Henry winding up as champion, determined by the number of laps led over the season.

Group C's 25th anniversary

The 25th anniversary celebrations for Group C made 2007 a busy year, particularly because Henry

became heavily involved in efforts to capitalise on the anniversary by improving and promoting the racing series. Besides this, there were other special occasions throughout the year.

It started in March with an invitation to take Derek Bell's Daytona-winning Miller 962 to Florida for the Amelia Island concours, where Derek was the 'Honoree'. In June Henry provided four of his Group C cars, including the Skoal Bandit, for a 17-car tribute at the Goodwood Festival of Speed, with original factory drivers demonstrating them. For the Silverstone Classic in July he sent his entire Group C collection

■ This prized possession, won in 2007 at Rennsport 3 at Daytona Beach, was awarded for the most original race car – 956 001. It was a very busy year, with the Miller 962 starring, with Derek Bell, at the Amelia Island concours in March and the entire Group C collection displayed at the Silverstone Classic Group C 25th anniversary celebration in July.

James Lipman



— 'a massively challenging exercise' — for a gathering that numbered an incredible 76 Group C cars. And in November Porsche Cars North America invited the Miller car back to Florida, accompanied by Henry's Rothmans 956 001, for star billing at Rennsport 3 at Daytona Beach.

'We certainly maximised every opportunity that anniversary year, but it was exhausting!'

Changing times

With many new commitments in full swing during 2007, Henry was forced to release a few cars from the collection. Then, with the Lehman Brothers

collapse in September 2008, he thought it was time to be prudent, remembering the effect of the 1989 downturn. He decided to take a complete rest from Group C and focus fully on Eagle, to be ready in case times became hard — which was looking distinctly possible. And, of course, it became far more difficult to borrow money.

'Karen had put up with everything being so all-consuming over the previous three years, and she said that it needed to change. She was right: I really needed to focus on Eagle. We had more work because people were now investing in tangible assets rather than stocks and shares and

■ At the 2011 Salon Privé, held near London at Syon Park, Henry performed a logistical miracle to mount a huge display of his Group C Porsches. This view shows five-times Le Mans winner Derek Bell with 'Derek's Dozen' – cars with which he has a personal link.

Tim Scott



■ Henry at Salon Privé in 2011 with his beloved ex-Richard Lloyd Racing 962 201, which was one of his earliest Group C Porsche purchases.

*Getty Images/
David M. Benett*



■ A huge thrill came in 2015 when Valentino Rossi, MotoGP motorcycle racing legend, attended the Goodwood Festival of Speed for the first time. Beforehand, Rossi asked to drive a Rothmans Porsche and sent the organisers a picture of 962 004, which Henry was honoured to provide for him from the collection.

Motorsport Images/LAT



it turned out to be the start of Eagle's golden years — which I am delighted to say continue to this day.'

But gradually the Group C obsession bubbled up again. While the E-type's 50th anniversary year, 2011, was busy for Eagle, there were Group C activities too. At Salon Privé, held near London at Syon Park, Henry overcame tricky logistics to put on two displays: one represented Eagle, including its stunning new Speedster as featured on *Top Gear*, and the other embraced all of his Group C Porsches, which now numbered 15. Of these, 12 had a link with Derek Bell — 'Derek's Dozen' — so it was most appropriate that Derek was present and able to talk about each of them.

'My only negative about my Salon Privé display was the lack of the third Shell/Dunlop 962, 007, which was still in America, where every single ex-works car had resided before my acquisitions. So it was quite something when Rick Villate phoned a few months later to say that the owner was thinking of selling — and I couldn't resist.

'As always seemed to be the case, another "dangerous" challenge soon followed. In March 2012 Gooding auctioned the spectacular Matt Drendel Collection at Amelia Island, with some totally fabulous cars on offer. The one that interested me most was Derek Bell's double Daytona-winning 962 103 but there was also 962 HR1, the famous Lowenbrau car that Derek took to so many IMSA wins with team owner and co-driver Al Holbert. Of course, I had to attend — even though I'd only just paid for the Shell/Dunlop car and things were getting tight again. But I didn't get either car: I only got in one bid for 103 before it soared out of reach, and then I decided not to chase HR1.'

Clearly Henry was now fully in Group C collecting mode again after his pause and so it has continued ever since, Jaguars continuing to vie with Porsches for his attention, along with the occasional Nissan and Toyota from the Group C era, and even the Audi that he saw win Le Mans in 2004, the year he competed there in the support race with his XJR-11. Sometimes the pursuit of special cars has required others to be sold, and in one instance he even had to sell an ex-works 956, one that he had long coveted, less than a year after securing it.

This was 956 009, which dominated the 1984 season with five wins from seven starts. 'Many years earlier I had tried hard to get this car, only for the owner to say: "I'd rather set fire to it than take that money." Well, that told me. And, indeed, soon after it sold for almost 50 per cent more than I'd offered. But I was totally smitten and determined not to make the same mistake again — and when it came up I got it. But soon, after quite a lot of other purchases, I was getting stretched again and sadly it had to go.'

Four more of Henry's Group C Porsches — the ex-works 956 001, the Canon 956 106, the Brun 962 003 and the Miller 962 — also moved on in this 2015–16 period. 'I never bought cars in order to later sell them — it has always been entirely to do with the passion. But like any collection, mine has been a living, breathing thing, so when something really special crops up, other cars ultimately might need to go, and I've had to sell a few cars to raise the money for new purchases.'

In the midst of this a huge highlight came at the 2015 Goodwood Festival of Speed. After years of trying, they had finally persuaded legendary motorcycle racer Valentino Rossi to attend. Rossi asked to drive two specific cars and one was Henry's Rothmans 962 004, which had just completed restoration by Trevor Crisp. 'That was thrilling as I'm so keen on MotoGP. He was besieged by crowds when he got in the car — the Rossi effect is quite astounding. I was a little

Historic Porsche Collection

Current cars

Chassis	Original team	Active years	Colours	Main drivers	Year acquired	Notes
956 008	Works	1983–85	Rothmans	Bellof, Mass, Schuppan, Dumfries, Brabham	2003	Led '83 LM, Norisring Bellof win
956 110	Fitzpatrick	1983–84	JDavid, Skoal Bandit, Rollei	Fitzpatrick, Hobbs, Warwick, Edwards, Keegan	2002	Brands & CanAm winner '83
956 114	Fitzpatrick	1984–86	Skoal Bandit, American 100's, etc	Boutsen, Hobbs, Gartner, Villota, Vélaz	2005	JFR's most prolific car (LM x3)
962 004	Works	1985–88	Rothmans	Mass, Ickx, Watson, Holbert, Wollek, Bell, Struck	2007	LM: pole '86, 5th '88
962 007	Works	1987–89	Rothmans, Shell/Dunlop	Mass, Wollek, Schuppan, Merwe, Ludwig	2012	LM: pole '87, long-time lead '88
962 008	Works	1987–90	Rothmans, Shell/Dunlop	Bell, Struck, Wollek, Schuppan, Andretti, Ludwig	2007	Many poles/podiums '87, 6th LM '88
962 010	Works	1988	Shell/Dunlop	Struck, Bell, Ludwig	2004	Last works car: pole/2nd LM '88
962 011	Works-backed Joest	1989–93	Blaupunkt, Momo, FATurbo	Wollek, Jelinski, 'Winter', Schneider	2018	Last 962 WSPC win, ultimate 'Evo'
962 200	Richard Lloyd	1988–90	CABIN, Porsche Cars GB	Bell, Weaver, Needell, Hobbs, Donnelly, Cobb	2003 & 2018	Built for Bell '88, full '89 season
962 201	Richard Lloyd	1989–90	RAIKA, Italiya Sports	Andskar, Hobbs, Hill, Weaver, Reuter, Lehto	2002	Final 962 podium, LM '89 & '90

Past cars

Chassis	First team	Active years	Colours	Main drivers	Years owned	Note
956 001	Works	1982	Rothmans	Ickx, Bell, Mass	2004–16	First works car; Silverstone class win
956 009	Works	1983–86	Rothmans	Bell, Bellof, Struck, Ickx, Watson, Wollek	2015–16	Seven world championship wins
956 106	Richard Lloyd	1983–86	Canon, various Brun	Palmer, Lammers, Boutsen, Rosberg	2002–16	Brands win '84, Brun '85/86
956 115	Kremer	1984–86	Liqui Moly, Kenwood	Winkelhock, Schuppan, Jones, Jarier	2002–17	Led '84 LM in Kenwood colours
962 111	Nova	1985–89	Advan-Alpha	Takahashi K, Acheson	2005–06	All Japan championship winner x3
962 163	Brun	1990	Repsol	Brun, Pareja	2006–12	Used just for final 2 WSPC rounds
962-CK6-87	Kremer	1987-88	Leyton House	Fouché, Konrad, Taylor, Nissen, Grohs	2004-07	LM: 4th '87, 8th '88
962 003 BM	Brun	1989–90	Hydro Aluminium, FromA	Grohs, Brun, Huysman, Konrad, Larrauri	2002–16	Mexico 2nd '89, LM x2, bespoke body
962 006 BM	Brun	1989–90	Jägermeister	Larrauri, Dickens, Konrad, Ratzenberger	2005–08	Bespoke part-carbon chassis, 4th Spa
962 108 C-2	Busby	1988–89	Miller High Life, BFGoodrich	Wollek, Brassfield, Andretti J, Bell	2005–15	Daytona: pole/2nd '88, winner '89
962-TS-03	Schuppan	1991	0123/Art Sports	Haywood, Weaver, Taylor	2004-05	Full carbon tub & bespoke body

worried that he might not be careful enough when driving it but he turned out to be so respectful.'

Henry is still buying Group C cars. His most recent Porsche, bought in 2018 from Mark Sumpter, is the works-supported, Joest-run 962 011 that secured the final world championship race win in 1989, at Dijon — the last Group C Porsche victory. It is presented in FATurbo livery with high-downforce bodywork, as seen in 1993.

'It's probably the ultimate Porsche race car you can buy. No 919 Hybrid has become available yet, and if you could get one you could never run it anyway, let alone simply turn an ignition key and immediately start it, as with a 956 or 962.

'In spring 2019 an opportunity to join Bob

Houghton and his friends for a spectacular couple of days at the Ascari circuit in Spain was too good to resist. After a five-year gap, I had forgotten how exciting a Group C Porsche is to drive. Bob tried my RLR 962 and was blown away at just how easy and exhilarating it is to drive, and declared "I want one" with a huge beaming grin when he eventually pulled back into the pits!

'For me, these wonderful Group C Porsches are still the best endurance race cars ever made and there's so much you can do with them — race them, enjoy them at track days, attend concours, get invited to the world's premier historic events, collect all the models, period team clothing and press documents... and even meet your heroes!'

■ Henry still gets a big kick out of exercising his cars: here he is (left) in the spring of 2019 at the Ascari circuit in Spain with his newly acquired FATurbo 962 011 and ever-faithful RLR-Italiya 962 201 at a two-day track session, invited by Ferrari specialist Bob Houghton (right).

Ian McGillivray



THE RESTORER

A bottom-up restoration — from floor to roof-top — of a Porsche 956 or 962 is a time-consuming and exacting job that can take anything from 1,200 to 1,500 man hours, estimates Trevor Crisp of Katana Limited, the leading Group C restoration specialist based in Buckingham, not far from Silverstone. In terms of time from start to finish, that is up to 12 months, although there may be downtime if any elusive parts are awaited.

A lot of detective work is involved, as Weissach was always modifying parts and some other teams, such as Kremer, reused chassis numbers on multiple occasions.

In 1984, Weissach built just five 1983 factory-specification 956s for selected customer teams (wrongly labelled '956B' by some), and John Fitzpatrick Racing took delivery of 956 114 that February. The car went on to contest 27 races, the most of any JFR chassis, and took a win at the Norisring DRM and five other podium finishes, two of them second places in the WEC Nürburgring and Mosport 1,000Kms races. It was crashed only once, lightly by Emilio de Villota in the Brands Hatch 1,000Kms warm-up in 1986, so remains remarkably original.

One of Crisp's most recent restorations at the time of writing was 956 114, which came to Katana in December 2017 largely in its original 1984 specification, when it ran in Skoal Bandit colours. The owner, avid collector Henry Pearman, wanted as much as possible of the car's original finish and patina retained, and decided that it should be presented exactly as for its first race, the 1984 Monza 1,000Kms.

'All the bodywork was showing all the history from its previous life, a

■ Katana owner Trevor Crisp, here with 962 007, has been working on Group C Porsches since the 1990s, and knows them better than anyone.
Author





bit beaten about and chipped,' says Trevor. 'It was the same with all the components on the car. A car is only original-looking once, so this restoration was at the preservation end of the spectrum rather than the concours type. If there are any areas that need repair, we'll do this sympathetically so we don't take away the originality.'

A case in point on 956 114 concerns repairs made after Le Mans in 1984, when Philippe Streiff ran over debris. After the race, the team riveted a circular plate over the hole punched in the floor. During its recent restoration, other damage to the floor and cross member was found, so Trevor called in John Thompson to replace the cross member. Crisp: 'We just put in a section of rear floor to allow access to the cross member — common practice in period — but stopped it short of that hole: it's part of the car's history.'

Similarly, the battery carrier was punched into the driver's side by the front wheel when Emilio de Villota hit the pit wall at Brands Hatch in 1986; the original repair is still there.

'We go through the whole car, starting with the chassis,' continues Trevor. 'These cars have a hard time over the years. Everything is stripped off the chassis, then it's jet-washed to get rid of any oil or residue in the seams. We check all suspension pick-up points, engine and gearbox



■ Comparison views of 956 114 (upper) and 962 007 (lower): the nosebox access holes to the pedal box are further forward of the windscreen on a 962C.

Author

■ Comparison views of 956 114 (upper) and 962 007 (lower): the front suspension on a 962C is cranked forward to move the front axle centre line ahead of the pedal box. On each car, note the air jack to the right.

Author



■ Cockpit and underfloor views of 956 114, showing the circular repair under the dash after Philippe Streiff ran over Aston Martin crash debris at Le Mans in 1984.
Author

frame mountings, as these are welded aluminium fabrications, and crack-test them in situ. If we find any cracked aluminium welds, we repair them.
'Once we're happy with the chassis, the whole thing will be scrupulously cleaned by hand and finished using fine abrasive pads to achieve a uniform natural-looking finish. Many cars, especially from America, arrive polished to death, which to me looks completely wrong. Needless to say, they never leave us looking that way.'

Katana then goes through the suspension, stripping everything to the base components, and again all parts is crack-tested. The use of eddy current testing (ECT), an electromagnetic procedure, enables a component to be crack-tested without stripping the original paint from it — especially useful on wheels and wishbones.
If a car is not likely to be used in anger, the Bilstein shock absorbers will be sent off for dyno-testing; if they are functioning correctly,



■ Monocoque of 956 114, repaired after the battery carrier was punched into the side at Brands Hatch in 1986.
Author

■ Rear bulkhead of 956 114 awaiting the engine; the vertical turbo intercoolers and angled radiators for cooling the cylinder heads show well; the triangulated spaceframe cradle carries the powertrain and suspension.
Author



THE RESTORER

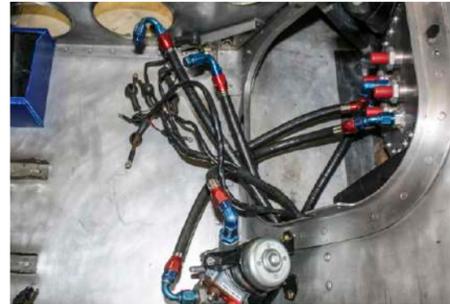
■ Titanium rear anti-roll bar (near photo) assembly costs £5,500 to make today. Aluminium oil pump drive off rear transmission (far photo) is frangible if debris gets in; a steel one would cause more damage.

Author



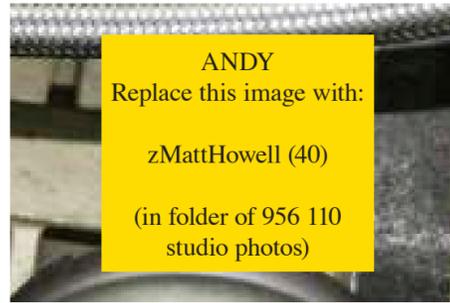
■ Standard on all 956s, a transmission spool (near photo) locked the rear axle; a differential could instead be fitted, making handling easier in the rain. A maze of pipes and wiring (far photo) for fuel pumps.

Author



■ Although Porsche did not stamp numbers on its chassis, it did put type numbers on its engines (near photo), as seen on 935 83, and on its gearboxes (far photo).

Author and Matt Howell



ANDY
Replace this image with:
zMattHowell (40)
(in folder of 956 110
studio photos)

and there are no leaks, they will be left alone. For a car that will be raced, more modern shock absorbers will be substituted as the period Bilsteins are non-adjustable.

'If anything is suspect, we replace it,' says Trevor. 'If we're restoring one of Henry's cars, we use parts from his ex-Schuppan stock. If it's someone else's car, we try to source the parts from elsewhere, but the problem now is that people want silly money even for parts in average condition. Often it makes more sense to reverse-engineer whatever we need, then make extras to put into stock.'

'A lot of these parts aren't cheap. For example, a complete titanium rear roll-bar assembly retails at £5,500; we made a batch of five last year that are now all sold. There are very few major steel parts; apart from motor and gearbox, there are just the front wishbones, front roll bar, roll cage, and rear wishbones and rocker assemblies. Everything else is aluminium, magnesium or titanium.'

One example of Porsche's engineering excellence is the fact that every single main suspension bolt and spacer is made from titanium, whereas all other manufacturers of Group C cars

used off-the-shelf items. Katana has a machine shop that can reproduce all such titanium items, and over the years the company has built up a full set of technical drawings.

'The flat-six engines go to Xtec Engineering in Walsall, where Paul Knapton specialises in high-performance rebuilds,' continues Trevor. 'There they are totally rebuilt and refinished as they were when new, and then dyno-tested to ensure they are giving the expected 630bhp — in this case for the car's original 2.65-litre 935 79 that is being reunited with 956 114 — before returning to us.'

Gearbox specialists either no longer wish to support these Group C Porsches or lack the experience to rebuild their gearboxes to the required standard, so Katana now rebuilds them in-house; parts for the five-speed transmissions are also getting harder to find. So, Trevor says, 'We made up the required tooling, and now do it all here. The transmissions are well-built and sturdy, and as long as the cars have been looked after well, they're usually OK. But if a car has been raced on a limited budget, you are likely to have problems.'

The turbochargers go to an experienced outside specialist who has been rebuilding them for over



■ The splined power take-off between clutch and gearbox allows quick and easy clutch replacement in situ.

Author

■ Rebuilt by Xtec Engineering, the engine goes back into 956 114, with Katana's Pohl de Visser connecting the intercooler piping; the gearbox spacer casing completes the load-bearing cradle.

Author



■ Used for the first time by the factory at Kyalami in 1982, the Bosch Motronic engine management system became standard wear on both factory and customer cars. This unit is a 1988 MP1.7.

Author



■ Rear suspension detail free of brake-cooling pipes; note upper/lower wishbones and rocker arms before shock absorbers and springs are fitted.

Author

30 years. 'They're sent off as a matter of course; they do have leakage issues and often debris damage. Waste gates get rebuilt in-house; we find that a lot of people seem to completely ignore these for some reason. They are often totally worn, needing new guides with a recut on the valve seats, along with new diaphragms and springs. The valves used to be lubricated with an aluminium-based anti-slip paste similar to copper-slip, which over time led to the valves becoming completely seized in their guides, leading to the inevitable over-boost!'

Water radiators, oil coolers and intercoolers are sent to a specialist to be sonically cleaned and pressure-tested. 'The early intercoolers contain a water pre-cooler core [banned by 1989] and we are now seeing a number of failures here. Originally the engines used a basic gauze filter on the turbo intake, rather than the K&N type, which resulted in the water core basically being

sand-blasted from the inside, coupled with corrosion from within the core due to some early anti-freeze becoming corrosive.

'Water pipes are all solid aluminium with aircraft-spec Wiggins connectors, rather than your usual rubber hoses and jubilee clips. We now use a waterless coolant to eliminate any further corrosion, which can be a major problem with the original cast-iron water pump impellers. All other fuel, oil and water-bleed lines are Aeroquip Nitrile braided hoses, which have a lifespan of about 10 years, and we use Teflon braided hose for the brakes, clutch and air-jack lines.'

Fuel cells are changed as a matter of course as their life span is only five years — even if 956 114, when it arrived, still had its original fuel cell from 1984! High-pressure fuel pumps will be tested for flow rate and current draw, then rebuilt if necessary. The low-pressure Bosch 'liff' pumps date back to the 917 days and often leak.

'We have worked out how to completely rebuild these pumps,' adds Trevor, 'by changing the six O-rings, which require the electrical connections to the motor de/re-soldering. It's fiddly and time-consuming but we have no choice as they are no longer available.'

'Other people generally replace most of the Nitrile fuel hoses when necessary, but there are four tiny ones between the fuel rails and the regulators that have a unique crimped-on fitting at one end. The number of original examples of these I have seen on running cars is rather frightening.'

Wheels and tyres come under scrutiny. While the factory mainly used Speedline wheels, customer cars were generally supplied with BBS. They were 16-inch diameter to start with on both the 956 and early IMSA 962 cars; this increased to 17-inch, with a few 956s even sporting 19-inch rears. The first customer 962Cs came with 17-inch wheels all round but later ones had 19-inch rears, which allowed the use of narrower rims without reducing the rubber footprint. This allowed the under-body tunnels to be widened for more downforce. For Le Mans, with the long-tail bodywork, 17-inch wheels were used all round.

To keep 956 114 truly original, it once again has a set of Momo wheels. It was a Momo that broke up at the exceptionally rough and bumpy Mosport circuit in 1984, putting Rupert Keegan's 962 105 off the road in practice, ending its Canadian weekend; that prompted the team to change back to original-equipment BBS rims.

'Brakes are thoroughly checked,' says Trevor, 'especially if sprint discs are fitted. These have a lot of lightening holes and they tend to crack a lot. I get new ones custom-made in France, at huge cost, but you cannot tell them from the originals.'

'The original brake calipers are magnesium. There are eight of those, two per wheel, and they can crack around the bleed nipples as the material is too thin. So they're taken apart very, very carefully; you can spend two days just getting them apart. Then they're crack-tested, and fitted with new seals and pistons if required. They're one of the horror areas on these early cars.'

Moving into the cockpit, a car receives a new fire extinguisher system as a matter of course and, if it is to be raced, a new set of seat belts too. Otherwise, the original belts are retained: 'A new set of belts doesn't work if you're trying to make everything look original and in period.'

The roll cages, aluminium for the 956, steel for the 962C, are usually fine — 'if there's a problem there, then you've had a very big accident' — and the pedal assembly is all crack-tested and master cylinder seals replaced. Then Katana cleans and checks all the instruments for any electrical malfunctions, and makes sure that the gauges



are working. All wiring looms are removed and thoroughly cleaned, and inspected for damage to wires and terminals. Then all is retaped to look as good as new.

'Factory Porsches had a cluster of four small red lights on the dash directly in front of the driver,' continues Trevor. 'These were operated by integral sensors in the Speedline magnesium wheels to illuminate should tyre pressure fall. No customer cars had these fitted, although, interestingly, the wiring is there for them.'

Bodywork is next in a restoration, although with 956 114 nothing was necessary beyond adjustment all of the fixings to make sure everything fits properly and securely, especially where quick-release pip-pins are used and holes have enlarged, otherwise there is the risk of a pin falling out.

With a full body restoration, however, the time involved becomes true to the 'how long is a piece of string?' analogy, especially if the appearance is to

■ Adam Giles and Pohl de Visser connect the water-cooled cylinder head pipework; the cylinders themselves would not be water-cooled until the 3-litre 962s came along.

Author

■ Attention to detail is Katana's trademark; only the best-quality nuts, bolts, washers and screws are used, many titanium as in period.

Author

THE RESTORER

■ Even the gearbox has its own oil cooler, piped up with Aeroquip hoses; note the rear anti-roll bar fitted in place atop the transmission housing

Author



■ Rear suspension detail showing triangulated rocker arms, awaiting the spring/damper unit to be connected to the anti-roll bar and bottom wishbones.

Author



■ The front brakes use twin calipers to slow the car down from the high straight-line speeds achieved at Le Mans; note the all-important pad-retaining clips.

Author



■ Driveshaft detail and Aeroquip oil-cooler piping to the gearbox; Porsche fabricated most components in-house, although others copied.

Author



be changed from sprint to Le Mans configuration, and total restoration time can rise to 2,000 man hours. If a car has been updated in period to the 28cm rear underbody maximum height of 1988 but the owner wants to backdate it to previous full-height specification, this is a major operation involving the entire floor section.

'The original body fit on most prototypes of this era was average, to say the least,' says Trevor. 'Each panel was individually fitted to a particular car, so a piece from one car will very rarely fit another without substantial work.'

Once Katana is happy with the body fit, the panels are all levelled, using as little additional material as possible, before the panel gaps are trimmed or filled to give a consistent finish.

'Regarding the original livery, we have a guy called Andy Bell who is the only person I trust. It's a long process, starting with finding as many period images as possible; we always build cars to a specific race specification and livery. While Andy researches the various logos and fonts, I measure the car and supply a list of the sizes I think they should be — which is right about 95 per cent of the time! Andy will then visit to fit them: he's as fussy as I am about the accuracy of decals, and sometimes we'll cock up a bit, but we keep redoing it until it looks absolutely correct.'

The decals might be Rothmans, Canon or Skoal Bandit, or something tricky with stripes running around the car, like the Victor Computer ex-Fitzpatrick 962 112.

'With 956 114, its Skoal Bandit decals were put on a very long time ago, so I went through it all to check everything for accuracy, then we renewed anything that was missing or incorrect. But the trouble is, once you start putting on new stickers, they stand out from the old, so you have to do it sympathetically. If there's something really wrong, something that was never on the car, then yes, we'll remove it. Basically it would be easier to take all the stickers off and start again — but on 956 114 Henry wanted to keep them.'

■ The engine and gearbox are now plumbed in, but await turbochargers and rear springs; rear frame supports bodywork.

Author

■ Now the turbochargers, rear suspension springs and underbody have been fitted, so the engine is ready to run; note the cooling ducts to the rear brakes.

Author





■ Detail of the turbocharger and intercooler, with stubby exhaust pipes exiting body side; these were vulnerable to side collisions.

Author



■ Rear suspension detail showing shock absorbers, coil springs and titanium anti-roll bar.

Author



■ Front suspension with shock absorbers and coil springs now mounted; twin-caliper ventilated disc brakes require massive ducts for cool air.

Author

Doors, windows, headlight covers and windscreen all need attention too. If a car is being repainted, it will receive new headlight covers and door windows, whereas if the original paint is being retained those items will only be replaced if they are badly broken. Katana has moulds for the door windows and headlight covers for both sprint and Le Mans versions of the 956, and both 1.2 and 1.7 versions of the 962C.

Windscreens, which are heated, have to be specially made as they are no longer available, and 956/962C screens have a double curvature at the top that makes them extremely difficult to manufacture correctly.

'It doesn't just wrap around the aperture, but also curves back at the top, which is extremely difficult to get right,' says Trevor. 'Back in 2000 we spent £10,000 on tooling to make new screens and developed a computer-controlled programme to bend them with heat jets in the right places at the right time during the process. Other people offer screens but the fit is appalling and invariably they don't have any top curvature. If we have to replace one, it will be because it's badly cracked; if it has just chips or minor cracks, we will have it professionally repaired.'

'Then it's a short journey to Superchips, also in Buckingham, where the car goes onto their rolling road,' adds Trevor. 'Ian Sandford at Superchips used to work for Richard Lloyd back in the GTi Engineering days, so it's a small world. As well as the motor, this gives us a chance to check the transmission; the last thing you want to do is get to the circuit and find there is a problem with the gearbox.'

Does Trevor miss his charges after spending the best part of a year restoring — or preserving



■ Deep driver's seat — all Group C Porsches were right-hand drive — has five-point safety harness; sports cars were, and remain, two-seaters by definition, even if only a dummy passenger seat was fitted.

Author



■ As the restoration of 956 114 nears completion, sidepods and door are added.

Author

THE RESTORER

■ The 956 came with a lockable driver's door, using a lock straight off the Volkswagen production line – not easy to use in a hurry.

Author



■ The 956 had a standard 911 ignition switch and key to start the engine; these red keys are scarce today.

Author



■ On 1987 factory cars, and standardised for 1998, the 962 had a purpose-designed door pull handle, utilising 928 latches and painted red to catch the attention of marshals.

Author



■ The underbody venturi tunnels that give the 956 its ground effects are neatly packaged either side of the engine and gearbox.

Author



— them? 'Group C cars have been my working life for 30 years now, and I could never imagine doing anything else. But no, I don't get sentimental. As soon as I've finished one, there's another one waiting.'

A wealth of experience

Acknowledged as one of today's premier Group C car restorers, Trevor Crisp learned his trade as an engineer on Norwegian Martin Schanche's Lucky Strike C2 Argo team in 1988, engineering for the world rallycross champion and Will Hoy.

His skills soon caught the attention of Britons Richard Piper and Patrick Capon, whose PC Automotive Spice C2 team he joined in 1989, with markedly more success. Running only selected world championship races, Piper and Olindo Iacobelli took three thirds at Dijon, Jarama and Spa, and a second at the Nürburgring. Those results were precursors to the big one: sharing the car with Mike Youles, they won C2 at the Le Mans 24 Hours in 1990, the final year for the category.

By now former Le Mans winner Vern Schuppan was converting Porsche 962s into road cars, and Crisp joined him at High Wycombe, at the old Tiga factory, developing and engineering them to meet type approval.

'With TWR now doing its XJR-15 road car and McLaren the F1,' recalls Trevor, 'it seemed to be a good market to be going into as Vern was planning two types of car with a production

run of 50. To me it was a good career move with Group C on the decline, and I would be in from the very start.

'Vern was racing in Japan, but of all a sudden there were going to be new cars to build for the 1991 Le Mans 24 Hours [where Vern was showcasing his 962CR supercar prototype], and I got drafted over to the race team to build two completely new 962-based cars, with different bodywork — everything.'

Designated TS-02C and TS-03C, the two new cars had chassis by Advanced Composites and Japanese sponsorship from 0123 Art Sports. TS-02C, to be driven by Eje Elgh/Roland Ratzenberger/Will Hoy, used the aero package developed by Jochen Dauer for the infamous 1991 Daytona shoot-out between the Unser and Andretti families. TS-03C, for James Weaver/Hurley Haywood/Wayne Taylor, was schemed by Aston Martin designer Max Boxstrom (and later reworked by Ralph Bellamy).

While Elgh qualified TS-02C 37th, the Boxstrom car was deemed undriveable because, says Crisp, 'It had little downforce and was basically trying to take off.' A pair of Porsche mechanics had meanwhile been quietly working on the team's spare 962 146 in a corner and, given the situation with TS-03C, it was duly pressed into service, qualifying 33rd — so this became their race car. It went on to finish 13th, delayed by a raft of niggling problems, including trouble with door hinges, while TS-02C went out with

head-gasket failure after 14 hours.

After Le Mans it was back to the day job for Trevor, building the road cars. In the spring of 1992, ADA Engineering's Chris Crawford purchased the last unfinished Richard Lloyd Racing 962 RLR 202 chassis, along with all of RLR's spares stock. Trevor was drafted in 'after hours' in order to get the car finished for an assault at Le Mans for the Bells, Derek and Justin, with Tiff Needell. They finished 12th after persistent brake problems.

By late 1992, Schuppan was in difficulties with his Japanese backers, not to mention the turmoil in the world stock markets, which started to make these supercars look more like follies rather than sound investments.

'I could see that the writing was on the wall at Schuppan; staff were being laid off every week, and that's when I went to ADA full-time at Brentford. Then the 962s started coming in; we had Henry Pearman's pink RLR 201, which Porsche Cars GB owned at the time, which we recommissioned, and jury-rigged an extra set of seat belts for a charity event giving passenger rides. Then Nick Mason's RLR 200 arrived and he asked us to backdate it to its 1988 spec.'

In the spring of 1993 Vern needed to complete the last Schuppan LM road car and, without the infrastructure to build it, commissioned ADA to do so. Crisp: 'We worked day and night to get the car built as quickly as possible and managed it in a record four weeks flat.'

■ Back on its wheels after a 12-month restoration, 956 114 shows the rear bodywork fit over the venturi tunnels; note the wing-adjustment rods.

Author





■ Restored to its Le Mans 1984 livery, 956 114 sports Skoal Bandit and Newsweek identities, both brought to JFR by Guy Edwards.

Katana

■ All customer Porsches were delivered white; for their livery schemes teams used vinyl, which was not easy to apply over such curvaceous lines.

Author



Crawford, meanwhile, had been buying up all available 956/962 spares, convinced that one day there would be a big market for Group C cars: 'At that time nobody wanted the parts and you couldn't do anything with the cars.'

Then in 1994 ADA ran 962 RLR 202 at Le Mans again, this time for an inexperienced all-Japanese crew, funded by Japanese rock star Masahiko Kondo with co-drivers Jun Harada and female racer Tomiko Yoshikawa. 'The whole thing was a fiasco. Because Le Mans was now running to GT regulations, the ACO would only allow the engine to use tiny restrictors, and most of the ground effects were gone because there was a massive flat floor area with smaller tunnels. Imagine three amateurs driving a flat-bottomed 962 with no power, and a load of ballast as well...'

The only 962 prototype in the 69-car field, RLR 202 qualified 13th. Despite two nose-damaging offs in the first part of the race, the Japanese crew were running in the top 12 at midnight. Then Yoshikawa became stranded on the Mulsanne straight by an electrical fault, which she was eventually able to rectify thanks to trackside instructions from Trevor relayed via an interpreter. After the car resumed, a cracked cylinder head caused coolant loss, so the team parked the car in the pits to wait for the closing laps to rejoin. It took the chequered flag but was unclassified, having completed only half the winning distance.

A factory-built Dauer Porsche 962 'GT', loosely based on road-car conversions, won the race outright, finally achieving what Vern Schuppan had tried to do in 1991. After buying JFR, Jochen Dauer had turned to supercars.

More restoration work came to ADA. Trevor worked on the very first customer 956, chassis 101, which was delivered to Kremer in 1983, at the same time as JFR received its 956 102. Then Jonathan Baker brought in Tim Lee-Davey's carbon-chassis 138 car.

Le Mans 1995 saw Trevor reunited with Richard Piper, who drafted in ADA to run one of PC Automotive's two ex-TWR Jaguar XJ220s, which unfortunately failed to finish after an excursion during the night. That had upset the aerodynamics to the extent that it was undriveable. The sister car would also fail to finish due to a broken crankshaft.

ADA was also running a de Tomaso Pantera, one of whose drivers was Dominic Chappell, who in 2018 was convicted of regulatory offences in the British Home Stores pension scandal. The Pantera won the British GT championship in 1995, but on the global scene it was no match for the McLaren F1-GTR. Crisp: 'We gave it a good try, and with Andy Wallace driving we



■ Sitting on its original Momo wheels, 956 114 is ready to race; the Rizla decal is a nod to driver Rupert Keegan's sponsor.

Author

■ Showing its Le Mans sticker for 1984 with the WEC decal, 956 114 remains highly original, apart from current owner Henry Pearman's name.

Author



■ Jürgen Barth, here at Katana with Trevor Crisp and 956 114, shook down every 956 and 962 built at Weissach.

Author

were close to winning a couple of races, but budget constraints ultimately put an end to our BPR campaign.'

In 1996 ADA became involved with Nissan Motorsports Europe (NME) in Didcot, initially developing their four-wheel-drive Super Touring prototype, then developing and building all of the two-wheel-drive Super Touring cars for the 1997 season.

After ADA closed in 1997, Crawford, who had been continuing to stockpile 956/962 spares, set up Group C Limited in High Wycombe, in premises formerly occupied by Schuppan's operation. Trevor went with him — and worked there for the next 15 years.

'We rebuilt a lot of cars during that time, mainly 956 and 962s, including three works Rothmans cars.

'From the connections we had made at NME we bought and restored the 1990 Blundell pole-setting Nissan R90CK-01, which had been sitting in the Le Mans museum for many years, owned by Nismo. With a historic race series looming in the form of Group C/GTP racing, we also purchased the most advanced R90CK ever made, for Charlie Agg. It had been run by Nova Engineering in

Japan through to 1993, and had some major aero upgrades including a biplane wing *à la* Jaguar XJR-14, now with the designation R93CK.

In early 2000 we took both cars to the HSR historic races at Daytona and finished first and third overall. Subsequently we ran Charlie in the European Group C series with great results and many wins, including the first Le Mans support race in 2004.

'Chris had over that time acquired Preston Henn's Swap Shop 956 103 and the famous 956 007, Stefan Bellof's Nordschleife lap record holder. Both cars, needless to say, were restored to perfection.'

Crawford decided to close Group C Limited in early 2012, selling all the assets to Henry Pearman. Trevor relocated the whole of the company's property — spare parts, workshop equipment — down to Eagle in Sussex, where Henry had set up a separate workshop purely for servicing his Group C cars.

'In 2013 circumstances changed somewhat,' says Crisp, 'when the new owner of the old Schuppan building in High Wycombe enquired about recommissioning his 956 101 Kenwood car to run at the 72nd Goodwood Members' meeting.



I struck a deal to set up a new workshop in the old Group C Ltd part of the building in return for a favourable rate on his projects. This coincided with Wayne Dempsey, then CEO of Pelican Parts, buying the ex-RLR 962 106B chassis, which needed a full restoration. Then I brokered a deal for him to buy 962 112, which also required complete restoration.'

This was the start of Katana, Trevor's own business, which soon relocated again, to Buckingham in 2014. Working with two mechanics, he has a 'good, steady business' that can take up to four cars for restoration at any one time. Group C Porsches are very much Katana's speciality, but the company will take on other sportscars from the era.

'Having worked on many different chassis over the years,' says Trevor, 'we know other marques and can take them on. We recently restored a Jaguar XJR-15 for a former Formula 1 principal: it turned out to be a very straightforward car, simple compared to a 962C.

'But the 956 and 962C are the cars I most enjoy working on. They're more complex than others and have superb build quality. Every part, every titanium bolt, spacer and washer, is specific

to the car — there's no corner-cutting.

'There are very few steel components on the car apart from motor and gearbox internals, wishbones, rear rockers, steering rack and pinion, and front roll bar. Everything else is either magnesium, aluminium or titanium. Porsche parts were and are very expensive, but they're top quality and wouldn't let you down.'

One of the Porsches on the workshop floor as we talk is the John Fitzpatrick Racing 956 114, the team's Skoal Bandit car for 1984, its American 100's car for 1985 and its Danone car for 1986, at the end of which it was sold to Dauer. Another car in the workshop, in its Dauer Victor Computer livery, is 962 112, which started life as JFR's first car, 956 102. This is the first time these cars have been together since the end of the 1980s.

Although Trevor works on these cars every day, has he ever driven one in anger? 'No, only slowly. I helped a friend who looked after the three Shell/Dunlop 962Cs at the Daytona Rennsport meeting in 2004, and I drove one round and parked on the banking for a photo shoot. It's just like driving a road car, docile, really easy to drive, especially with the synchro gearbox. But I've never lapped in one, or even driven one remotely hard!'

■ Now owned by Wayne Dempsey of California, the ex-Fitzpatrick 962 112 received a total restoration in 2018 by Katana; the chosen livery is that of Victor Computer, as run by Jochen Dauer in 1987.

Author