



CHAPTER 9

Daytona International Speedway

In 1967 John Wyer invited me to drive his formidable GT40-based Mirage with Jacky Ickx in the *Daily Mail* Nine Hours at Kyalami, South Africa's leading circuit. That solid win together paved the way for our partnership in the 1968 season, beginning with the 24 Hours of Daytona.

I had raced on a banked track twice before, in Nick Cussons' Ford GT40 at the 1966 Monza 1,000Kms – my first race abroad – and at Montlhéry with David Piper's Ferrari 250 LM in the 1967 Paris 1,000Kms. In fact the latter event, in which Richard Attwood and I finished sixth in pouring rain, was the prompt for Wyer to contact me for the Kyalami drive. Whereas the huge banked bowl at Montlhéry dates back to 1924 and remains active as a proving ground today, Monza's high-speed oval was fairly short-lived. First used in 1955, it was abandoned by Formula 1 after the 1961 Italian Grand Prix, the race blighted by the death of Wolfgang von Trips and 15 spectators, but continued as a sports-car venue until 1969. It also featured stirringly in *Grand Prix*, John Frankenheimer's fine 1966 racing film. Now just one section of Monza's banking remains, truncated by grandstands perched above the modern track's Turn One.

All the same, learning Daytona's steeply banked curves was a new challenge, and I found the process unnerving. Despite considerable determination, I couldn't seem

to keep my foot hard on the throttle in the steeply angled turn known as NASCAR 3, the critical corner for a fast lap time. My hesitation had a lot to do with approaching a steep wall at about 195mph. Even more daunting was the incredible compression on the chassis, and my body, as centrifugal forces pushed the car up the embankment towards the looming concrete barrier. Suitably embarrassed, I asked my younger co-driver if he were flat out all the way through NASCAR 3. 'Yes, of course, Bree-an,' Jacky replied, 'but each time I sink zat I fly to ze moon.'

If you can imagine what it might be like to drive around the inside of a cereal bowl, you have a pretty good idea of the bizarre attitudes a racing car takes on Daytona's high banks. Still, with all due respect, until you have ticked off a couple of hundred day-and-night laps tilted at this unnatural angle over the course of 24 hours, your imagination still has room to stretch. There's more to Daytona than its high banking, of course, but the slingshots they provide onto two long straights are what make this track fast, difficult and dangerous.

Think of the Daytona International Speedway as a broad, upright, elongated oval with the vertical stretch on the right-hand side pulled out in a graceful arc to form a shape that is, whimsically enough, like a giant capital 'D'. This arc is banked at 18 degrees, enhancing a car's grip and, therefore, its speed, but actually angled to give grandstand

OPPOSITE I drove both Gulf Porsches in the 1970 24 Hours of Daytona, this second-placed 917 with Jo Siffert and the winning Rodriguez/Kinnunen car, replacing Leo for a stint.

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The Enthusiast Network



ABOVE Prior to my racing on Daytona's high banks, I had experienced Monza's rain-soaked inclines in the 1966 1,000Kms driving Nick Cussons' Ford GT40 with Richard Bond, finishing in ninth place.

LAT

spectators a close-up view of the cars in profile. Daytona's start/finish line crosses the centre of this arc and has prime seating above for tens of thousands of fans. Jutting out over the hallowed stripe is a platform that has hosted a spectrum of flag-waving celebrities, including several serving American presidents, enlisted to drop the green flag on the starting marshal's command.

The only flat surface of the tri-oval, directly opposite the start/finish line, is the long back straight that connects the two sets of nearly identical banking. On this 1,000-yard stretch, a driver has time to check his gauges and relax a little, albeit while accelerating towards 200mph. The aforementioned two sets of banking are in fact the four celebrated 31-degree corners that give the circuit its special character: NASCAR 1 and 2 at the top, NASCAR 3 and 4 at the bottom. Each is angled about as steeply as San Francisco's most vertical hills, with one crucial difference – traffic on Daytona's inclines runs sideways. From within a racing car, the road ahead seems to soar away in a continuous uphill curve.

NASCAR

Daytona is the beating heart of the National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing and the premier venue for this massively popular racing series for *faux* street sedans that resonates among millions of white-collar, blue-collar and no-collar American fans. NASCAR was launched in 1948 by 'Big' Bill France as a way to gather together a scattering of individual events for 'stock' cars into a championship series. It turned out to be a billion-dollar idea.

There's an old story about this beginning that undoubtedly is apocryphal, but too amusing not to repeat. France, frustrated that former bootlegger and top driver Junior Johnson was reluctant to sign up for the complete series, invited him to a Southern breakfast of bacon, eggs and grits.

'Junior, you need to be committed to the entire series.'

'Well, Bill, I plan to enter all the major races so I really will be involved.'

'Junior, there's an important difference between



involved and committed. Consider what it took to produce your breakfast. The chicken may have been involved, but the pig was committed.'

From 1936 until 1959, races were held on a thin 4.2-mile loop alongside the Atlantic Ocean. The main straight was two miles of Highway A1A connected by a quick U-turn onto Daytona's hard-packed sandy beach, where competitors duelled for two more miles along the water's edge before swinging back onto the highway for another lap. Even today, you may still drive your street car along these very stretches of road and beach, although more carefully: the current speed limit is a sedate 10mph.

By 1959 stock car racing was becoming a significant spectator sport. Forward-looking Bill France invested \$3 million (about \$25 million in today's money) to create a huge uptown speedway that could seat thousands of fans. By the time I arrived some nine years after the bulldozers had departed, little about Daytona had changed. Over the years attendance grew in parallel with NASCAR's increasing popularity

and in its heyday the Daytona International Speedway could accommodate 150,000 fanatically partisan supporters of larger-than-life superstar drivers, fans parking their cars in reserved single-marque corrals. NASCAR events have always featured 'stock' cars, their facsimile bodies shaped to resemble family sedans, but with little or nothing about them off-the-shelf stock.

Daytona is home to two race tracks. From the speedway's inception, all sports racers, including our exotic prototypes, have raced on a layout that interrupts the tri-oval to incorporate an infield section, extending the track's length from 2.5 miles to over 3.5 and includes three of the four high-banked curves. Unlike most of the circuits I've raced on, Daytona runs anti-clockwise.

For the stock cars, the arcing front straight rises to enter NASCAR 1. Sports cars, however, skip NASCAR 1 and join the road racing circuit just beyond the pit exit and follow a boomerang-shaped track through six corners before re-entering the tri-oval between NASCAR 1 and NASCAR 2.

ABOVE We heroes of the 1968 Gulf GT40 team survey our world, me at left (on my first visit to the USA) with Jacky Ickx, David Hobbs and Paul Hawkins.

Courtesy of John Horsman

OPPOSITE Jacky Ickx, my young Belgian teammate, on the high banks at 195mph in our John Wyer Ford GT40. LAT

Daytona’s driving demands
Visitors to Daytona may amuse themselves by trying to walk up the 31-degree banking without help from their hands, but in doing so they are one small slip away from scuffed palms. While ordinary road cars touring the high banking at speeds below 90mph are likely to slide to the lower apron, a racing car circulating at the limits of adhesion is shoved the opposite way, towards the outside concrete wall, experiencing the same centrifugal forces as astronauts launched from nearby Cape Canaveral. This unforgiving barrier, added in 1964 to prevent cars from occasionally departing the circuit, brings the unfortunate consequence that contact with it usually causes a crashed car to rebound across the track, much to the fright of its helpless driver and the distress of any racers bearing down on him. One accident often leads to another, and sometimes many.

Drivers were rewarded when we were fast, and we were fast when we probed the edges of the physical limits of both car and tyres. So probe we did, and violent wrecks in NASCAR 3 became increasingly common. By 1973 blow-outs from over-stressed tyres were causing too many severe crashes, inducing the track management to add a broad U-shaped chicane just before NASCAR 3. (NASCAR races excluded this chicane because their cars ran quite a lot slower.) This speed-arresting complex looked a lot like a bus stop and immediately became known by that name. No more did our cars arrive at the end of the back straight at about 200mph directly facing the entry to NASCAR 3 but were down to about half that speed by the time they exited the chicane. The ‘bus stop’ did its job, and the number of crashes in NASCAR 3 was significantly reduced.

Drivers negotiated the chicane by braking reasonably hard on the approach – just enough to find the entry – and then flowing the car left into the first part of the U. There was room for a short burst of acceleration along the chicane’s mini-straight before one touched the brakes for the hard right leading to the left-hand final turn. Until the mid-1980s, this exit from the chicane

pointed the car directly at the outside wall just 60 feet away, requiring a demonic commitment to open the throttle while changing direction by 90 degrees. The arc from the chicane exit into the apex had to be as aggressive as it was graceful, and the bigger and smoother the radius, the more speed a car could carry; but the harder the acceleration, the more the car pushed towards the wall at the top of the banking. NASCAR 3 was where races were won because even a small speed advantage gained in this curve was sustained for a full mile, all the way to NASCAR 1. There was a pressing incentive to be fast.

The Daytona traffic jam
The 24 Hours of Daytona (now known as the ‘Rolex 24 at Daytona’) has always been a race stuffed with competitors. Daytona takes 75 or more cars on the 3.5-mile sports car course, whereas Le Mans accommodates just 55 on its 8.5-mile circuit. The French race also takes place near the summer solstice when daylight hours are at their maximum, while Daytona’s endurance race is run in late January. Although Daytona is now softly illuminated for the Rolex, races before 1998 forced drivers to rely on headlights for 11 hours of the 24. The distance an incandescent headlight reaches at 200mph is the same as at 20 but, while the beam illuminates the same amount of track, the interval is covered 10 times more quickly.

Throughout the history of the 24 Hours of Daytona, the most dangerous hazard has been the huge differential in speeds among the various racing classes. In a Porsche 917 we were often 70mph faster than the slowest cars – MGBs, Volvo 122Ss and Fiat 124s – and we passed as many as 15 competitors every lap. Off the start, we would catch the stragglers on our fourth lap, less than eight minutes into the race, and lap them another 150 times over the full race distance. Nonetheless, we still had to set consistent times that pleased the team manager’s merciless stopwatch.

In the 917 we changed drivers at every fuel stop, more or less once an hour. After seven intense stints each between the noon start and



RIGHT In 1969 I was a works Porsche driver, partnered by Vic Elford, seen here with Porsche engineer Helmut Bott.

Porsche-Werkfoto



2.00am, drivers tire and mistakes are inevitable, especially in the hours before dawn. Before racing cars became reliable (a relatively recent miracle) at least one-third of the field either crashed or broke. As the pits of eliminated teams went dark, the lights in the medical hut burned all the more brightly.

The 1969 24 Hours

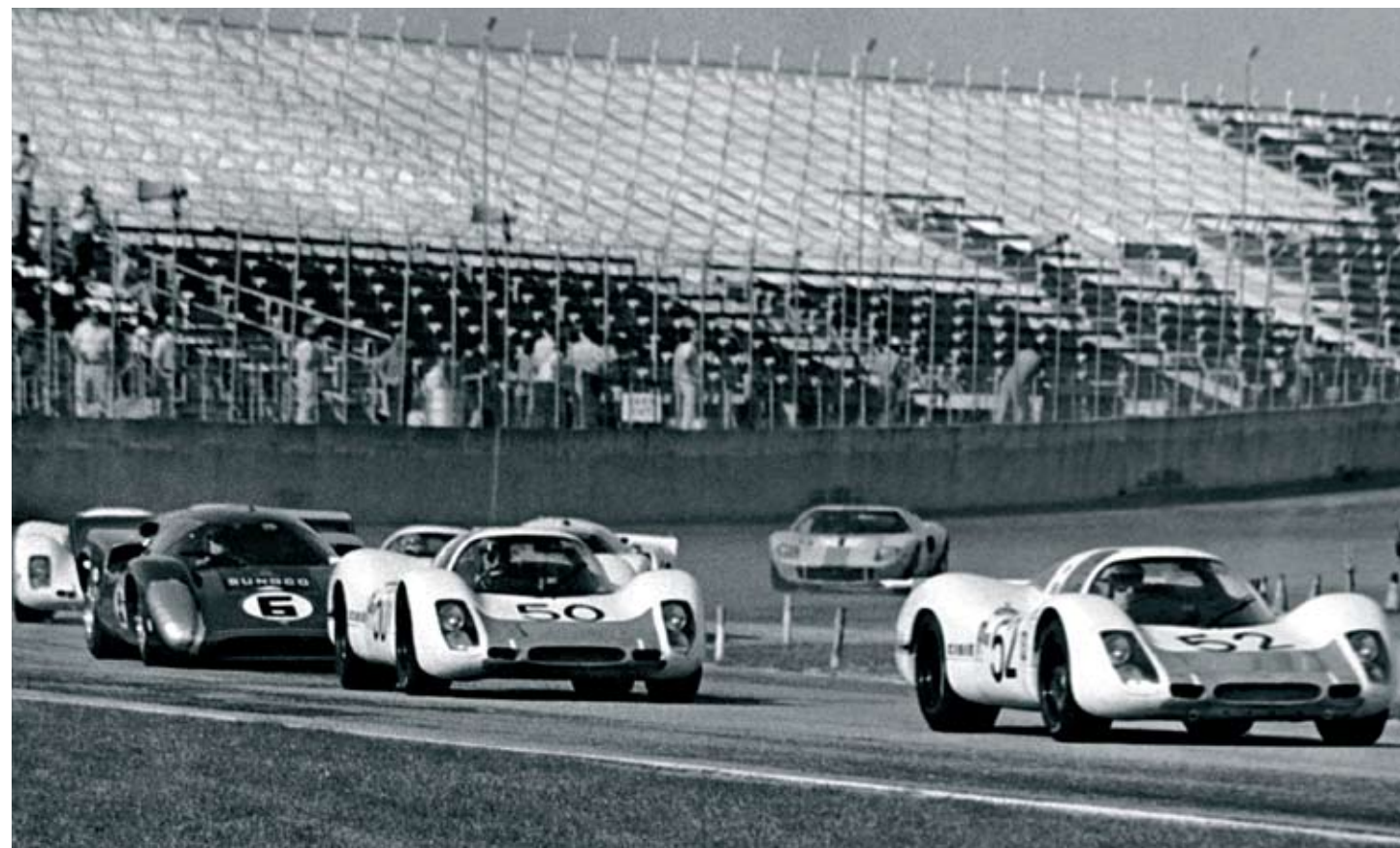
In January 1969 I arrived at Daytona for the 24 Hours with very little use of my right arm, which had been badly fractured seven months earlier in my crash at Spa during the 1968 Belgian Grand Prix.

My radius and ulna were reconnected by steel pins and after the surgery I exercised regularly until a single X-ray at my local hospital pronounced the bones healed. At the end of that season Derek Bennett hired me to drive his lovely 2-litre Chevron-BMW B8 in South Africa's Springbok Trophy series, which began with the Kyalami Nine Hours. My arm hurt like hell during that race and got progressively worse in

the subsequent three-hour races in Cape Town, Bulawayo and Lourenço Marques. Providentially, Alex Blignaut, organiser of the South African Grand Prix, knew a great orthopaedic surgeon named Dr David Roux, who saw me quickly and took a barrage of new X-rays.

'I have two bits of bad news for you, Brian. Your bones never knitted together.' When I asked about the second unpleasantry, Dr Roux replied, *'Well, there's an experimental procedure I could try but I'm going on vacation tomorrow.'*

This indeed was very bad news. A week earlier I had been contacted by Rico Steinemann, the Porsche team manager, offering me a contract to drive one of the five 908s being prepared for the factory's campaign in the 1969 International Championship for Makes. If I ever were to race for Porsche, or anybody else, I needed that operation. The good-hearted Dr Roux agreed to delay his holiday and operated the next morning. He opened up my arm, cleaned it out, cut some bone from my right hip and glued it into position above the radius and ulna. For reasons never



explained, he chose not to encase his repair in plaster, providing a sling instead. *'Don't use your arm until it's necessary,'* cautioned Dr Roux. As promised, I rested it as much as possible through the winter break, mindful that it was exercise that had prevented the bones from healing in the first place. At Daytona, I would need both arms.

All the Porsche team cars were 908LH long-tail coupés and I was paired with 'Quick Vic' Elford, so my lap times needed to be good. I found that I could move my damaged right arm forwards and backwards well enough to shift gears, but the rotational strain of turning on the high banked curves obliged me to jam the steering wheel with my left knee. In the infield, I relied heavily on my left arm. I managed to fake my way through practice and qualifying but worried that I wouldn't survive 24 hours of hard racing. This was especially concerning because my continued employment depended on a strong performance in the first event of the season.

Early in the race, Vic and I were nearly rendered unconscious by an exhaust leak but,

unfortunately, that was fixed. Then, blessedly, the titanium teeth on each of our cars' timing-gear drive shafts began breaking and, one by one, all five factory Porsches were forced to drop out. Vic and I were finished just past the halfway point, to my unspoken relief.

In that year's race an unusually high number of cars had problems and a little-known underdog,

ABOVE AND BELOW In 1969 Vic Elford put our long-tail Porsche 908 on pole, but we retired from the race at half-distance with an engine problem.

Getty Images/RacingOne & Porsche-Werkfoto





LEFT Jo Siffert, my partner at Daytona in 1970, rests his injured ankle, sitting in his removable 917 seat.

Michael Keyser

RIGHT Our splendid Gulf Porsche 917s sparkle in the spring sunshine ahead of their début race. The roof of each car was fitted with an oval-shaped window to allow the drivers a better view of the banking as it soared ahead of us.

Michael Keyser



a Lola-Chevrolet T70 run by Roger Penske and driven by Mark Donohue, was the winner even though it had spent over two hours in the pits. Never before had a car powered by a General Motors engine won a major endurance event and the names Penske and Donohue went on to rock the racing world.

Daytona's woes aside, Porsche triumphed in the 1969 season, with Seppi Siffert and me winning four races in a sequence of five – the Brands Hatch Six Hours and the 1,000Kms events at Spa, Monza and the Nürburgring. The gearbox of our long-tail 908 Spyder failed us whilst we were leading at Le Mans, overheating after 60 laps. In the next race at Watkins Glen, Seppi and I won again.

The 1970 24 Hours

The 1970 24 Hours of Daytona was a legendary battle. It was also the début of the JW Automotive team's formidable Gulf Porsche 917Ks, Pedro Rodriguez and Leo Kinnunen in one of them, Seppi Siffert and me the other. John Wyrer's team was the official Porsche entry, with full



ABOVE The 24 Hours of Daytona in 1970 was the first round of a much-anticipated, year-long Ferrari/Porsche battle. In fact Porsche won nine of the ten championship rounds, four of them with me at the wheel.
Porsche-Werkfoto

RIGHT In 1970 John Wyer was rightly disturbed about the Daytona presence of a rival to his works 917s – this unexpected competitor from within Porsche itself.
Porsche-Werkfoto



factory backing – purportedly. When our team showed up in Daytona at the end of January, we were surprised to find another factory 917K for Vic Elford and Kurt Ahrens entered by Porsche Konstruktionen, essentially the factory development department. Wyer queried this with Ferdinand Piëch, the director of Porsche motorsport, who disingenuously assured us that he and Porsche Konstruktionen flew their car, spares, drivers and mechanics to Daytona just for some fun in the sun. It appeared that we would be battling not only a team of Ferrari 512s but also racing against ourselves.

Seppi turned up with a still-healing ankle, broken in a bizarre off-season go-kart accident that says everything about the competitive nature of my friend. The previous month Porsche had invited all of the factory drivers to celebrate its championship year with other successful German sports stars at the Berlin Sportpalast. The venue included a velodrome configured like a big teacup, flat at its base but sloping increasingly sharply upwards until its sides were

nearly vertical. We were to take part in a race for fun (mostly Porsche management's) but, instead of bicycles, we were issued with go-karts. The team's usual clear and strict instructions were to confine ourselves to the flat track at the bottom of the velodrome because a sizable door in the banked wall had been left open. Seppi, true to form, ignored team orders and shot up the wall to take advantage of the additional grip. Almost immediately he had to choose between the yawning void of the doorway and the narrow bit of track above it. Picking the latter, Seppi found his go-kart wouldn't fit through the space, tumbling him to the bottom of the track with his machine on top, breaking his ankle – and catching fire. If Seppi's mending ankle bothered him at Daytona, it certainly didn't diminish his performance.

Our chief competitors, the imposing Ferrari factory team, introduced the new 512S and had three cars for six seriously talented drivers: Mario Andretti with Arturo Merzario, Jacky Ickx with Peter Schetty, and Nino Vaccarella with Ignazio Giunti. Not to be ignored was the supremely

ABOVE The Ferrari of Andretti/Merzario/Ickx, fastest of the works cars, challenges my Porsche – perilously close racing on Daytona's bumpy banking.
*Getty Images/
The Enthusiast Network*

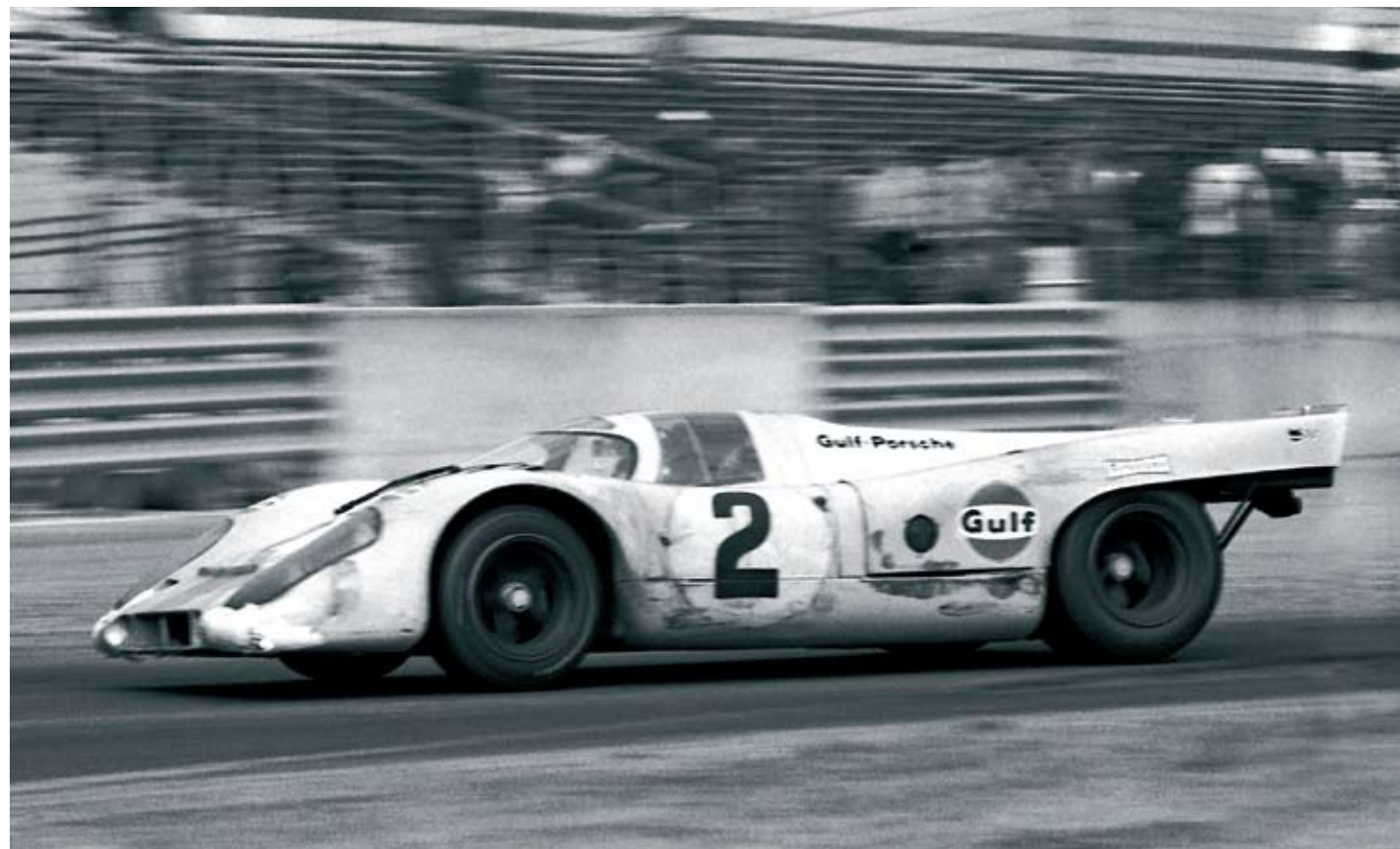
RIGHT Porsche 917 number 2 won the 1970 race, crewed by Pedro Rodriguez and Leo Kinnunen – plus, for one stint, Redman.

Porsche-Werkfoto



BELOW After 2,758 miles of racing, the winner has earned its battle scars.

*Getty Images/
RacingOne*



capable Dan Gurney, partnered by Chuck Parsons in another 512S run by the North American Racing Team (NART).

Andretti in his Ferrari took pole position with Siffert in our Porsche on the outside of the front row. Shortly after the start, Seppi jumped Mario for the lead and our 917K stayed in front for three hours, until we had problems. First there was an ignition fault, then a puncture, then a loose brake line. The last failure was the most memorable. At 2.00am, with me driving, the car hit the notorious NASCAR 4 hump hard enough to break the right rear shock absorber, causing me to spin helplessly down the front straight. Drivers of racing cars experience almost no sensation of speed, even at 200mph, except when the car is out of control. That night, as I watched the infield lights and outside wall swap places half a dozen times, I found the velocity terrifying.

A total of 20 laps were lost fixing all of these problems and we dropped to third place. Meanwhile, the Rodriguez/Kinnunen Porsche had assumed the lead and was running

flawlessly. Rejoining the race after repairs, we followed our teammates through the night until, at 7.00am, our car's clutch gave out. Our mechanics were ready to push the car to the garage but Ferdinand Piëch insisted that the team fit a replacement. That was a major job and dropped us from 20 laps behind the leaders to over 50, but, amazingly, we still retained third place.

Whilst the mechanics were working on the clutch, Wyer called the leading 917K into the pits because Kinnunen wasn't following his instruction to slow down and conserve the car. Either Leo didn't understand team orders or he refused to obey them; it was hard to know which as he spoke no English and our cars had no radios. I took Leo's place with strict instructions to run calibrated times, fast enough to win but slow enough to protect the car. To my surprise, a delighted Seppi passed me on the banking in our own 917K, waving at me as he swept by. Not only was the Porsche factory team racing its competition director, I found that I was now racing myself!

ABOVE I watch (foreground) as Seppi impatiently waits while mechanics repair our car after I slid on the 'marbles' coming onto the banking, striking the wall a glancing blow.

Michael Keyser

A lap of Daytona

Let me share the sensations of lapping the 3.5-mile Daytona circuit in my 1970 Porsche 917K.

After rocketing out of NASCAR 4, I reached the start/finish line at about 210mph, staying in the middle of the 18-degree banking in order to set up for the smoothest possible entry into the tight left-hand corner leading to the infield section of the course. Hard braking, snatch second gear and accelerate into third, then ease off the throttle a little in the quick right/left before braking hard for Infield Turn 3.

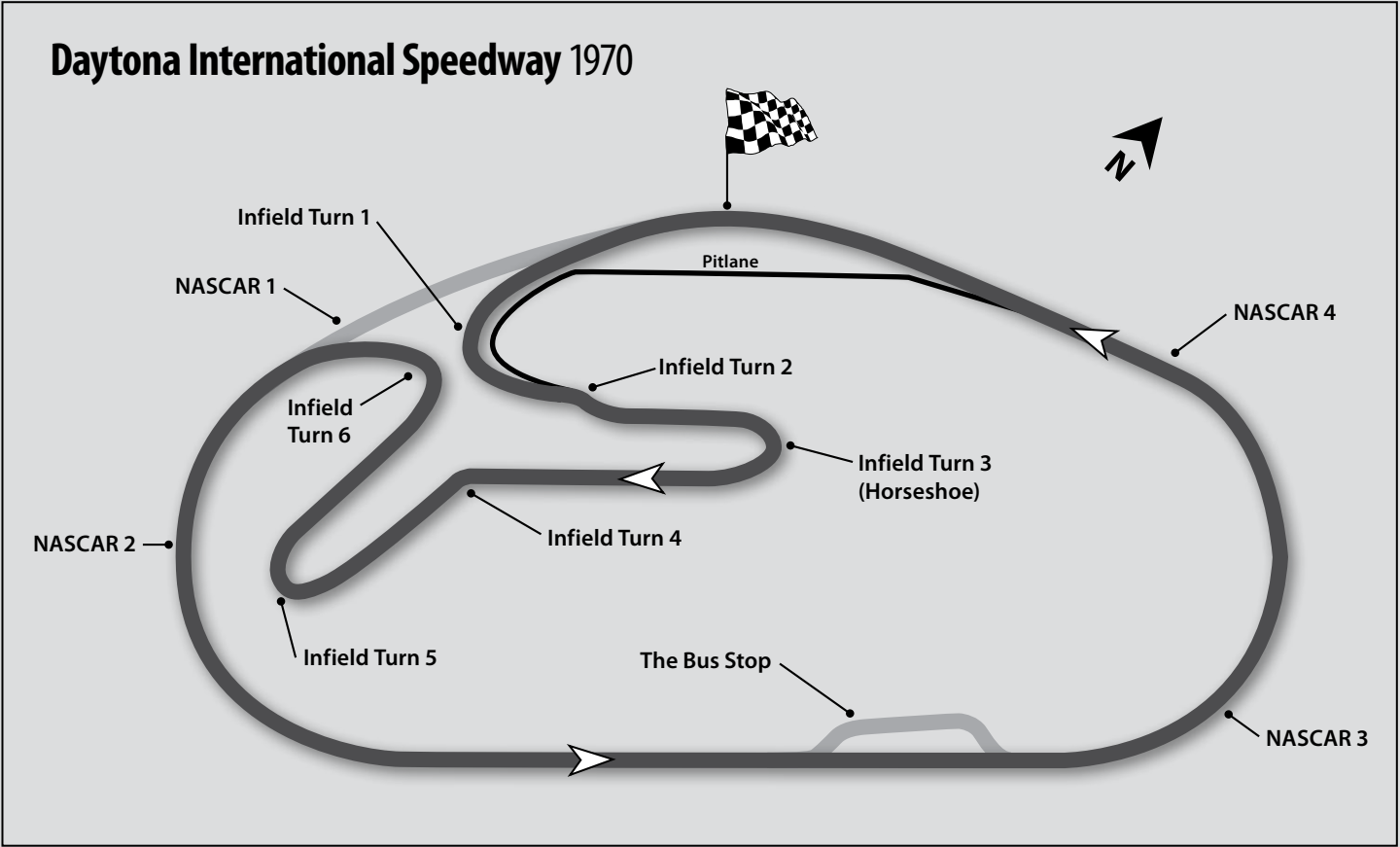
This is the Horseshoe, which required careful car placement because the gravel on either side of the track contained shells sharp enough to cut a tyre. Exiting, I would squeeze on speed in second gear, grab third and fly through the next left-hand bend at 160mph with as small a lift as my courage and the tyres’ grip would allow. More hard braking and then it was second gear for the 180-degree Infield Turn 5 right-hander, then up to third and back to second for the final turn of the infield section, a left that squirted the car back onto the speedway about halfway between NASCAR 1 and NASCAR 2. Because Infield Turn

6 widened at its exit, I could open the throttle aggressively as the car made its abrupt transition to the banking and climbed the 31-degree gradient.

Now the 917K was accelerating rapidly and angled towards the outside wall with only 20 yards to bend it back to the direction of the track. As I progressively added speed, I needed to leave exactly enough grip in the tyres so that they continued to obey steering input. NASCAR 2 was bumpy enough to make my eyeballs rattle and the car wandered slightly in response, but after a few laps I was used to it. I kept the throttle buried, selected fourth gear (top in a 917K), flashed through the banking and onto the 1,000-yard back straight, arriving at NASCAR 3 at about 210mph.

The key to a fast lap at Daytona lay in keeping the car on the ragged edge through NASCAR 3, the corner Jacky Ickx likened to a moon-shot. Flying into that quick-transitioning banking, I dived for the apex at the bottom and stayed on the throttle as centrifugal forces pushed the car sideways up the slope until it skimmed the wall at 180mph.

Good entry speed was important and hitting the apex



was critical, but fast exit speed was paramount. At the apex I pressed my foot to the floor, throttle wide open. As the car accelerated, the increasing velocity demanded more and more of the tyres’ grip, so I progressively unlocked my arms and straightened the wheel. If I timed the exit perfectly, my hands were level and the car was pointed straight, inches from the concrete wall. An early apex tightened the radius of the exit and, under maximum acceleration, caused the car to arrive at the outside wall with more turning required. The inexperienced driver instinctively would lift his throttle foot, inducing an unfortunate phenomenon called trailing-throttle oversteer where the front bites, the rear lifts, the car rotates, and – bang! Despite the alarming proximity of solid concrete, it was critical to lift as little as possible and better not at all. One-tenth of a second faster in NASCAR 3 yielded a full car-length advantage by the end of the start/finish straight. After just five matching laps, the gap could stretch to 100 yards.

My Porsche 917K hammered into NASCAR 3 in anything but an orderly way. Once beside the outside wall, it was disconcerting to realise that looking straight ahead is no good at all since there was nothing out there

but curving asphalt. To see where the car would travel over each next half second, I focused exclusively on the top left-hand corner of the windscreen since that was where the car was headed next. In 1970 Porsche fitted each 917K with a small half-moon Plexiglas window above the driver’s head for better visibility.

Throughout all my years of racing at Daytona, there was an unexpected complication between NASCAR 3 and NASCAR 4 – a severe bump in the track above the tunnel that gave cars and trucks access to the infield. Drivers get used to instability caused by a track’s washboard surface – a condition certainly not unique to Daytona – but it took some time for me to become comfortable with the way this mid-corner hump abruptly tossed a car four or five feet towards the outside wall. At 210mph, it was critical to stay low on the banking and leave a clear lane between my car and one being passed. Four feet apart could quickly become inches – and potential trouble.

Coming off NASCAR 4, I bent the car once more towards the infield as the banking slowly flattened to 18 degrees. From there to the start/finish line, it was flat out, with more than 200mph sustained for nearly a mile.

One lap done – just 700 or so to go.



ABOVE Pedro and me with the winners' trophy, happily exhausted after an eventful 1970 Daytona 24 Hours.

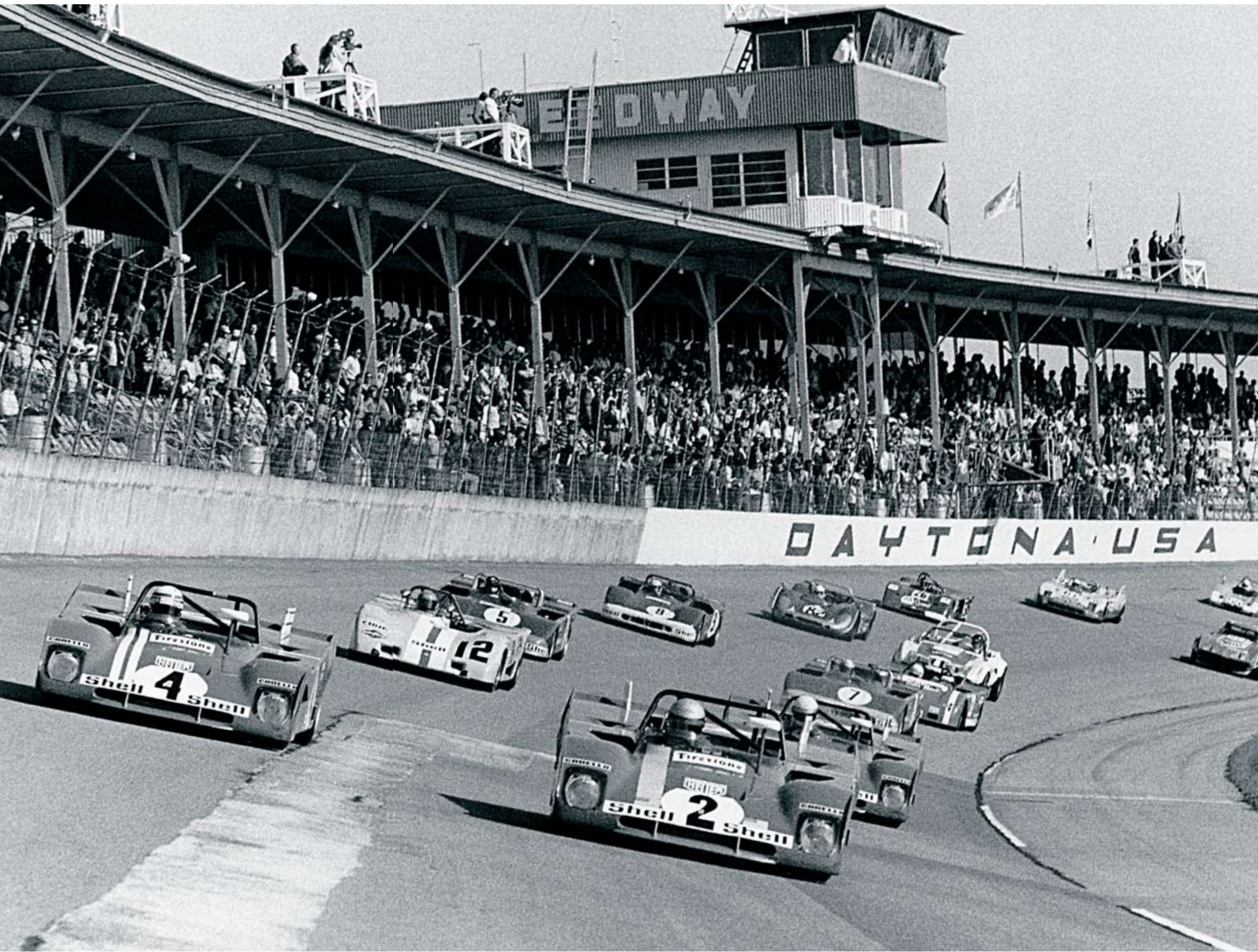
Getty Images/
RacingOne

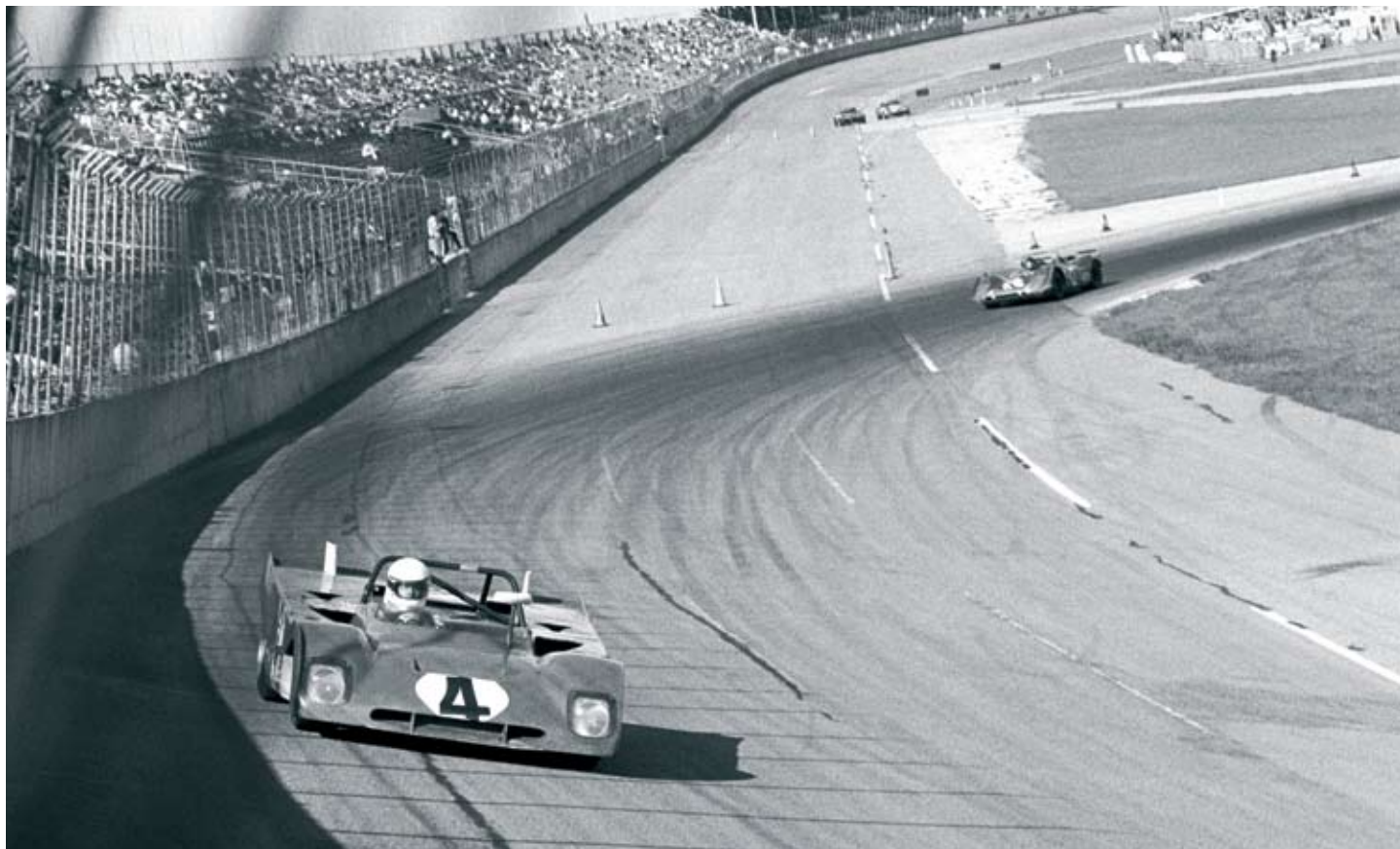
Back in my car, I drove flat out to the end of the race, as did Seppi. Near the finish, he managed to pass the Andretti/Merzario Ferrari for second place, giving Porsche, Gulf and JW Automotive a splendid 1–2 finish on their collective debut. Since I contributed to the win, I was expected to join Rodriguez and Kinnunen on the top step of the podium but I chose not to do so, content to stick with Seppi one level lower.

The lesson we all learned that night was that Piëch may have misled us on our factory exclusivity but, in insisting that we repair the car, he made an intelligent decision. When things go wrong, fix the car and don't give up.

Daytona with Ferrari

My ill-considered retirement to South Africa meant no Daytona for me in 1971. By the following year's 24 Hours, I was driving for Ferrari and 1971's disappointments vanished as the season unfolded. It was a magical year of podium domination and a driver's dream – if he were in a Ferrari 312PB.





ABOVE Seen during practice, devoid of sponsors' decals, my Ferrari has exited the flat infield section and is climbing the steep 31-degree banking that extends from NASCAR 1 through NASCAR 2. The incline in the foreground is steeper than it looks.
LAT

The *Scuderia's* lightning-fast 3-litre machines were essentially Formula 1 cars with bodywork, and no other manufacturer's sports racer came anywhere close. Peter Schetty, the team manager, was a Swiss ex-driver who, unlike some of his emotional and occasionally draconian Italian predecessors, ran the operation with the precision of his home country's watches. For good measure, Ferrari's driver line-up was racing's Murderers' Row: Mario Andretti, Jacky Ickx, Carlos Pace, Carlos Reutemann, Ronnie Peterson, Tim Schenken, Clay Regazzoni, Arturo Merzario and me. Moreover, our competition that year was seriously compromised. Carlo Chiti, a talented engine designer but an old-school team godfather, was at the helm of Autodelta's Alfa Romeo team. John Wyer, always a force, was fielding an *équipe* of still-teething Mirages and could only muster sporadic challenges. Jo Bonnier's Lola T280s proved to be quick in the corners, but their detuned Cosworth Formula 1 engines were underpowered. In deference to America's looming energy crisis and the millions of cars lined up at fuel pumps, the

1972 Daytona race was cut to just six hours. Not unexpectedly, the Ferraris were the class of the field, taking the top three grid spots in qualifying. In the race I was paired with Regazzoni and we were very much in the hunt when, with Clay driving, a tyre blow-out on the banking tore up the rear bodywork. He was able to limp to the pits, but extensive repairs put us many laps behind. Mario and Jacky took the win with Ronnie and Tim second. Vic Elford and Helmut Marko were third in one of the Alfa Romeo T33s while Clay and I hobbled home in fourth place. That year the Ferrari team ruled the World Championship for Makes, winning six of its 11 rounds, with my indisputable highlight the victory with Merzario at Spa. The year's saddest moment was the death of Jo Bonnier at Le Mans when his Lola T280 tangled with an amateur's Ferrari Daytona and flew over the trackside barrier into thick woodland, out of sight of any track marshals. Vic Elford saw the burning Ferrari and stopped to rip open the door and free the driver, not realising that he already had escaped.



ABOVE The field bunches up on Daytona's infield, Regazzoni in our number 4 Ferrari in company with Andretti's number 2.
Bill Warner



LEFT I'm at the wheel during the 'easy' 1972 Daytona race, shortened to six hours by the energy crisis.
LAT



LEFT The BMW entries demonstrate team driving as Ronnie Peterson in our car leads the sister CSL of Sam Posey and Hans Stuck early in the 1975 race.
BMW

RIGHT Ronnie Peterson blew our BMW CSL's engine during his first stint, leaving me with nothing to drive. Work done, Ronnie and I watch as team manager Jochen Neerpasch (centre) keeps tabs on his other car.
BMW

As Vic looked around, he spotted Bonnier's car nestled among the trees. He called for help, but it was too late. Vic's heroics cost him valuable time and, while he carried on in the race, his Alfa ultimately broke down and he had to retire. Later Vic's valour was recognised when the French President, Georges Pompidou, awarded him a *Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Mérite*.

Ironically, Bonnier was the sitting president of the Grand Prix Drivers' Association, a group specifically organised to promote driver safety. While not a friend, he was a talented racer and my respected competitor in many thrilling battles.

Jo Bonnier was 42 years old.

Daytona with BMW

Daytona, Sebring and Brands Hatch fell off the world championship trail in 1973 and the following year I was busy with Formula 1, Formula 5000 and Can-Am. By 1975 Daytona had been restored to a 24-hour event and was now the opener for John Bishop's superb IMSA series. I was hired by BMW and paired with Ronnie Peterson in





ABOVE The Sebring 12 Hours in 1975 was the scene of a fabulous BMW victory. Although the CSL bears Ronnie Peterson's name, my real co-driver was Aussie Allan Moffat, with Sam Posey and Hans Stuck contributing stints after their sister car failed.

BMW

RIGHT The fast but fragile CSL makes a night-time pit-stop, with me crouching in the foreground.

BMW



a 3.0 CSL. Alas, our race lasted all of 29 laps before the engine convulsed. If drivers are destined not to finish an endurance race, it's preferable to get it over with quickly.

For the 1976 24 Hours of Daytona I again drove a BMW 3.0 CSL, a lovely car, this time with Peter Gregg, an American driver who was known for many unflattering reasons as Peter Perfect. I suppose partisanship played a role when Saturday's *Daytona News Journal* proclaimed 'Gregg Wins Pole' but I was less understanding about Peter's race contribution over the next 24 hours. It seemed that Peter was feeling less than perfect at the start of the race and he elected to drive just two brief daytime stints. This was the year when water somehow found its way into the Union 76 fuel truck patrolling the pits and one by one cars began to falter, including ours. IMSA stopped the race for two hours 40 minutes to allow teams to purge their tanks and take on fresh fuel. With Peter retired to his motorhome, I drove 14 brutally long stints, occasionally assisted by John Fitzpatrick whose sister BMW had failed.



ABOVE Drivers Hans Stuck, Sam Posey, Allan Moffat and Brian Redman test the strength of the winning BMW CSL's roof as they celebrate BMW Motorsport North America's historic victory at the 1975 12 Hours of Sebring.

BMW



LEFT BMW sets out its stall during practice for the 1976 24 Hours of Daytona, my car in the foreground.

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RacingOne



ABOVE Rain adds to Daytona's hazards, especially if some of the many competitors have dropped oil on the track's surface.
*Getty Images/
 RacingOne*

At 4.00am our CSL went from six to five cylinders but, by using the maximum 9,000rpm, I was still faster than the fastest Porsche RSR. Grit paid off, and John and I claimed victory.

As we approached the winner's circle, we were dumbfounded to see Peter there ahead of us, looking fit in an immaculate driving suit and revelling in the rewards of victory. His arms only left the two race queens' waists to shake hands and accept congratulations. Dirty and completely drained, I looked and felt like Peter's grandfather. Fitzpatrick was so offended by Peter's preening that he refused to take part in the ceremonies.

At breakfast the next day, our team manager, Jochen Neerpasch, said, *'Brian, you missed ze victory dinner.'*

When I apologised that I had fallen asleep in the bath, Jochen responded, *'No worries, Brian, it does not matter. Peter Gregg gave a fantastic speech, thanking all of the mechanics in German.'*

How perfectly Peter Perfect!

I shouldn't have been surprised at Peter's self-interest. In 1970 he had collected David Piper's



RIGHT Matching numbers, as the Daytona scoreboard shows car number 59 leading the 1976 race.
*Getty Images/
 RacingOne*



ABOVE AND BELOW
The car says 'Gregg/Redman' but Peter was my co-driver in name only, as I did most of the racing, assisted by John Fitzpatrick after his sister BMW dropped out.
Bill Warner



917K from the Miami port and, without David's knowledge, entered it in the 24 Hours for Tony Dean (another character) and himself. That time Karma prevailed and the car broke in practice.

A Daytona coda
To me, Daytona was, is and always will be one of the world's greatest circuits. Yet it earned its 'killer track' sobriquet honestly: 22 racing drivers,

nine motorcycle racers, three go-karters, one powerboat racer (on the infield lake) and one track worker. In an oblique way, Daytona also killed Peter Gregg.

In June 1980 Peter crashed his road car near Paris while *en route* to Le Mans, where he had been due to practise a Porsche 924 Carrera GTS as a member of that year's works team. His injuries prevented him from racing at Le Mans but the following month he returned for the Paul Revere 250 at Daytona. There he struggled with what was said to be double vision and his impaired condition was obvious as he slipped back, passed by lesser cars driven by lesser drivers. Later, hearing that Peter was preparing a team for the 1981 24 Hours, the IMSA sanctioning body investigated. When tests showed that Peter was suffering from severely compromised vision, the IMSA officials had no choice but to withdraw his competition licence. Unable to race, Peter wrote a note that said, 'I just don't enjoy life any more...', and took his own life in December 1980.

Peter Gregg was 40 years old.

RIGHT Jochen Neerpasch (left), the largely missing Peter Gregg and an unidentified crew member display the winners' trophies while, after the toughest race of my career, I get to hold the banner.
Bill Warner



RIGHT Peter Perfect embraces the race queens while the driver who did most of the work does his best to fit in.
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RacingOne

