

TRACK TIME

By: Brant D. Nystrom



Last month we wrapped-up the local track season, and took a brief look at our final events at Road Atlanta and the National Corvette Museum. Since we are in the official racing off-season, I thought we'd jump back to pro racing to examine the rumors and official moves that will impact not only Porsche, but also the entire worldwide racing structure for the coming year.

Starting right at the top of the food chain – Formula 1. This was a tumultuous year in F1. The 4-time reigning champion Sebastian Vettel and his team at Red Bull, were relinquished to “also-rans”, as significant rules changes to the power plants upset the balance of power such that the Mercedes-powered cars fully dominated the year. The result was the crowning of another multi-time world champion, Lewis Hamilton, and a not yet complete shuffling of talent in the F1 ranks the extent of which hasn't been seen in a decade.



Formula 1 Ferrari and Red Bull Teams

The shuffling starts at the top with Sebastian Vettel's unexpected move to the most prized seat in all of racing, the number 1 driver at Ferrari. His move to Ferrari, forces out F1 great Fernando Alonso to a currently occupied seat at Maclaren. The musical chairs continues to this day, and is yet unresolved.



Formula 1 Nico Hulkenburg – Future Porsche Driver?

Why discuss Formula 1 you may ask. This is about Porsche. Last year's departure of Mark Webber from the F1 ranks coincided with the reemergence of Porsche in the highest level of endurance racing in the World Endurance Championship (WEC) P1 class. Webber's move to Porsche P1 will be remembered as *'significant'* in the racing world, as it signaled a clear driver

pecking order from F1 to Le Mans prototypes. As a result, it has been rumored that long-time F1 great Jenson Button may join Webber in WEC if his seat in F1 is lost. Additionally, adding to the complexity, both Nico Hulkenburg and Fernando Alonso have suggested they may be running both Formula 1 and WEC in 2016 (Hulkenburg, one of my personal favorite drivers, has confirmed his ride in the third Porsche P1 car).



Porsche Prototypes Leading the Way

Regarding Porsche and WEC; the Porsche launch back into prototype racing for 2014 was a milestone for the company, but met with lack-luster results. However, their resolve is not shaken as they plan on growing from a 2-car to a 3-car team in 2015. Rumors abound in WEC as well. The AUDI P1 dynasty that has dominated endurance racing for well over a decade has been rumored to be considering a switch to F1. Additionally, this shift will push Porsche into the lead role for VW group in endurance prototype racing. We all believe Nissan will enter into the WEC P1 class for 2015 (their launch will allegedly be made in a Super Bowl commercial), and rumors persist that Ferrari and/or others may join in as well. No matter how this all shakes out, be sure to tune into the 2015 24 Hours of Le Mans race this spring. It should be a great one.



Porsche WEC Prototype Car

This leads us to Porsche 991 action here in the US. As you may recall from my past articles, the Tudor United SportsCar Championship (TUSC) kicked-off in 2014, and was quite successful. I expect to see that success continue into 2015. As of yet, I have seen very limited announcements from Porsche regarding the series, but we fully expect them to be back in full force. The Porsche teams and drivers ran very solidly in 2015, and racked up more manufacturers points than any other mark in the TUSC. Overall, American road racing is strong and healthy with the TUSC, Pirelli World Challenge, and Continental Tire SportsCar Challenge leading the way.



Porsche 991 RSR Racer Under-the-Lights

If you are interested in racing, the next, and first event of the season here in the United States is the Rolex 24 at Daytona, January 22-25, 2015. Daytona is a huge event that brings out the entire Tudor crowd plus numerous other drivers from different disciplines as well. The event is sure to be televised, and it's a great way to get involved in the Road Racing season from the very beginning.



Porsche at TUSC Race in Indianapolis

I look forward to a great racing year in 2015. Porsche fans will be able to cheer for numerous and increasing cars and drivers. This may be road racing's golden age.

If you have interest in joining us at any upcoming event, or would like more information on PCA DE events and what is required to join-in, please feel free to contact me: brantdnystrom@gmail.com

Brant