

How racing drivers inspire children

A story that began in 1969 continues at the 2019 Kyalami 9 Hour.

If you were a racing fan in the 1960s and '70s, there was one racecar to really ignite your passion, the Porsche 917. Arguably one of the most famous Porsche racers of all time, the 917 was a fearsome machine raced only by the truly brave and talented.



Not only did the 12-cylinder-powered 917 claim Porsche's first overall victory for the marque at the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1970, but it dominated sports car racing the world over throughout the 1970s.

Team Perfect Circle

One 917, in particular, won the 1969 Kyalami 9 Hour race. The car, driven by Richard Attwood and David Piper was entered in the endurance event under the banner Team Perfect Circle.

Piper had contested three Formula One races and countless sportscar events successfully through his career. Attwood, a veteran of 17 World Championship Grands Prix, was a teammate to Hans Hermann the duo that claimed victory in the 1970 24 Hours of Le Mans. Both were giants of motor racing in the era.

At the 1969 9 Hour, the relatively new Porsche racecar held off the likes of the tried and tested Porsche 908, four Lola

T70s, a Ferrari P4, a Ford GT40, a lightweight Mirage-Ford, a plethora of saloons and sportscars driven by South African drivers, to claim victory in the hands of the British duo.

Over the course of 9 hours on 8 November 1969, the pair would amass 1,338km in varying weather, lighting and track conditions.

That event, memorable for freak weather and a multitude of accidents, was etched into the mind of a young race fan by the name of Andre Bezuidenhout. As an impressionable eight-year-old, Bezuidenhout hung on the fences of Kyalami and watched, wide-eyed, as his racing heroes Attwood and Piper wrestled the monstrously powerful Porsche to victory.

The youngster knew right then and there he wanted to be a racing driver. The fuse was lit, and young Bezuidenhout would become a fully-fledged motorsport enthusiast and a Porsche fan for life.



L to R Franco Scribante, Silvio Scribante, Andre Bezuidenhout and Dino Scribante

“The moment I heard about the 9 Hour’s revival, I knew Franco and I had to form a team to participate. We really have to thank the owner of Kyalami, Toby Venter and Stefan Ratel of the SRO for reigniting this classic race.”

Thinking back to his childhood, Bezuidenhout explains, “I can recall the 1969 event like it was yesterday. My dad took me to the race at the old Kyalami where I watched almost every lap with my face up against the fence. I wanted to hear every gearshift and feel that 12 cylinder thunder in my chest. Dickie (Attwood) and David (Piper) were simply magnificent as they dominated the field that day. I knew that one day I wanted to race in the 9 Hour. I did not know that it will take me 50 years to achieve my dream.”

Inspired

The desire to race burned strong within Bezuidenhout who has since become a successful gentleman driver. He has competed in a variety of machinery in club and national level events in South Africa, with notable victories in the Simola Hill Climb, considered by many to be one of the premier motorsport events in the country.



Kyalami 9 Hour returns after 37 years

Naresh Maharaj 8 Oct 2019



When the Johannesburg-based advocate heard the famous Kyalami 9 Hour would be revived, as part of the Intercontinental GT Challenge, he knew that he would finally get to emulate his heroes by competing in this famous endurance race.

Bezuidenhout approached friends, fellow racers and sometimes rivals, Franco, Silvio and Dino Scribante to join him in forming the new Team Perfect Circle. The Scribantes are a well-known racing family in South Africa. The race circuit in Port Elizabeth is named after their grandfather, Aldo Scribante, and the cousins keep the family colours flying in local motorsport.



Local motorsport rivals team up for Kyalami 9 Hour

19 Nov 2019



Franco Scribante shared his thoughts about teaming up with his usual opposition, “Andre and I are fierce rivals on-track, but we are also good friends and have a great deal of respect for each other’s abilities. We are usually trying to beat each other in local racing so teaming up to compete in the 9 Hour is a great way for us to be on the same team on home soil. I am really looking forward to the challenge.”

Bezuidenhout approached David Piper with a nostalgic plan. After discussions between South Africa and England, the retired racer gave his blessing to the local squad to name their outfit Team Perfect Circle. The newly formed team was the first local entry for the revived Kyalami 9 Hour.

Weapon of choice

Bezuidenhout and the Scribantes, naturally, selected a Porsche as their weapon of choice, which will run a similar livery as the 917 from 1969 and even race with the same number #9 on its doors. The 911 GT3 R is a car that has plenty of competitive mileage under its wheels. It will be run at the Kyalami 9 Hour by British race team Simpson Motorsport, led by a meticulous team manager, Jonny Westbrook.

Incidentally, Westbrook’s father was a team technician at the 9-hour event more than 40 years ago.

“The 9 Hour is a classic race in the southern hemisphere. I think it’s wonderful that the name of the team is being revived. There’s a lot coming together after a very long time. There’ll be plenty of nostalgia for many people who were there when we last raced at Kyalami,” said Attwood.

Corporate sponsors involved in the original Team Perfect Circle have come aboard to support the latest effort, most notably international beverage company Coca-Cola. Other supporters of the revived Team Perfect Circle include lubricant company Motul, Africa Cash & Carry, Everysun and The Capital Hotel & Apartments, among others.

Franco Scribante on his pending challenge: “It will be great to compete against top-flight GT teams, to use them as a yardstick of how we measure up internationally. I know that all the drivers are really looking forward to the challenge.”

Bezuidenhout concludes: “We must never forget how we inspire and influence children. Our team is taking Joshwin Bock, a 17-year old from Cloetesville, Stellenbosch to experience this world-event in an effort to ignite youthful inspiration into motorsport. This story has been 50 years in the making and motorsport continues to influence the youth as part of mobility of the human race.”