

## **The Rolex 24 at Daytona**

### **By Gil Ferguson**

This year, Rita and I decided to attend the 61<sup>st</sup> Rolex 24 at Daytona. Every year on the last weekend in January, the Daytona International Speedway is the venue for this 24-hour endurance race, featuring many of the top sports car manufacturers in the world, including Porsche.

I first attended the Rolex 24 in 2015, and drove my 2014 Cayman S to Daytona. I had tickets for the PCA corral, located on the infield near Turn Four. PCA also had a tent with chairs inside, where you could enjoy refreshments, sign up for a tour, or just watch the race on closed-circuit television.

This year we left on Thursday, 26 January, arriving late at night after traveling for 12 hours. We had originally planned to go to Key West after Daytona, but decided to put it off for a later date. The hotel was within walking distance from the speedway, and since we had not reserved a space in the PCA parking area, which is for Porsches only, we drove the Jeep.

On Friday, the gates opened at 9 a.m., so after breakfast at the hotel, we made our way to the speedway. After getting our wrist bands, we walked over to the Midway, where Toyota, Acura, BMW, Ford, Chevrolet, Hyundai, and Michelin tires had displays set up. There were also food vendors on the Midway. The weather was perfect with temperatures in the 60s on Friday, and 70s on race day. The warm weather brought out the fans, so by Saturday there was a good crowd on hand to watch the race.

At the end of the Midway was the PCA tent and corral parking. As PCA members, we could avail ourselves of the amenities the tent provided. On Friday afternoon, we took a tour of the Michelin tire workshop. Michelin provides the tires for the race, and brought 18,000 tires for different conditions to the speedway. Tires are mounted, balanced, and inflated with nitrogen, then transported to the pits. Worn tires are brought back for analysis and disposal.



**18,000 Michelin tires!**

After the tire workshop tour, we walked up to the garages near the fan zone, where they were preparing cars for the race. As we approached, I was fortunate enough to get a picture of the Porsche Penske Motorsports 963 as it was being brought out of the garage.



**Porsche 963 on a roll.**

Saturday was the start of the 24-hour race and Acura had gotten the pole position for the start, with the Porsche 963 starting in second place. The race started promptly at 1:40 p.m. Acura would go on to take overall first place in the race. Porsche would enter two 963s in the GTP Prototype Class, as well as two 911 GT3.R (992) cars in the GT Daytona Pro class, and five 911 GT3.R (992) cars in

the GTD class. Unfortunately, none of the Porsche entries would end with a podium finish. Porsche did not race in the LMP 2 or LMP 3 classes. There was a total of 61 cars entered in the five classes.

On Sunday, we headed over to Ocala to have lunch with my sister and niece, then a visit to the cemetery where our parents are buried. Around 1 p.m. we headed back to Alabama, stopping in Dothan for the night.

We enjoyed our trip to the Rolex 24 at Daytona, to watch the race and mingle with other PCA members. You can always watch the race on television from the comfort of your easy chair, but if you want to experience the sights and the sounds of the cars roaring by, then go to Daytona.