

Buckler, TRG Winds Down Era of Phenomenal Porsche Success

Written by TRG Admin

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PETALUMA, CA (October 19, 2013) The End of an Era. For the last 22 years, Kevin Buckler – now team owner/CEO for The Racer’s Group – has raced Porsche. During that time, he has gone from being a how-to-get-it-done aspiring racing guy to one of the most innovative and revered team owners in North America.



This Saturday at Road Atlanta in the American Le Mans Series final event, Buckler will watch his Porsche race at the highest level of sports car racing for the last time. Next year, Buckler will race Aston Martins in a deal signed this past year, which gives his organization exclusive control of the Aston Martin Racing program in North America. He will continue to run Porsches in other amateur series and will stay involved with the Porsche Club of America where he cut his teeth.

“I must admit, there will probably be a tear in the corner of one eye,” said Buckler. “We have been extremely fortunate to have raced and won with such a great marque as Porsche these last 20-plus years. The support has been beyond terrific and the people along the way are people I will be friends with for the rest of my life. But the opportunity that Aston Martin Racing presented to us was just too great to pass up for the future of our business and our company.”

Next season, TRG-Aston Martin Racing North America, LLC takes on a full slate within the TUDOR United SportsCar Championship series, Continental Tire Sports Car Challenge, participation in the Pirelli World Challenge and the launch of a one-make series – the Aston Martin GT4 Challenge of North America.

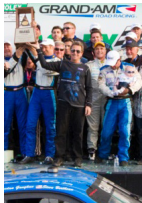
In the TUDOR Championship, TRG-AMR plans to compete in the GT Daytona class with a pair of Aston Martin’s Vantage GT3 V12 monsters as well as supporting any other teams interested in running GT Daytona or GT Le Mans categories. In the Continental Sports Car Challenge, the TUDOR Championship’s top support series, TRG-AMR expects to run several Vantage GT4’s. All this while also servicing multiple customer programs and wearing his TRG-AMR North America hat.

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“This is certainly a massive program,” said Buckler, “which was the attraction from the first meeting with Aston Martin Racing. While it was great running at the top with Porsche, being able to control the Aston Martin Racing program and have a say in the evolution and development of that program and the brand in North America is an absolutely exhilarating and an unbelievable opportunity that we had to jump in on.”



But Buckler admits to a bit of regret, particularly when his recall takes him back to the early days of 1992 when he and his then-partner (soon to become his bride), Debra, attended his first ever Porsche Club Race in Colorado or a few years later when they were running a start-up operation from their home in Monterey (CA) and shipping race parts from their garage.

“We were literally selling stuff just to create a little budget to go racing,” says Buckler. “We were crisscrossing the country in our truck and trailer hitting any event we could--- auto crosses, club events, swap meets.....Anything we could do to build and develop our parts and racing business. I still have old friends come to me now and say - ‘I wasn’t sure you kids were going to make it in the early days...We would see your truck and trailer set up at Sebring and just buy something to make sure you had gas money to get home!!’ - We began manufacturing parts for our own Porsche and winning the races we were involved in and soon other guys were coming to us wanting to know if they could have the same parts and set-ups too. So our first business which we still have today became The Racers Group and was later shortened to TRG.”

From those humble beginnings became an accomplished sports car program that has gone on to win championships and races at virtually every major road course and street race in North America. And then there was the unbelievable win at the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 2002.

“We went there as the little engine that could,” said Buckler. “We didn’t have a very big crew and we were a customer team dwarfed by the Porsche, Audi, Ferrari, BMW, Peugeot, Corvette and so-on factory programs. But we rolled up our sleeves, kept at it, didn’t let a bit of adversity distract us, and by the end of a very, very long month over seas, we were spraying champagne at the top of the podium in one of the closest finishes to this day. I’ll never forget it.”

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That season finished off with Buckler winning the prestigious Porsche World Cup for the Porsche factory as one of the few American drivers to ever receive the honor.



Another huge race Buckler won't ever let slip from his memory is the 2003 Daytona 24. Yes, Buckler has won four 24 Rolex Hours at Daytona championships as a driver or owner from the GT class but 2003 was different. He won OVERALL as well!

"People tell me that will never happen again," he says. "I don't know if that's true or not, but it sure was a momentous achievement to be on top of the entire field including the prototypes after 24 hours. We ran a perfect race that day."

That success led to General Motors tapping Buckler to run its Pontiac factory GTO.R program in Grand-Am for 2005-2006. And Buckler dominated with that program as well, reeling off a 23-race podium streak while continuing to race Porsche in GT class. In 2006, TRG won the drivers, team and manufacturers' title in GT class while placing the Pontiac GTO.R on the podium every race and winning eight times.

When it all first began, Buckler was driver and team owner. His wife Debra was and is the company's Chief Financial Officer. Today, they run an operation that is housed in a state-of-the-art 20,000 square foot race shop that also contains a private wine tasting room and is joined next door by their winery operations.



Buckler does nothing second class. He does not shy away from any challenges and has always aimed high. And above all, he follows his passions – one of which is wine. In 1999, he and his wife launched Adobe Road Winery. Today, Adobe Road is considered one of the boutique winery darlings of Northern California, winning accolade after accolade for its wines from the industry's premier authorities including Wine Spectator Magazine. They support a brisk winery business and an active tasting room right on the square in downtown Sonoma.

