

CLASSIC DRIVER

Remembering Jochen Mass: a life at speed

Lead

A dear friend and true gentleman of motorsport has left us. Jochen Mass passed away on May 4th, 2025 — and with him, the world of historic racing and all who had the privilege of knowing him have lost a unique spirit.



Born in 1946 in Dorfen, Germany, Jochen Mass began his career at sea before moving to motorsport - sailing was his lifelong passion. After early success in touring cars, he moved into Formula One, driving for teams like Surtees, McLaren, and ATS from 1973 to 1982. He won the 1975 Spanish Grand Prix and became a key figure in endurance racing, famously winning the 1989 24 Hours of Le Mans with Mercedes. Long after his retirement from professional racing, Jochen remained a celebrated figure at classic and motorsport events, known not just for his speed, but for his wit, generosity, and encyclopaedic memory of motorsport history.



Classic Driver's CEO JP Rathgen recalls the first time he ever met Jochen, sparking a length friendship with the legend of racing. "I first met Jochen in 2016 during the Schloss Dyck Classic Days, at a welcome BBQ. My dear friend and founder of Jägermeister Racing, Eckie Schimpf, invited me to join a very special table. I still remember sitting at the head of the table on a straw bale, looking around in disbelief. Eckie had invited me to join a table of racing legends — Christian Geistdörfer, Walter Röhrl, Prince Leopold of Bavaria, Hans Joachim Stuck and also Jochen Mass and his wife Bettina."

"That evening, surrounded by laughter, stories, and memories shared between legends, Eckie nudged Jochen to perform something unforgettable. And he did. Jochen started to recite all the verses of Schiller's "Der Taucher" (The Diver). The table fell silent. We were all captivated. Few knew that Jochen, in his younger years, had begun memorising poetry as a way to sharpen his focus before a race — a mental discipline that accompanied his development from a humble beginning as a ship's boy to a sharp-minded and articulate man of culture and racing."



JP continues, "That evening in 2016 was the beginning of a wonderful friendship. Since then, we've shared many moments of joy and laughter — Jochen had a remarkable sense of humour. I also learned so much from him about race strategy and the inner workings of motorsport. Though I never became a racing driver myself, Jochen's insights were invaluable. The Goodwood Members' Meeting and the Revival won't be the same without him. He brought warmth, mischief, intellect, and kindness to every paddock and every conversation. I will deeply miss my dear friend, who was always up for a joke and never failed to bring a smile."

We will all miss you dearly, Jochen.

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