

CLASSIC DRIVER

Book Review: Vic Elford



Inextricably linked with Porsche, the British driver Vic Elford's career has encompassed drives in F1, rallying, long-distance sports cars, saloons and even NASCAR, Trans Am and Can Am. He is the complete racer. In a new autobiography he tells the story of his racing life from co-driving in British rallies to complete mastery of one of the greatest racing cars ever built - the Porsche 917.

The connections between Elford and Porsche started in 1966 when the then recently-departed works Ford driver in races and rallies went to the Stuttgart company with a strongly held belief in the 911's potential in rallies. A tentative entry by Porsche's competition manager Baron Huschke von Hanstein of Elford and long-term co-driver David Morris in a 911 on that year's Tour de Corse resulted in a relationship with the top members of the company like von Hanstein and Ferdinand Piëch that was to last for the rest of his driving career. Multiple victories with the 911 in rallying and racing were to follow, including a win at the incredibly arduous Marathon de la Route at the Nürburgring in 1967.

Come 1968, and Elford's various Porsche forays have promoted him to works driver status having an almost unbelievable year with wins on the Monte (911), at Daytona (2.2 litre 907), the Targa Florio (2.2 litre 907), and 'Ring 1000kms (3 litre 908). The following year he finds time to drive Colin Crabbe's privateer F1 Cooper and McLaren, test Japanese CanAm cars for Toyota, enter the famous Daytona 500 in a NASCAR Dodge and drive the first 'undriveable' long tail Porsche 917 at Le Mans.



In 1970, such is Elford's close links with the Porsche inner circle that he's the obvious choice to be a significant member of the Porsche Salzburg team of 917s and 908s doing battle (much to John Wyer's annoyance) with the 'official' Gulf JW team. There's also an American interlude where he drives the famous 'sucker' Can Am Chaparral 2J and gives Jim Hall's team its only Trans Am win with a Chevrolet Camaro.

Another year of semi-works Porsches in 1971 (Martini International Racing Team this time, often paired with another rally driver, Frenchman Gérard Larousse in the mighty long tail 917 at Le Mans and tiny ultra-light 908/3 at the Targa and the 'Ring), and in 1972 Elford has his final fling as a factory driver with the Autodelta Alfa Romeo team that has the misfortune to come up against the Ferrari 312PBs at the peak of their

potential.

For anyone liking this era of motorsport, with multi-tasking drivers steering exciting cars at the world's best events this book cannot be recommended more highly. It makes an interesting counterbalance to the other volume also recently published by David Bull, *Racing in the Rain* by John Horsman, describing life in the legendary Gulf Racing Team, running GT40s, Mirages and 917s.

The fact that Ferdinand Piëch has written the forward to the Elford book shows the high esteem the factory has for the English driver, described by Piëch as “..one of the greatest all-rounders ever in grand prix racing and international rallying”.

The book is 288 pages with many b/w and colour photographs. It can be ordered direct in the UK from **Haynes Publishing** by visiting www.haynes.co.uk. Alternatively please visit www.bulldpublishing.com to see similar titles.

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