

24 Heures du Mans | 13 & 14 June 2009 | Le Mans, France

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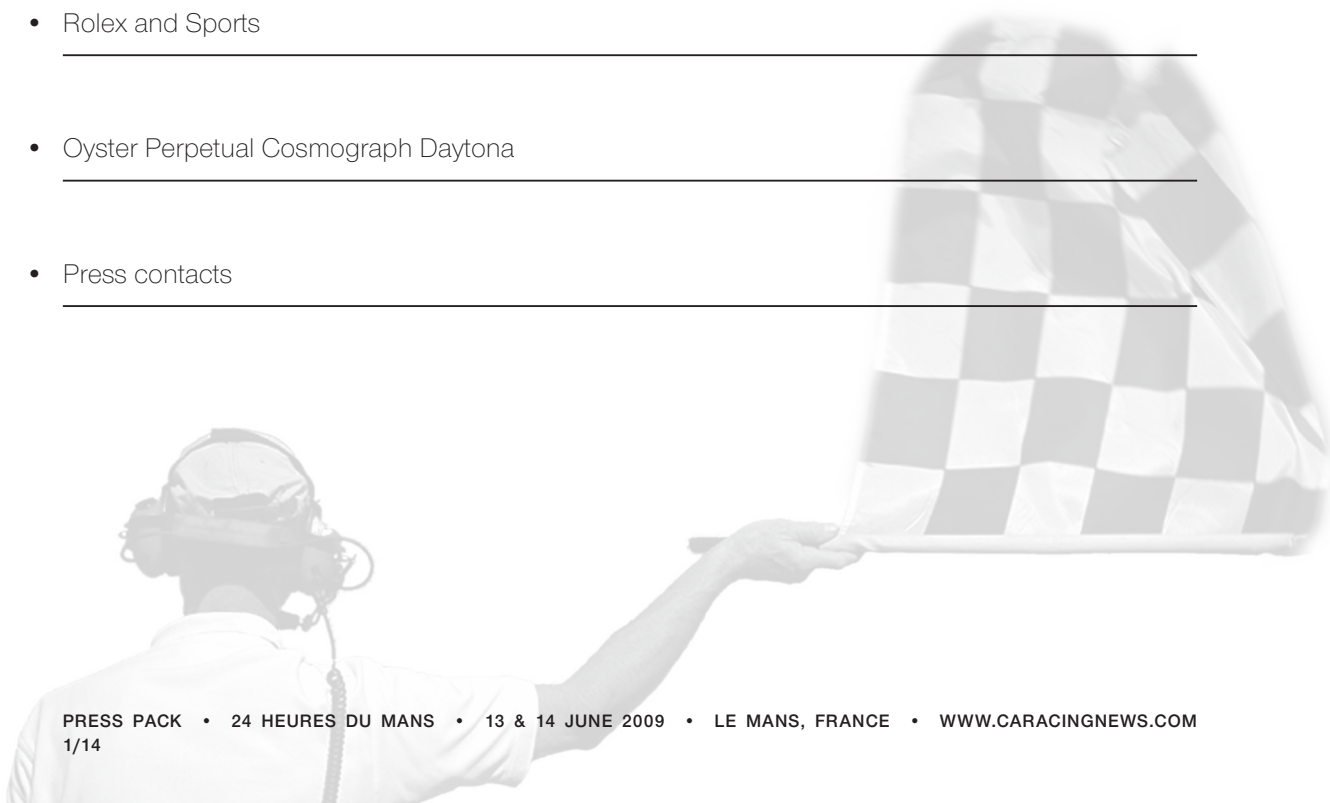
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PRESENTATION OF THE 77TH EDITION OF LES 24 HEURES DU MANS

One of the most fascinating races in the world

Created in 1923, Les 24 Heures du Mans is the oldest and the most prestigious endurance automobile race in the world. For over 80 years every June, a time when the days are the longest of the year and the nights the shortest, the best car brands and internationally renowned drivers have been coming together in Le Mans.

The competition is organised by the Société Sportive Professionnelle de l'Automobile Club de l'Ouest (SSP-ACO).

The race takes place on a 13.629-kilometre course located south of Le Mans, a city about 200 kilometres southwest of Paris, in the department of Sarthe, France.

This year the race will start on Saturday 13 June at 15.00 CEST, regardless of weather conditions. About 50 teams consisting of three drivers each will be participating. The drivers take turns behind the wheel during this race that reveals both the reliability of their machines, as well as the physical and mental stamina of the drivers (men and women).

The winning team is the one that covers the greatest distance in 24 hours, often more than 5,000 kilometres.

A legendary racing circuit

The Circuit de la Sarthe, where the race takes place, has the distinguishing feature of being both a mixed and a provisional course: it consists of public roads and stretches of the Bugatti circuit, built in 1965 and used for other competitions.



Race cars built for endurance

All the cars involved participate in the race simultaneously, but are divided into two main categories that are divided into subcategories:

- Le Mans Prototypes (LMP1 and LMP2), cars individually custom-built specifically to race according to the rules of Le Mans
- Grand Touring cars (LMGT1 and LMGT2), derived from production cars and manufactured in very limited numbers

Several criteria distinguish the Le Mans Prototypes from the Grand Touring cars:

- LMPs have a carbon chassis
- GTs have a steel chassis
- LMPs are capable of higher performance than GTs (for example, one lap in 3'31" for the Prototype versus 3'51" for the Grand Touring car)
- LMPs are lighter than GTs (by about 200 kg)

Over a hundred years of history and unforgettable moments

Le Mans is one of the cradles of the French automobile industry.

In 1906, when car owners were few and far between, a small group of pioneers from the region founded the Automobile Club de l'Ouest (ACO) and organised the first Grand Prix of the Automobile Club de France on a closed track. This race is considered the forerunner of the current Formula 1 Grand Prix circuit.

The resounding success of these informal endurance races led to the creation of Les 24 Heures du Mans in 1923. Thirty competitors participated in the first edition.

In keeping with the spirit of its founders, the objective of the race was to contribute to technical progress in automobile design and to encourage the expansion of this, then, budding industry.

For many years, the start of Les 24 Heures du Mans was a particularly spectacular ritual. The drivers stood on one side of the track and their cars were parked at an angle on the opposite side. When the signal was given, they had to run across the track, jump into their cars and roar off. Accidents were frequent.

In 1969, the first year he participated, driver Jacky Ickx expressed his objection to this dangerous practice by walking slowly to his car. Despite starting in last place, he won the race in a spectacular finish snatching victory with a lead of a mere 120 metres (130 yards).

In 1971, the organisers decided to change the start procedure: from then on, the drivers would begin the race from within their vehicles.

Over time, some parts of the track have attained mythic status, like the Tertre Rouge corner or the five-kilometre long Hunaudières Straight, on which cars would regularly top 380 km/h (236 mph) for one minute. In 1991, chicanes were installed on this section of the course for safety reasons.

The renown of the race is so powerful that it has always attracted celebrities from beyond the circle of professional drivers. In 1970, the race served as the subject and the setting for the filming of the movie *Le Mans*, starring Steve McQueen, a Hollywood actor closely linked to the world of automobile racing. In 1979, the actor Paul Newman, known for his passionate interest in motor sports, entered the Le Mans race and finished in second place.

A universally recognised concept

Since the late 1990s, Les 24 Heures du Mans has been exported under licence.

In 1998, the American Le Mans Series was born, based on the rules of the French competition. Its success was such that in 2003 an international competition was organized in Europe, the Le Mans Series, a circuit sponsored by Rolex that currently includes six races of 1,000 kilometres each.

The newly introduced Asian Le Mans Series will take place this year in Japan on the Okayama track and in China on the Shanghai circuit.



ROLEX AND LES 24 HEURES DU MANS

Rolex has been a partner of the race since 2001 as the “Official Timekeeper”.

Les 24 Heures du Mans is a source of many technological innovations in braking, lighting, fuel consumption, bio-fuels and tyre wear, many of which benefit series production cars and the public at large. These developments concern technical performance as well as reliability, robustness and safety.

ROLEX AND AUTOMOBILE RACING

The presence of Rolex in automobile racing dates back to the 1930s.

At that time, Sir Malcolm Campbell, an English driver and multiple land speed record holder, was already wearing a Rolex Oyster. In September 1935, at the wheel of his race car Bluebird, he was the first person to exceed the mythical speed of 300 miles per hour, reaching over 301 mph (484 km/h). An extraordinary achievement for the times!

It was in the late 1950s that the real association between Rolex and automobile sports was born. In 1959, Rolex began its association with the Daytona International Speedway in Florida where the endurance race, 24 At Daytona, takes place. In 1992, Rolex became the Title Sponsor of that race, which had meanwhile become, along with Les 24 Heures du Mans, one of the most prestigious competitions in the world in its category. The Rolex 24 At Daytona is held yearly and is the only competition of its kind in North America.

In the second half of the 1960s, this exceptional race inspired the creation of an equally exceptional watch, the Cosmograph Daytona. The watch, designed for lovers of speed, allows its wearer to clock elapsed times and calculate average speeds. Ever since then, the presence of the Rolex brand in automobile racing has grown steadily over the years.

Today, Rolex sponsors three types of competition:

- **Rolex 24 At Daytona**
- les **24 Heures du Mans**
- **Le Mans Series**, consisting of five races of 1,000 kilometres each, held in locations around the world
- **Rolex Sports Car Series presented by Crown Royal**, which comprises several races that take place in the United States.
- **Asian Le Mans Series 2009** on the Okayama circuit in Japan and the Shanghai circuit in China.

Rolex has been the “Official Timekeeper” of Les 24 Heures du Mans and the Le Mans Series since 2001 and 2005 respectively.

Races with a historical element:

- **Goodwood Revival** in England, devoted to race cars built before 1966
- **Rolex Monterey Historic Automobile Races** that bring together several hundred cars each year at the Californian Laguna Seca Raceway in Monterey. Rolex has been the Title Sponsor of the event since 2001.
- **Historic Sportscar Racing**, which is organised in the United States and is a gathering of vintage cars restored to their original splendour. This competition includes various races held throughout the season.

Events that celebrate the beauty of historic cars rather than their racing performance:

- **Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance**, launched in 1950 to present the most avant-garde models of the period and which today features the most striking of vintage cars. This competition, the most prestigious of its kind, takes place every year in Pebble Beach, California. Rolex has been its "Official Timekeeper" since 1997.
- **Pebble Beach Tour d'Elegance presented by Rolex**, created in 1997 to demonstrate the elegance of automobiles in motion. Rolex became the Title Sponsor of the event in 2007.
- **The Quail**, a motorsports gathering on the Monterey Peninsula within the heart of Carmel Valley (CA) which features legendary race cars. Rolex has been its "Official Timekeeper" since 2005.

Among the Rolex Testimonees are two key figures in the sport: Sir Jackie Stewart from Scotland, one of the greatest drivers of his generation, and the American Roger Penske, once a racer in his own right, and now the owner of a highly successful race team.



BIOGRAPHIES OF ROLEX TESTIMONEES

Sir Jackie Stewart

Date of birth: **11 June 1939**

Nationality: **British**

Sir John Young Stewart – best known as Jackie Stewart – is without doubt one of the most emblematic figures of contemporary automobile racing. For more than 30 years since his competitive retirement in 1973, Sir Jackie Stewart has continued to play an essential role in a world that he has influenced as much from a sporting point of view as a personal one.

His long list of honours makes him one of the most decorated Formula 1 drivers of the past thirty years, while his determined commitment to the safety of drivers continues to influence the discipline. Following his retirement, he has remained active in motor sports and in 1997 he founded a race team with his son Paul that competed in F1 for three seasons.

The involvement of Jackie Stewart in the world of cars and motorsport racing, dates back to his childhood. With a garage man as a father, he was very quickly introduced to mechanics and then to racing.

At the beginning of the 1960s, during a driving test session for Formula 3, Jackie Stewart first touched upon his innate driving skills. This performance would mark the start of a career that would bring this driver to glory in F1 over the course of the next decade.

In 1964, he won his debut race as a driver in Formula 3. The following year he debuted in Formula 1 under BRM colours and took his first victory in Grand Prix that same year. Constantly looking to outdo his competitors, his victories began adding up, rapidly making him the man to beat.

From 1965 to 1973, Sir Jackie Stewart participated in ninety-nine Formula 1 Grands Prix and took home 27 victories, 3 world championships (1969, 1971, 1973) and finished 43 times on the podium in total. His record of 27 victories was not beaten until 14 years later, when France's Alain Prost was contesting his 118th Grand Prix in 1987.

1966 was a year that marked a significant change in the life of Sir Jackie Stewart. Victim of a serious accident (at Spa in Belgium) from which he escaped unharmed, he became aware of the need to improve driver safety and has been devoting his energy to this cause ever since.

Jackie Stewart is also intensely involved in the fight against dyslexia, which he suffered from in his youth.

Roger Penske

Date of birth: **20 February 1937**

Nationality: **American**

A legendary figure in American automobile racing, Roger Penske today is one of the most important names in the automobile industry in the United States. A brilliant businessman, this former driver is at the head of a number of companies active in the construction, sale and rental of vehicles. He is also the owner of a racing team, Penske Racing, and is a member of the board of directors of several multinational companies.

Born in Ohio in 1937, Roger Penske had already developed a real passion for automobile racing in his youth. He started his driving career as a semi-professional in the late 1950s. He participated in his first official race in 1958 and went on to accumulate victories in various categories. In 1962, the *New York Times* named him Driver of the Year.

While pursuing a driving career, he was also a student at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania. He graduated in 1959 with a diploma in industrial management and joined an aluminium company as a sales engineer.

The year 1964 marked the peak of his driving career. The following year, when he was only 27 years old and still among the top drivers in the world, Roger Penske announced his retirement from the sport to dedicate his time to the automobile business, thus laying the foundation of what was to become a major empire.

Always faithful to the passion of his youth, he founded at the same time Penske Racing, in partnership with another automobile racing personality, driver Mark Donohue.

In 40 years, Penske Racing has forged a record that speaks for itself: 225 major victories of which 100 were in the IndyCars category (including 13 successes in Indianapolis), several victories in Can-Am, 30 in the NASCAR Winston Cup category, and one in Formula 1 at the Austrian Grand Prix in 1977.

In 1978, he participated in the creation of a series of races based on the Formula 1 model, the CART (Champion Auto Racing Teams) races in the United States, of which the Indianapolis 500 is the most prestigious event.

In 1995, Roger Penske entered the Motorsports Hall of Fame of America, and in 1998 he was inducted into the International Motorsports Hall of Fame.

In 2006 and 2007, the Penske Motorsports team participated in the American Le Mans Series.

2009 CALENDAR OF THE MAJOR AUTOMOBILE EVENTS SPONSORED BY ROLEX

JANUARY 2009

24-25 January **Rolex 24 At Daytona**, Daytona (FL), United States

APRIL 2009

3-5 April **Le Mans Series**, 1000 km de Catalunya, Spain

MAY 2009

9-10 May **Le Mans Series**, 1000 km de Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium

JUNE 2009

13-14 June **Les 24 Heures du Mans**, Le Mans, France

JULY 2009

31 July-2 August **Le Mans Series**, 1000 km d'Algarve, Portugal

AUGUST 2009

14-16 August **Rolex Monterey Historic Automobile Races**, Monterey (CA), United States

13 August **Pebble Beach Tour d'Elegance presented by Rolex**, Pebble Beach (CA), United States

21-23 August **Le Mans Series**, 1000 km de Nürburgring, Germany

SEPTEMBER 2009

11-13 September **Le Mans Series**, 1000 km de Silverstone, England

18-20 September **Goodwood Revival**, Goodwood, England

PRESENTATION OF ROLEX

Rolex is recognised the world over as the leader in the Swiss watchmaking industry and enjoys an unparalleled reputation for quality and know-how.

The birth of Rolex

The origins of Rolex date back to the beginning of the 20th century. At a time when pocket watches were still the order of the day, Hans Wilsdorf, a young Bavarian just 24 years old, wagered on the future of the wristwatch. The pioneering spirit of the founder is the subject of some of the finest chapters in the history of contemporary watchmaking and was the source of two major innovations. In 1926, Rolex invented the Oyster, the first waterproof and dustproof watch, and, in 1931, the first self-winding mechanism equipped with a Perpetual rotor. Over the years, Rolex created a full line of Oyster watches, with a strong identity and intrinsic features. Recognisable at a glance, this collection includes over 170 models available in 3,200 possible combinations. The Cellini collection later enhanced the choice offered to consumers loyal to the legendary Rolex quality. The reliability and performance of the product have built the worldwide reputation of Rolex.

An international company

Today Rolex is established in some one hundred countries. The company ensures the distribution of its watches and the quality of their maintenance through a network of 28 affiliates and several thousand official Rolex jewellers.

A Rolex watch is made to last. Assembled by hand, it benefits from the company's know-how and decades of cumulative expertise. An after-sales service, unique in its genre, ensures the proper functioning of the watches over time. It is based on the competence of nearly 4,000 watchmakers, trained by Rolex, who work for the affiliates or for jewellers of the Group worldwide. A universal and timeless brand, Rolex continues to conquer new markets and expand its presence worldwide.

State-of-the-art technology

Responding to growing demand while integrating the latest technologies requires constant evolution of the means of production. In the mid-1990s, Rolex opted for a vertical integration of its production facilities, thus ensuring its control over the manufacture of all its watch components and guaranteeing its autonomy. In the interest of consistency and efficiency, the company consolidated all its activities in Switzerland at four sites.

In Geneva

The Rolex headquarters is home to all the administrative activities of the company, to those related to the final assembly and sales of the watches, as well as to the after-sales service.

The Chêne-Bourg site brings together all the activities related to the development and manufacture of the dial and gem-set elements.

The Plan-les-Ouates site groups all the activities related to the development, manufacture and quality control of the case and bracelet.

In Bienne

The Bienne site is the location of all activities related to the manufacture and assembly of Rolex watch movements.

An image of excellence

The name Rolex is synonymous with performance. In 1927, Mercedes Gleitze, a young English-woman, swam the English Channel in a time of over 10 hours wearing an Oyster. Upon arrival, the watch was still in perfect working order. The company immediately placed an advertisement in the *Daily Mail* proclaiming the success of the waterproof watch and the beginning of "the triumphant march of the Rolex Oyster around the world." This event also marked the start of a long association between Rolex and exceptional personalities who bear witness to the excellence of the product and are Testimonees of the brand. These associations give rise to numerous partnerships and sponsoring activities in fields as varied as art and culture, tennis, golf, sailing, and equestrian and automobile sports.

Perpetuating the spirit of enterprise

While committed to the principles that are the foundation of the brand, the company is still capable of breaking with tradition in order to respond to changes in an ever-evolving world. Rolex's position as a leader in the watchmaking industry has been further reinforced through the conquering of new markets and the enhancement of the brand's image.

Taking over from Patrick Heiniger, Bruno Meier was named the Directive President of the company in January 2009.

Official site: www.rolex.com

ROLEX AND SPORTS

Precise, waterproof and robust, at its launch in 1926 the Oyster was already synonymous with a pioneering spirit. Adapted to the lifestyle of a rapidly evolving society in which leisure played a more and more prominent role, this wristwatch was destined to little by little replace the traditional pocket watch.

The sports world offered an extraordinary field of validation and expansion for this timepiece of unprecedented quality. Hans Wilsdorf, founder of Rolex, achieved a master stroke in 1927 by equipping Mercedes Gleitze, a young Englishwoman, with a Rolex Oyster when she swam the English Channel. He reserved the front page of the *Daily Mail* to announce the event to the public at large. Even though the watch had remained immersed for over 10 hours in the seawater, it continued to keep accurate time, proof of its undeniable waterproofness and robustness. The young entrepreneur had just created the "Testimonee" campaign.

From then on, the advances of the Oyster would be inextricably linked to sportsmen and women excelling in disciplines that were new at the time, like aviation, automobile racing or mountaineering: in 1933 Stewart Blacker flew over Everest; in 1947, pilot Chuck Yeager became the first person to break the sound barrier; in 1935, Sir Malcolm Campbell broke the land speed record in his bolide *Bluebird*, attaining 301 mph (484 km/h). In 1953, the expedition led by Sir John Hunt, Sir Edmund Hillary and Tensing Norgay was the first to conquer Everest. Through their achievements, these highly visible personalities underscore the technical qualities of the Oyster.

Over the years, new sports disciplines would be added. Today, Rolex is involved in five major sports: golf, sailing, tennis, equestrian sports and automobile sports. All of these disciplines combine precision and endurance, and call on participants to push themselves ever beyond their limits.



OYSTER PERPETUAL COSMOGRAPH DAYTONA

Sporty yet elegant, the Oyster Perpetual Cosmograph Daytona is a chronograph that features a central chronometer seconds hand, minute and hour totalisers activated by screw-down pushers, and a graduated bezel that serves as a tachometer. It is the ideal instrument for measuring elapsed time and calculating average speed.

A concentration of Rolex technology

The Oyster Perpetual Cosmograph Daytona has, since 2000, been equipped with a new chronograph movement entirely designed and manufactured by Rolex. This movement includes a PARACHROM hairspring, very resistant to shocks and magnetic fields, and has a 72-hour power reserve.

Self-winding, equipped with a Perpetual rotor and certified by the Swiss Official Chronometer

Testing Institute (COSC), the Oyster Perpetual Cosmograph Daytona is guaranteed waterproof to a depth of 100 metres (330 feet). It features a sapphire crystal and a Triplock winding crown protected by shoulders.

It is equipped with an Oyster bracelet with an Oysterlock clasp and an Easylink comfort extension link.

An extremely versatile watch, the Oyster Perpetual Cosmograph Daytona is available in several versions. In the jewelled version, a vast selection of gem-set bezels and dials is available.



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To know more about Rolex, Rolex and sport, and Rolex and automobile racing.

www.lemans.org/24heuresdumans

www.caracingnews.com

