

# REFLECTING *on a* RACING YEAR

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**FLYING LIZARD MOTORSPORTS**



2008

2008 was undeniably a successful year for the Flying Lizard squad. The team won their first ALMS GT2 championships: securing both the drivers' (Jörg Bergmeister and Wolf Henzler in the No. 45) and the team titles.



Wolf, Marc, and Jörg Celebrating Victory at Sebring 2008

The Lizards set the tone right from the season start by winning the *Mobil 1 Twelve Hours of Sebring* with a one-two finish. It was to be the first of five double podiums over the season. By Laguna Seca, the final race of the year, the Lizards had four wins,

five double podiums and 15 total podiums under their belts! Johannes van Overbeek and Patrick Pilet of the No. 46 Porsche finished third in the drivers' championship and No. 44 drivers Seth Neiman and Darren Law finished fifth and seventh. The No. 44

also finished fourth in the GT2 team championship.

Seth Neiman, team principal and driver of the No. 44 Porsche, looked back on the season, "Winning the championship this year was



Laguna Seca 2008: Opening Lap Approaching Turn 2

particularly satisfying given the level of competition in GT2. At every race, five or six cars were seriously in the hunt to win. We had to fight every step of the way and battled for position at each race with Tafel Racing, Risi Competizione, Farnbacher Loles and the rest of the GT2 field. That made points hard to come by and every victory that much more meaningful.”

The Sonoma, California-based team ran three Porsches for the 2008 season: No. 44, No. 45, and No. 46. Each of the three cars was managed independently, with a dedicated crew, strategist, engineer and drivers. Team manager and strategist of the No. 46 Porsche, Eric Ingraham added “Fielding three cars was significantly more challenging than fielding two as we’ve done in years past. The increase in work was not linear: you’d think, OK, we increase from two cars to three and that means



**Detroit 2008: A Triple Pit Stop**

a 50 percent increase in work. But it didn’t work that way. Some areas were 100 percent more difficult, and some areas scaled reasonably easily. The biggest change was that we had to re-structure how the team worked internally: what was effective for two

cars was not necessarily right for three. And we found that communication between the car teams became crucial to how we finished during the race.”

The Lizards have run Porsches in GT2 in the ALMS since 2004. The team has had the GT2 championship in their sights since the first year of competition — finishing every year in the top three but never winning the title. Chief strategist Thomas Blam reflected on the road to the win, “We had been close to the championship several times in the last few years, but saw it slip through our hands — because of our own mistakes or bad luck or combination of both. For me, 2008 represents a year in which we did not make any crucial mistakes. Porsche did a lot of work on the car in the offseason and gave us an opportunity to be competitive at every race this year. The crew did an outstanding job in preparing reliable



**The No. 80 Being Prepared for Test Day Prior to the 2008 24 Heures du Mans.**

cars that could last the distance. Our drivers kept focused in some incredibly high pressure situations. To win in endurance racing at this level of competition comes down to who makes the fewest critical mistakes. The only way to keep those mistakes to a minimum is to be completely prepared for every possible eventuality so that you have room to deal with the unexpected when it's thrown at you."

Crew chief and co-technical director Tommy Sadler was responsible for keeping all three cars on track, "I'm very proud of all three cars: they were professionally run and it showed in the results. We spent the last few years building the infrastructure to support three cars and were able to make it work this year. We had reliable cars all year and few mechanical problems."

Chief engineer Craig Watkins, who was responsible for engineering



24 Heures du Mans: Prix ESCRA Awarded at Hour 23

the No. 46 Porsche, added, "Having three cars gave us the luxury to experiment during setup. We could work three different paths and then leverage that work across all three cars. Stefan Pfeiffer (engineer of the No. 45 and co-technical director), Sebastien Constans (No. 44 engineer) and I were able to learn a lot this year,

especially with the support that Porsche gave us over the season."

After Sebring, the Lizards went on to secure three more podium spots at the next two races — St. Petersburg and Long Beach (their second double podium) — and then a win and third double podium at Miller Motorsports Park near Salt Lake City. The team also had three poles in a row, starting with Henzler on the pole at St. Pete in the No. 45 (the team's first pole since Mosport in 2004), Pilet in the No. 46 at Long Beach and Henzler again at Salt Lake.



Five Double Podiums in 2008

Following the Utah Grand Prix, the team traveled to Le Mans, France for its fourth consecutive *24 Heures du Mans*. The Flying Lizard No. 80 Porsche has run four times at Le Mans: 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008. In 2005, the No. 80 made it to the podium with a third place finish, but has not finished higher than fourth since. In



Long Beach 2008: Johannes and Jörg on the Podium

2008, the No. 80 finished sixth. Two hours into the 24-hour race, the No. 80 was hit by another Porsche, sending the car into the gravel with significant damage. Although the No. 80 was eventually able to rejoin the race, an hour-long repair in the pits effectively ended the team's shot at a podium. It wasn't the result that they had hoped

for, but the team's spirits were lifted when, at hour 23, they were awarded the Prix ESCRA from the ACO for superior technical pit work and best overall presentation.

Heading back to the U.S. after Le Mans, the team had their third GT2 win in July at the narrow and

congested Lime Rock circuit. "Lime Rock was definitely a bittersweet win," added Blam. "The No. 45 took home the victory, but was the only Lizard car to cross the finish line." The No. 46 finished the race in the pits after an incident on a late-race restart that damaged the radiator, and the No. 44 was retired after being collected by a prototype on course. Blam continued, "After Lime Rock, we knew that we had to take the next step up in communication so that all three cars were working in concert, rather than against each other."

At Lime Rock, Flying Lizard also rolled out their first at-track store, part of a pilot program with the ALMS to sell merchandise in the paddock. "We were thrilled to participate in this pilot to offer Lizard gear in our paddock area at select circuits," explained merchandise director Paul Pillitteri. "With the in-paddock store, we were able to respond to requests from our fans for team gear, and more importantly, it gave our fans a chance to meet the team. It was a true joy to meet or get reacquainted with entire families that have been following the team though the years. The genuine enthusiasm for the entire series was very encouraging." He added, "The program was a smashing success and we hope to have the opportunity to do it again in 2009. We will also continue to offer authentic Lizard team gear through our web store."

By Mid-Ohio, both the No. 46 and No. 45 were back on the podium in second and third: the fourth double

podium of the year. The No. 45 went on to finish second at Road America and third at Mosport. Heading into Detroit, the last street race of the year and one of the most challenging circuits, the No. 45 was now in a head-to-head battle with the No. 71 Tafel Racing Ferrari and both Flying Lizard and Tafel had a shot at the team championship. The team narrowly missed out on a full podium sweep at Detroit, but a first place finish by the No. 45, second by the No. 46 and fourth by the No. 44 increased the gap between the Lizards and Tafel.

Heading into *Petit Le Mans*, the championship was still open: the No. 45 was in the points lead, the Tafel Racing No. 71 in second, and the No. 46 in third. The first two-thirds of the 10-hour race went well for the Lizards — the No. 45 was in second and all three cars were in the top five. At hour eight, things suddenly started to go south. A leaking water hose required a lengthy repair for the No. 44, pushing the car back in the field where it finished in sixth. The No. 46 was

involved in a major crash on course and the car was retired. Although they had completed enough laps to finish eighth, the No. 46 did not earn enough points to remain in contention for second place in the championships.

“There were so many highs and lows this year,” added Blam, “Petit was both: we clinched the championships here, but the No. 46 crash definitely took some of the pleasure out of the win. Luckily, no one was hurt in the incident but it was a disappointment for the crew and drivers. Both the No. 44 and No. 46 had overcome numerous challenges leading up to the race so for them to both lose a chance at a podium after eight hours of solid running was tough.”

Blam continued, “With the championship secured at Petit, we were able to go into Laguna with a clear objective to stay out of trouble and finish as high as we could. We still needed to help Porsche secure the GT2 manufacturers’ championship

and Johannes, Patrick, Seth and Darren were pushing for drivers’ points. It was a relief to have the team and drivers’ championships already decided. We’ve had so many problems at Laguna over the years and this year turned out to be no different. We started the race strong, but things went downhill fast. We ended up fourth (No. 46) and fifth (No. 44) and ninth (No. 45): our only race this year that we were not on the podium!”

The disappointing race at Laguna didn’t dampen the Lizards’ spirits. The No. 46 Porsche had finished high enough to help Porsche clinch the manufacturers’ championship, and van Overbeek and Pilet ended a tough year with a third in the drivers’ championship. Rogerio Reis, lead mechanic on the No. 45 Porsche, also received the coveted Mechanic of the Year award.

After Laguna Seca, the Lizard squad returned home to their shop at Infineon Raceway in Sonoma, California. They will take some down time over the off season and start getting ready for 2009.

Neiman added, “This season illustrates why many feel that the ALMS is the pinnacle of sports car racing worldwide. The level of competition in GT2 is as tough as anything you will see anywhere in racing today. With BMW, Corvette and rumors of Jaguars and Astons coming into our class, next season will undoubtedly ratchet up the intensity.”



**Lime Rock 2008: No Room for Error**

As 2008 comes to an end, Neiman and the team are preparing to close out an important chapter in the team's history. "Professional racing is a very

humbling sport. 2008 will be savored deeply by all of the Lizards: not only for the championship victories but also because we understand how easily

things could have gone another way. We are looking forward to coming back to the ALMS in 2009." ●



The Flying Lizard Team at Laguna Seca 2008



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