Porsche Podcast 9:11

Transcript episode 2: The Legend of Le Mans

Guests:
Timo Bernhard, Le-Mans-Winner 2017
Norbert Singer, former Porsche racing engineer

Host:
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Intro [00:00 – 00:15]

SR: Welcome to the new edition of 9:11, the Porsche podcast. With this audio magazine, we want to bring the world of Porsche closer to you and answer some interesting questions. Once a month I welcome two guests to our podcast studio, here at the heart of our brand, the Porsche Museum in Zuffenhausen, Stuttgart, where we have a view of the Porsche sculpture of three white 911 cars from different generations.

My name is Sebastian Rudolph and I am responsible for Communications, Sustainability and Politics at Porsche AG. Today, as the moderator, I would like to take you, the listeners, with me to the race track. At least figuratively, because our podcast is about the 24 Hours of Le Mans. Porsche achieved its first overall victory there 50 years ago – it is still legendary – and since then we have achieved 19 overall victories, which is a great record! Together we will immerse ourselves in the 24 most famous hours in the world, where technology and tactics combine. We ask ourselves the question: what actually makes Le Mans such a unique race?

I am delighted to welcome two excellent connoisseurs of motorsport, and in particular of the Le Mans race, Norbert Singer and Timo Bernhard. And so that you, the listeners, also know who you are dealing with, let me first introduce them to you. [01:38]

XX: Norbert Singer is now 80 years-old. During his time as a Porsche race engineer he was involved in the development of all the winning cars for 28 years, from 1970 to 1998. The Porsche 956, 962 C, 936: these models alone achieved 10 overall victories. Norbert Singer

ended his active professional career in 2004. He remains closely associated with motorsport, and still goes to the 24 Hours of Le Mans every year. [02:15]

XX: Timo Bernhard started his career at Porsche as a junior driver more than 20 years ago. In 2002, Bernhard participated at Le Mans for the first time. As a test driver, he drove the development of the race cars forward. He has numerous top placings and two overall victories at Le Mans. In 2015 and 2017, he was part of the team who won the World Endurance Drivers' Championship. The 39 year-old is now a brand ambassador for Porsche. [02:47]

SR: Hello Norbert, [hello], hello Timo, [hello]

Every year since 1951, Porsche sports and racing cars have competed at Le Mans. What exactly is it that makes this relationship between Porsche and Le Mans so special? Norbert, perhaps you can take the first question: what is the significance of this anniversary? [03:04]

NS: Well, I mean, Le Mans is very long and very fast and these are exactly the characteristics of a Porsche. It is reliable and fast, and that's a good description for Le Mans. These are the characteristics of Le Mans and Porsche so they are a good fit. Ferry Porsche had already recognised this back then. [03:04]

SR: Let's move over to Timo: you weren't even born 50 years ago, but what does this legend of Le Mans and the legend of Porsche mean for you? [03:30]

TB: When I started in motorsport, the Le Mans and Porsche legend had already been born. Norbert Singer's generation contributed hugely to that. For me, it was one of my goals to drive a Porsche at Le Mans. I think that if you break it down, it's because it is simply the hardest race for a driver – because of the distance over the 24 hours, because of the speed but also today it's the last adventure for a driver, because the circuit consists of a closed race track and a section of public road, something which used to be common practice but is actually unthinkable in modern times. This is what makes Le Mans so unique. [04:07]

SR: In practical terms, how do you approach this experience – this fast and long race – how do you prepare for it? Above all, physically? [04:16]

TB: For me, Le Mans has always been the most important race of the year in terms of timing. I've always jokingly said that it's like preparing for the Wimbledon of motorsport, even though I don't play any tennis. It was always held on the third weekend of June, and was therefore the highlight you were training for, because you knew that if you went to the race track a week before, to Le Mans, you would be physically and mentally at your peak and also, I would say, with the sports regulations and whatever, you would be in top form. And that was always my goal, to be in top form, because you knew that if you went there, you would reach your limits, mentally for yourself and everything else that goes with it. [04:58]

SR: Talking about limits, Norbert, you were involved in 16 overall victories at Le Mans. For a race engineer, what are the basic conditions you need for your work to be so successful? [05:09]

NS: There are various things you need. First of all, you have to have a car that is reliable, which gives you the chance to drive for 24 hours, that won't break down due to engine, transmission damage or anything else. Second, it should have a certain basic speed. So, that doesn't mean that you drive around in 30th place somewhere, but 14th place is good enough, just like 50 years ago. At Le Mans, the position on the starting grid is actually the least interesting thing. I mean, of course, if you're at the front, because of the start photo and so on, it's great. But then the race actually sets the pace. And you've got to be there, you've got to be up front, so that when the time comes, you're there. It's not like Grand Prix thinking where you start in pole position, drive through and win – which is something you always see and believe these days. Le Mans is completely different. [06:10]

SR: And what strategy do you use there? [06:12]

NS: You need to drive consistently and not make any mistakes. These are the major demands on the driver. Avoid all critical situations, because it's not only the very fast cars that are on the track – the top 10, 12 or whatever. There are actually four races in one, there are much slower cars: the GTEs, the professional GTEs, the amateur GTEs, they drive as well and as fast as they can. If a prototype approaches from behind, a driver can look into the mirror before the bend, but in the bend it's next to him and the driver doesn't see it at all, it's just suddenly there. And that's part of it – sometimes there are very silly incidents that are a handicap, so-to-speak, for

the winning car. Things you can't do anything about. That has nothing to do with technology – it's simple, it's just part of the game. [07:06]

SR: And how do you prepare the drivers – you're off the track, but you're still in the middle of it? Or even during the race, how do you keep them mentally in the game, so to speak? [07:16]

NS: Well, as Timo said, you have to be physically present and still have that concentration at three o'clock in the morning: that is very important. And of course it takes a certain amount of experience to see when you should not pass the slow cars, because they might do something stupid. Instead, you hold back and overtake them after the bend, where they see you – or not, which is something that happened in 1983, when [another car] drove right next to you on the first lap. Yes, that was actually decisive in the race for the team. But no matter how brilliantly you drive, how many endurance runs you do, how many tests you drive, racing is entirely its own thing and is sometimes characterised by such small random occurences … punctures – these are things that you just have no control over. Then someone might have an accident or breakdown and the parts are still on the track until the track marshals come … and suddenly you're in the pits with a flat tyre. Full stop. [08:13]

SR: And how important is teamwork for the driver, to have a team at the track to advise you and keep you physically and mentally in the game? [08:21]

TB: This is actually a very, very important point. After all, it wasn't only the final phase in the World Endurance Championship in Le Mans with the 919 Hybrid … but there were also the short races, because the World Endurance Championship consisted of a long race, the 24 hours of Le Mans, and the remaining races of the world championship were six hour races. You still kept the triple driver pairing from Le Mans over the whole season.

If you wanted to strengthen the driver team you want to keep this trio together, even if that means being overstaffed for the six hour races, with three drivers. You want to keep this trio simply to strengthen the mental side, but also to strengthen the team. It's a very important point, because then the drivers support each other. In endurance sport you always have to make compromises, it starts with the seating position, with the set-up. Mr. Norbert Singer is already grinning, so this is a big issue, because egos are often in the wrong place there.

You also have to think for the team – you have to be a team player, and I think that's the same for all the other roles in such a team: you all have the same goal. That, I must say, is an element that makes endurance sport incredibly attractive if you work together in a functioning team that is pulling in one direction. I enjoyed it immensely, it was very rewarding and I was able to get a few per cent extra out of the car. [09:42]

SR: We have now gained our first impressions of the Le Mans world. Now let's listen to a few more facts about the race. [09:51]

XX: If you love your car, you will push it. If necessary even over the finish line. Like Claude Storez in Le Mans in 1957. After 23 hours he stopped on the track, so he simply pushed his Porsche 550 A Spyder across the finish line. His willpower was rewarded with seventh place. But only briefly – later, he was disqualified. A case of legal "pushing" happened six years late, with Herbert Linge and Edgar Barth at the wheel. Just before the pits, their Porsche 718 W RS Spyder had a puncture. Barth had to get out and push. Alone. His mechanics are only allowed to help in the pits. But it was worth it: the team came first in the two-litre class. [10:39]

The epic movie "Le Mans", by and featuring Steve McQueen, is world famous. But few people know that the racing scenes are real. The film crew sent their own car into the race in 1970. The Porsche 908/02 was equipped with a heavy camera. Herbert Linge and Jonathan Williams were at the wheel. Despite the weight handicap and stops to change the film reel they did well: after about 3,800 kilometres they reached unofficial eighth place in the overall ranking. [11:11]

Earl Bamber, Timo Bernhard and Brendon Hartley started the longest catch-up race in 2017. Their Porsche 919 Hybrid was in 56th place on Saturday evening, and 13 laps behind due to a repair. Then the motto was full speed ahead – for more than 19 hours. Seven minutes before the end of the race they drove into first place. Victory. [11:36]

SR: Yes, listeners, you couldn't see that, but there was a lot of smiling and nodding going on here, and of course I have to ask Timo the question: what were those emotions and what kind of finish was that with the Le Mans victory? [11:49]

TB: That was, I must say drama, drama, drama. Because Le Mans, of course, involves a lot of preparation and on top of that, it was my dream to not only compete at Le Mans with Porsche but to achieve overall victory. Many people have not been able to do this in their careers and whether you will ever succeed, you simply don't know. At that time, I was lucky enough to already have celebrated a Le Mans victory with Audi, and it was definitely a great experience, but it was my passion and a training goal for me to achieve this with Porsche. When the car was pushed backwards into the pits after three hours – I drove in the starting phase – it was a shock for me at first and my initial thought was actually, ok, when you're pushed backwards into the pits at Le Mans it's over because the previous races before had accelerated so much in the years before that ... you couldn't make up the time. But when the car drove out again after 56 minutes, we were listening to the radio when Brandon Hartley said "ok, the car feels ok" and the race engineer said "ok continue" and "push, push". There was a little bit of hope and then I had to smile when we calculated, or the engineers said, "ok, we can drive for a podium finish, in the last hour it's getting kind of... could we catch up with the LMP2, then maybe we can still make it onto the podium. And then the full motivation was actually there. We also got the ok from the team boss back then to, let's say, "do what you have to do". So, catch up, take risks and do what you normally wouldn't do after four hours. We kept up the pace, gave everything and drove to the end, in a nutshell. And when I crossed the finish line, it was a very emotional moment, because I always ignored that before and was really focused. Something can always happen: you think about nothing else, focus on the job, and concentrate on that alone. But when I crossed the finish line, it was an emotional moment that lasted several minutes – I am getting goosebumps now just thinking about it. Because it's only at that point that you can appreciate just how much has been involved in the preparation. We had thought that it was already over, and then we were given hope that it wasn't, and then we finally achieved our goal. That was something we couldn't have planned for and it will always remain in my head. Those emotions I will never forget. [13:58]

SR: Sportspeople are literally in a kind of tunnel, according to your description, and when the tunnel takes you past the finish line, emotions will break out, especially if you catch up such a deficit and take the overall win. What is it like at the track? As a race engineer are you also in a tunnel, and at the very end you look out? And what happens to your emotions then? [14:21]

NS: It is very similar. For me, the best races were always the ones that ran without problems at first, so everything went according to plan, pit stops and so on. And the longer it went on, the more nervous I got. If there was a puncture just before the pits, and it came a bit earlier, it was a bit like “now we’ve got that behind us, now it has happened, now we can drive normally”. You’re tense until the end, and we saw in 2016 that the leader can change in the last lap. So it really is until the last lap and everyone was aware of that. I always hated the idea of opening the champagne about an hour before the end of a race. It’s obvious that those who do don’t know what they’re talking about – they don’t know what’s happening and that the worst things can still happen. I have also experienced that you can be leading two hours before the end and then be forced to retire. It’s a huge disappointment, but it’s part of the experience, because when you win again, you’re twice as happy. But only after the car is over the line. Not before! There’s also an element of superstition: you shouldn’t cheer too much before the end, and say that you’ve got it in the bag. Or when you hear "we’re going to Le Mans to win" – hello! Those that say that don’t know what they’re talking about – they have no idea, they probably don’t even know where Le Mans is. [15:47]

SR: So it’s important to be mentally present until the last minute and also have the necessary humility regarding the track and the length and toughness of this race. [15:59]

NS: Yes. I think everyone has to be like that – not only me, but the team, the mechanics, everyone, because as was just said, you can get to the penultimate lap and have a flat tyre. Then at least you hadn’t put everything away and said “right, now we’ll have the party” or something like that. The driver will come in and you have to be able to change wheels. That must be … that’s the way it is. And everyone understood that. That way the jubilation [when you win] is, well, let’s say, twice as much. [16:24]

SR: Timo, you mentioned Wimbledon earlier. Many tennis professionals who start their career say “I’d like to win Wimbledon someday”. You started out as a junior driver for Porsche in 1999, did you have a dream even then of someday winning Le Mans or is it different? [16:41]

TB: No, I definitely had a dream. So for me, the chance to join the Porsche Junior Team, to be accepted, was the ticket to become a professional racing driver. At that time, I must add, it was

just when Porsche withdrew from Le Mans, from the GT1 series. It is fair to say there were two works drivers and two juniors and I was one of them. So this cannot be compared with the programmes you have today at Porsche Motorsport. Nevertheless, for me the goal was clearly to have Porsche come back at some point, because at 18 years of age, of course, I had dreams and there was still time, as I felt like that from the very beginning.

I can still remember it: I was with Alex Wiggenhauser, my mechanic in the Junior Team, who was working on the GT1 98 at Le Mans when it came second in the double victory. In 2000, we did a Carrera Cup race at Le Mans on the short track and we were just raving about it before the race, and in the evening we drove on the long track and it was like this for me: my mouth went dry, I said "to experience that once..." and then three years later I started in the GTE car for the first time at Le Mans. When you're actually there you really get the real thing ... let's say the full force! This is what Le Mans actually means, i.e. the fans, the challenge of the race, the attention around it, in other words the demands placed on you as a driver. And that is what it was for me. Then it became more specific and I would say "at some point I would like to stand on the podium, looking down on thousands of people and experience that". [18:12]

SR: Why don't you take us with you in the car for a while? In 2002, the Porsche 911 GT3 RS, then in 2017 with the 919 Hybrid – how varied is the Porsche world in this respect and how varied are such races when you're in such different cars? [18:29]

TB: When I think that these are two completely different worlds, I don't think it is possible to describe them any further apart. At that time, the use of a GT car at the first Le Mans race, that was customer sports, in other words, an engineer from Porsche was assigned to us. At that time it was Roland Kussmaul, who also was involved in the overall victory in group C in the 1980s. And then there were two works drivers, one customer driver and the team was, in principle, a pure customer team from the US. In 2017, of course, there was a full works team in the top category and it was all about attention, but with all the pressure that comes with the attention and the expectation that comes with it too. Purely in terms of driving, of course it was completely different. I remember back then with the GTE car, with the steel brakes, you really had to watch out for them. You had to make sure you didn't have to change them twice, because it was obvious that you couldn't complete the distance without changing them once. It

was just an H-pattern gearbox with clutch engagement when shifting up and down. Roland Kussmaul was the one who drummed into us to shift with the clutch, watch the brake, and no kerbs. So it was the real thing, you didn't just have the feeling, it was an endurance race. It wasn't just about driving fast, you had to get the performance out of the car over a distance right to the end so that you could still attack if you had to. You had to look after the car like it's life itself, so to speak. Over the course of time, the race naturally became faster and with the 919 Hybrid it was already the case that you had to drive the complete distance almost at a sprint with the carbon brakes, the paddle-shifted gearbox, with a downforce car. Then there were also corners and kerbs where you had to be careful not to shift up on your kerb because it was not good for the gearbox. But the restrictions were much less. On a higher level it was of course about the possibilities, but also about the demands on the driver, physically and also mentally. It was a different story in any case. [20:28]

SR: Norbert, how has this changed on the race track, what Timo is saying about the worlds the GT car and the 919 Hybrid offer and the demands that come with them for the driver – what is it like on the race track for the engineers? [20:43]

NS: Well, all right, let's go back a little bit to Le Mans. Le Mans was once well-known, or is well-known, for the 24 Hours. Afterwards you immediately remember it has a long straight of five km. And five km is about what it takes for a car to reach top speed. So, that means you are driving at almost top speed – perhaps two or three km/h less. These two things – the long straight and the 24 hours – are what really characterise Le Mans and I think that only Le Mans is now celebrating 30 years of chicanes. I mean that 30 years ago chicanes were introduced on the straight, because the FIA, the safety people, said: "think about what safety means". As Timo said earlier, this is a public road, with ditches and everything that goes with it, and next to it the gardens, houses and so on, so it's not a permanent race track. And then they introduced two chicanes, which is absolutely right, in view of the insane speeds – we reached 370 and sometimes 380 on a public road. Yes, you have to imagine, on a public road. If you drove your car on the road normally from time to time, it was always open – you can see these truck ruts that are there in the road. When it's raining, the water stands there a bit – so it's not great for

your car. But that was Le Mans. So you didn't say: "hey, that can't be like that, you have to change that". That was Le Mans, full stop.

If you go back a little further, I think the 24 Hours of Le Mans has been around since 1923 – but the ACO, the organiser, has been around since 1906, which is only a couple of years after the FIA was founded so they've been around for about the same time. They always had something in mind. For example, they also had their first Grand Prix. The first Grand Prix was at Le Mans. [22:38]

SR: There is a beautiful story and I would like to know if it is true: that during the 24-hour race, Norbert Singer did not sleep. So from Saturday morning until Sunday evening, after the victory celebration, you didn't sleep. Is that true? And if so, how does someone manage that? Is it pure adrenalin that keeps you awake? [22:56]

NS: No, it's not too hard at all. You have to remember that in the past there was no radio or Wi-Fi and you had no idea how the car was driving, so I had my own way – I stood outside in front of the pit with my watch and timed the car. I wanted to see – and back then it was the RSR, and they drove four minutes something, later it was just a bit faster – when should he pass? And then you'd look and see that now he has to come out of the chicane. Yes, he's coming, OK, that's alright. Then you would wait another four minutes and at some point, well, he's not coming. Then you'd indicate to the pit: watch out, it could be something – from a puncture to the bodywork, anything is possible. Yes, and then he would come 10 seconds later, because he was stuck in traffic somewhere. All-clear – he drives on. And then at some point: he has to come now because he's half a minute overdue! That was the only information. There was no television, there was no timing, there was nothing. In this respect, you stayed on your feet. Really on your feet. I don't think I sat down at all. You just went into the pit during the four minutes, maybe ate a sausage or something, and then came out again, because in four minutes he had to come around again. And so the 24 hours went by relatively quickly. At night it was difficult when you only saw the headlights. So you would say ok, he should be there now, with the three that are coming now, and if he's not with them, then there would be a bit of, well, yellow alert. [24:25]

SR: How was that for you as a driver? Did you sleep during the race? [24:29]

TB: Well, the good thing is that the 919 was equipped with an onboard camera, i.e. telemetry. So we always knew where the car was and the great thing for the following drivers – because a driver always had to be on standby in the pits – was that you could watch the onboard camera. That meant you could see live how your colleague overtakes, where he overtakes, how he overtakes and then you could always take a bit of information with you. But, like Norbert Singer, I can also say that as a driver, you are in the race, even when you are not driving. And I think that's something that people don't see in sprint races or sometimes drivers don't understand – that even though you're not driving right now, the car keeps going and you're in the race anyway, following it as if you were in the car yourself. This means that there is no time to really switch off or to relax in any way. Never mind sleep. So I think I maybe doze off for half an hour, if at all, but I always did it like this – because I was always scheduled for the start in the last few years so that if there was no problem, I would do two stints – three hours each – and then after the second run in the middle of the night I would lie down for a while and it was already around 6 or 7 o'clock or so, and then I'd doze off for a while. You can see then what your body can do with little sleep, because in the second half of the race, when it started again in the morning, we would set exactly the same times as the day before. And that shows what the body can compensate for without sleep. If it's trained, if you drink in time, if you're prepared, the body can compensate. That was always astonishing for me. But on the following Monday and Tuesday you'd be out of order, that's clear. You'd be done. [26:07]

NS: Yes, that is very important. We always used to say: at 4 o'clock in the morning, 5 o'clock when it gets light again, 6 o'clock actually, that is the witching hour. Because that's exactly what it is: you still have to be concentrating and there are drivers – I mean, there are 40 or 50 cars driving around – who are less focussed and that's when the silliest accidents happen. Nothing spectacular now, but one just slips and the other touched him or something like that. That witching hour, when it was over, when the sun was in the sky again, then it went on. But that was the critical time. [26:39]

SR: Concentration is a good cue, there is also a story about Timo Bernhard and how your body needs carbohydrates. How do you solve this if you want to drive as fast and as long as possible and also successfully? How do you go about that? [26:52]

TB: Well, I'm a meticulous tinkerer and a meticulous person – I have to give a bit of background information. In 2014, we found out during the tests that we could not have an electrolyte drink in the car because the pump for the drinking system would then clog up and not work any more. Therefore we only had water for the race. I can drive all day, but I need the energy and water alone was not enough for the three hours in the car. A year later we experimented during the endurance races, at the pit stop when I stayed sitting in the car, we used a syringe filled with a liquid – with electrolytes and also with carbohydrates in liquid form. It was then drunk quickly under the helmet, so to speak, and then it went on and the code word was always: "I need a gel". Like what is used for athletics or for marathon events. That's what we did in Le Mans in 2017, and my New Zealand colleagues, who are a few years younger than me, always teased me because they always said "what do you need gel for? For your hair or something?" and I would say "sure, sure, you two, there will be trouble after the race". That's how it was, I was teased a bit, but it was just important for me to be able to keep up my performance over the three, three and a half hours. That was always the critical thing. You could do either three or four stints with one tyre, and you left the driver inside for this whole time, where you leave the tyres on. But you still have to refuel – three times probably. If you leave the tyre on for the four stints and only change the driver when the tyre is changed, you save time at the pit stops. You didn't want to stop unnecessarily. That's why I had to use gels during pit stops. [28:31]

SR: We've talked a lot about the team now, how important the attitude is, how to keep at it, whether off the track or on the track. Are there also moments when you say that we had the luck necessary to win such a race? Norbert, can you remember such a situation? [28:51]

NS: Oh, Lord, a lot. Both good luck and bad luck. We had the last major situation like that in 1994, when we "drove", let's say, the 962 GT and actually wanted to win the GT class. It came to this – I have to go back a bit – to this action with the 962, which was the prototype in Group C. Jochen Dauer in Nuremberg had three cars in his yard. He said: "I'm turning them into cars for the road, so that I can get this dead capital, this money, back in." And then he came to Porsche at some point and said: "Can you help me to get road car approval for these?" And Porsche said: "No, no, you can't sell them and then, if the customer has a problem, he must come to Porsche – we don't do that". But that year McLaren announced their F1, I think it was called, with a

BMW engine. A mid-engine, mid-seater even. Gordon Murray did everything there that had to be done. Then the question came up: “what can we beat him with? With the 911?” and we said that we couldn't do that. Then at some point we came up with the idea: “Well, there's still time left and if we help him, then we can …”. Well, ok, we did it, it worked, it went perfectly. We wanted to win the GT. We were already relatively fast in practice – I can't remember, fourth or fifth fastest or something like that. In the race we had a few axle shaft problems. And, well, as life goes, another Toyota – it happens more and more often – had gear shift problems two hours before the end. It stopped in front of the pit lane exit. We weren't that far away. As the old saying goes, we were in the right place at the right time. We took the lead and remained in the lead, but we had a huge axle shaft problem. It happened before it got dark, and we took the problem with us into the night. During the night they said: “it's dark now, we'll look when the sun rises”. And then it just went like this: “yes, it works a bit”. And then suddenly we are leading two hours before the end with a huge axle shaft problem. So then I said: “that's it, we won't look any more, we'll just drive. One way or the other”. So we were lucky that we won. A few years later, we dropped out two hours before the end, in the lead. That is the other side of the coin. So both. You need both. That's what I meant earlier – you can't really do Le Mans by saying: "Now let's go and win this". There are so many things involved that you cannot control. You can drive as many endurance races as you want, but it's not possible. Luck is just what you need. And Toyota didn't have it a couple of times and now they won a couple of times [31:42].

SR: And that is also what makes it so fascinating. Sometimes you're lucky, sometimes you're unlucky. This suspense that is created in this race alongside the legend that Le Mans exudes. Do you also remember a scene where you said: "Well, that was also luck, the necessary luck of the brave?" or also damned bad luck, we shouldn't have had it? [32:01]

TB: Definitely both. 2017 is the best example of a happy moment and the necessary bit of luck. This is what Dr. Wolfgang Porsche also told us at our first appearance with the 919 in 2014. He said: "Despite all the preparations you need the necessary bit of luck!". And it is exactly what you need to win. Of course with the starts I drove there was both. In 2017 there was a little bit of luck, but if I look at 2014, three years earlier, on our return to the top class at Le Mans, we had a race that couldn't have been better for our return. Right after three hours of leading kilometres, always

driving around the podium, the two Audis had a turbocharger problem, I think. All of a sudden we were leading and then, as Norbert Singer has already described, there was a little tingling sensation and you think it's not going to happen … And that was exactly the moment two hours before the end when we coasted out of the race with engine failure. And back then, I have to say, that was a reminder that a) it's really only over when it's over, and b) the race, you can't foresee it, you can't plan it, you shouldn't think of anything before the race. It is a race where you have to be prepared as best as possible. I have always thought you need to be open about the result. Trying to get your best performance, and what comes out is what comes out of it. And then you try to analyse afterwards, objectively. But I also felt I couldn't go into the race any other way – for me, that is – or I would be too disappointed or I would get caught up in other things where I would no longer be focussed. [33:36]

NS: I remember that in 1982, I think, when we drove in Group C for the first time. At the start and finish. Before the start, there were the preparations. Then there are the media representatives, who of course say "yes, great" and "super" and think to themselves … "well, let's see". You had to drive for 18 hours and then see what was left – maybe you're not even in the race any more, then you don't even have to think about whether you'll win or not. So, that's the basic idea. And what you say is absolutely right: you can't go and say that we will win quickly. That's not possible. Those who say that, they don't know. [34:16]

SR: Now, we have two motorsport and Le Mans experts sitting here so we want to play a little game with you. Let's see how well you do. My question to you listeners is: which engine sound represents a Le Mans winner? I will play three sounds for you. At the end we'll see if you were right. Here is number one. [34:37]

Engine sound 1 [34:50]

SR: That was a throaty sound; now for number two. [34:53]

Engine sound 2 [35:01]

SR: That was also a fast car– it could have been from Timo Bernhard. Let's go to number three. [35:07]

Engine sound 3 [35:14]

SR: So Norbert, you get to guess first. One, two or three: which sound represents a life without winners? [35:21]

NS: I would bet on the 917 for the first one. [35:23]

SR: Timo, what do you think? [35:24]

TB: This is before my time, so I would definitely agree with you. Yes, number one. [35:30]

SR: It is always good to have an experienced race engineer you can rely on. Great! Norbert, congratulations, it's actually a Porsche 917 and Timo has the instinct to put his money on the right people.

TB: That's also part of it.

SR: And the 917 won in 1970 and 1971, before Timo was even born.

TB: Not even planned.

SR: By the way, behind the second sound there is also a Le Mans winner: a Porsche 911 GT 1. In 1998 this racing car took first and second place. And the third engine sound was a Carrera GT – not a Le Mans winner, but an absolute super sports car that we built between 2003 and 2006. [36:16]

Acoustic separator [36:20]

SR: Now let's go to the audience and see how well you know Porsche sounds. Do you also have the right instinct, like Norbert Singer and Timo Bernhard, to win a prize? The question is which of the following three sounds belongs to the record-winning Le Mans car, the Porsche 956 / 962? This car crossed the finish line first six times in a row from 1972 to 1987. I will now play three sounds for you – please listen carefully. Here is number one. [36:52]

Engine sound 1 [37:05]

SR: A characteristic sound. Let's listen to number two. [37:07]

Engine sound 2 [37:16]

SR: And here comes number three for you. [37:18]

Engine sound 3 [37:31]

SR: One, two or three. Which of the three sounds represents the Le Mans record-winning Porsche 956 / 962? [37:39]

Female station voice – Prize draw

Porsche AG is giving you the chance to win a guided tour of the Stuttgart Porsche Museum. Exclusive insights behind the scenes are guaranteed. The competition starts now and will run up to the next edition of the 9:11 podcast. Porsche will draw one winner from all correct entries. Everyone above the age of 18 can take part. The detailed competition rules – along with the odd hint – can be found in the Porsche Newsroom at www.porsche.newsroom.de. Good luck! [38:11]

SR: Yes, dear Norbert, dear Timo. We have now almost reached the end. Time has literally flown by and I would like to finish by asking you: what is it that makes Le Mans so special, and for Porsche in particular? [38:29]

NS: Well, we said it at the beginning: Le Mans and Porsche have always been connected. Porsche went to Le Mans for the first time in 1951, actually very shortly after the Porsche name or car even came into being. Ferry Porsche had the foresight to say we want to go there and we want to look good there, through a good finishing position. It worked and I think that's the connection. As I said before: both are fast and reliable. That is very important. A Ferrari is also fast, but sometimes it is not reliable. Today it is better. But that's what Porsche always has been … suitable for everyday use, fast, reliable. That is decisive and that is what you need at Le Mans. [39:14]

SR: And how do you see that? [39:15]

TB: Well, I went to Le Mans for the first time in 2002 as a new works driver, and during the obligatory weighing on Monday I walked on to the *Place de la République* wearing a Porsche

shirt. At that time Porsche was not active in the major class and I think the third fan I saw – because it's very full of fans, you can hardly get through – asked me in French when Porsche would finally come back to the major class. I immediately understood the tradition there and not only because of the record wins, but also the fascination of the different Porsche models that drove there, and how Porsche always presented itself. This has contributed a great deal to the way the brand is intertwined with the race there. So, it is unique and a great honour to be able to represent Porsche as a driver there and that is something special. I really have to say that it was the crowning glory of my career to start there. [40:07]

SR: Let me take this opportunity to thank you for your insights into the world of Le Mans and Porsche and for the goose bump moments we had during our conversation. Timo Bernhard, Norbert Singer: stay healthy and I wish Porsche and motorsport all the best. And now to all our listeners, to end our podcast I would like to ask you to give us some feedback. If you have any ideas, questions or suggestions, just send us an email to 911-podcast@porsche.de. I look forward to receiving your thoughts and, of course, to having you join me again next time.

Outro [40:40]