



ash - through the esses

This column originally appeared on TheRaceSite.com

Through The Esses - Fabcar's Dave Klym - Ready For The Rolex 24

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Long time race car builder Dave Klym had an early voice in the creation of the Grand American Road Racing Daytona Prototype class. He lobbied hard for the idea of an affordable series with racing cars built by American fabricators, and his built-in-Indiana Fabcar FDSC/03 was the very first model to come to life.

Raced under the Brumos Porsche banner - a veteran racing organization led by long time Porsche dealer and team owner Bob Snodgrass - the Fabcar enjoyed early success at the start. Over the last two years however, the number of cars competing in the class has grown incredibly larger and with that growth has come increased competition. Stiff competition.

The net effect of having builders like Kevin Doran, Max Crawford and Bill Riley putting their own DP cars on the track, raced by several teams with both significant and varied levels of ability, has been to relegate the original Fabcar chassis to a position further down the grid. Fans of the always well prepared, yet torque-deficient Porsche-powered Brumos Fabcars have been waiting patiently for a reversal of fortunes. Recent developmental work carried out by Porsche suggests a trip 'back to the future' may be at hand for 2005.

Brumos owner Snodgrass recently commented on why the team went directly to Porsche for assistance. "Because of the stiff competition and the influx of new Daytona prototypes, we went back to the drawing board this winter to make sure the Brumos Racing Porsche Fabcars have what it takes to be competitive this season."

We talked with Klym about what he and Porsche have been doing to ready his chassis for a second run at the rest of the DP pack.

"Porsche has a history of helping the people who run their cars and we shipped one of our cars over to them in Germany, where they did a complete review of the entire car. They made a number of suggestions for us to address and we are in the midst of doing that right now.

"Key Porsche people were also at the Daytona tests with us, which further demonstrates their professional approach to working with their customers to achieve results."

Brumos Racing owns three Fabcar chassis. Klym told us they sent chassis #006 to Germany. This is the



current #58 Red Bull car. He also gave us a brief rundown of the other chassis that will be at Daytona in a few weeks time.

"The first #58 car was chassis #002. This was the same car that Kyle Petty ran as #45 in last year's Rolex race. That car is now the #29 car that the Vargo's are running in the Rolex. And I am preparing another Porsche powered car. It is the former white #22 car that we had displayed with the Toyota motor. Brumos now owns it too, making it four Porsche-Fabcars for them. This car will be on display at Daytona.

"The #59 car is the first chassis ever built and it has close to 25,000 racing and testing miles on it. And #59 has always been the same chassis. Chassis #001. We take it into the shop each year and smoke it over to check for cracks and all. It had a pretty extensive rebuild this winter. The car has had a hard life!"

Racing is hard. Winning is even harder. And in every race there can be only one winner. Getting across the line first rarely comes first. Practice, followed by heartbreak, followed by moderate success normally precedes the achievement of one's ultimate goals. Klym is in complete agreement. And when solutions to problems are found, enthusiasm follows.

"Race cars are an ongoing process of continued development and change. Our major issue has been with chassis rigidity. And that is primarily due to the use of the flat six engine. It is easier to brace a V8 where you can get under the oil pan or somewhere. But we have an engine that is 30 inches wide and sits right on the bottom of the floor because exhaust pipes come out of the bottom. It is a pancake chunk.

"There are two things you need to do. You need to get it as low as you can for the center of gravity, and you need to get the exhaust pipes out the bottom. Our crank center line is higher than anybody else's. And, again, it is very hard to brace this engine because you can't get underneath it without raising it higher. Porsche was able to come up with a solution that allows us to properly brace the engine. We came up with a way we could brace it so as to improve chassis rigidity."

For us non-engineers, Klym provided a brief summary of why race cars should have rigid chassis structures.

"There are several reasons why you want the chassis to be rigid. If the chassis is flexing it is like having another spring on the car. It becomes another unknown variable, making suspension adjustments that much harder. We would have liked to have gone faster at the Daytona tests, but that wasn't our goal. Our goal was to relearn the chassis and get closer to making the right adjustments now that the flexing issue has been taken care of."

Snodgrass made this comment during the Daytona test days: "This is an evolution not a revolution. What we are trying to do here is move the car forward for the 24-hour race, and we are really confident about that. For the upcoming shorter races, we have some work to do, but we are not looking for an overnight success."

Klym concurs.

"For the shorter races you need more torque. You need that help out of the turns. If you watch the cars on television, when they show the inside car camera view, you can see the other cars just pulling away from us out of the turns. What you are seeing is pure torque. The horsepower is the same for all of us. If you look at our times at most of the tracks we are right up there with the rest of the pack. We don't have a horsepower problem and we don't have a drag problem, the problem is torque."

A 3.9 liter Porsche engine is now eligible in Grand Am and we wondered if the Brumos cars might be switching to this new powerplant.

"We did test that engine at Homestead last fall. We will probably be going to some version of that engine -

but probably not that large - by the middle of the season. Torque is improved with the new motor but there is no real substitute for cubic inches. Even though they have reduced the Pontiacs to 5 liters, we would still be at just 3.9. It is definitely a handicap."

Others have tried engines besides the Porsche 3.0 in their Fabcar chassis. Southard Motorsports ran a BMW-Fabcar and Cegwa Sport ran a Lexus (Toyota) Fabcar. The two recently announced they would join forces for the 2005 season running the #3 Cegwa Sport Lexus Fabcar at the Rolex 24 at Daytona and then switch over to running Southard's BMW Riley the rest of the season. This means that, after the Rolex 24, only Brumos Racing will be carrying the flag for Fabcar for the foreseeable future.

"Fabcars have been run with BMW and Toyota motors with the results not having been all that good. But the question becomes is that a function of the engine tuning, the set up, the ability and experience of the crews? I don't know. What I do know is that I have no control over the car once it leaves my shop."

And now the #58 Brumos Fabcar has left the Porsche shops and is under Klym's control. Getting where you want to be takes a little help from friends sometimes and Klym is certainly appreciative of what the people at Porsche have done to help him try to gain back the advantage - any advantage really.

"Uwe Bretel, the President of Porsche Motorsport North America, and everyone connected with the Porsche Company, have been most supportive and willing to share ideas with us. We feel we have come away from the nearly six weeks spent in Germany with a real action plan for getting our cars up to speed."

Porsche owners and Brumos Racing fans everywhere are certain to be looking for a strong showing at the Rolex 24 hours at Daytona. A quick check of the Grand Am message boards shows several people listing the #58 car on their list of top finishers. The fans are keeping the faith.

It would seem the Porsche legacy of success in Motorsports has room for another chapter. Dave Klym and Bob Snodgrass would love to help write that chapter.