

# **Pedro Rodriguez – 1,000 kilometres in 4:01:09**

**Mexico's Pedro Rodriguez commanded the legendary Porsche 917 better than just about anyone, with Jo Siffert his only equal. He shared a series of swashbuckling duels with the Swiss, who was a fellow driver for John Wyer's Gulf team. Rodriguez also became one of the leading drivers in Formula One.**

Pedro Rodriguez started his Formula One career in 1963 with Team Lotus. Having taken his first Grand Prix victory in 1967 in a Cooper-Maserati, he recorded his second and final win with BRM in 1970. Like many Grand Prix drivers of the era, Rodriguez also participated in other racing series and started out by contesting a number of sports car races for Ferrari. In 1968, he and his teammate Lucien Bianchi took a Ford GT 40 to victory in Le Mans for the John Wyer team. Rodriguez then became a partner of Porsche in 1970 and 1971. This was the golden age of the World Supercar Championship, featuring the Porsche 917 and the Ferrari 512 battling for the title.

The 1970 season opened with the 24 Hours of Daytona, which the Mexican-born driver won together with Leo Kinnunen and Brian Redman. Rodriguez took victory again in 1971 with teammate Jackie Oliver. His biggest rival at John Wyer Automotive was Joseph Siffert, who had been one of the fastest Porsche drivers over the previous seasons. Rodriguez and Siffert had a particularly intense duel at the World Championship race in Spa-Francorchamps, their twelve-cylinder Porsches touching on a number of occasions as they headed through the notorious Eau Rouge passage. Although Siffert and Redman won there in 1970, Rodriguez and Oliver triumphed in 1971 after covering the 1,000-kilometre distance in 4:01:09. The duo achieved an average speed of nearly 250 kilometres per hour for the entire race, even including pit stops.

In June 1971, Rodriguez took part in what was a relatively insignificant Interserie race at the Norising in Nuremberg. Driving the Ferrari 512 M belonging to the Swiss driver Herbert Müller, Rodriguez was leading the 200-mile contest when his car smashed into a wall and caught fire. The marks left on the track suggested a technical defect such as a tyre failure or a broken wheel suspension was behind the crash. Pedro Rodriguez died in hospital as a result of the accident.