

AL HOLBERT'S 1983 IMSA WINNER & THE 1984 DAYTONA- WINNING KREEPY KRAULY MARCH 83G GTP CAR



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The March 83G Porsche in its original CRC sponsorship color scheme, driven by Al Holbert and Jim Trueman (who owned Red Roof Inns,) the car was dominant everywhere it ran.

Al Holbert's 1983 IMSA Winner & the 1984 Daytona-Winning Kreepy Krauly March 83G GTP Car



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The telltale sign of a Porsche turbo-charged engine was always the burst of flame from the exhaust as the driver shifted gear. This is the March on its way to victory at Daytona in 1984, in the field.

Although it is not widely known, one of the most successful Porsche powered racecars ever was not a Porsche. It was a March GTP car, an 83G that, in the hands of Al Holbert, not only won the 1983 IMSA Camel GT Championship, it then went on to win the 1984 Daytona 24-Hour race outright, in the hands of its new owners, the South African-based "Kreepy Krauly" cars.

To uncover the history of this great car, we first of all have to take a look at just how the March-Porsche combination came about.

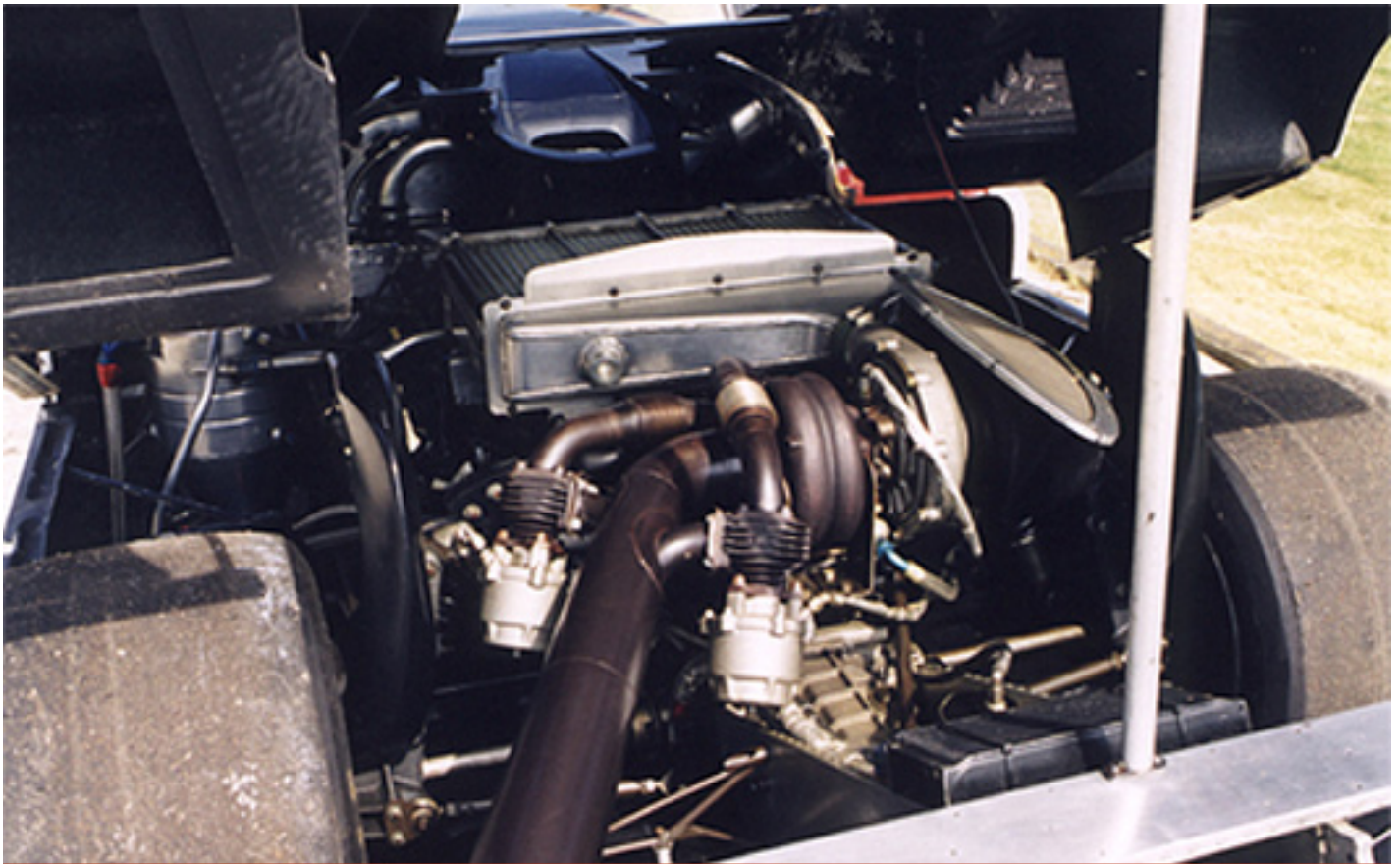
With the announcement of new rules, both for IMSA and the forthcoming Group "C" formula, in 1980, March (along with Lola which produced the T600 series) began to develop a GT prototype which would use ground effects and also carry a wide variation of engines. John Bishop, the head of IMSA, wished to break the domination enjoyed by Porsche with their 935 and its derivatives.

The March design team produced a prototype BMW-powered car called the M1C. David Hobbs and Marc Surer raced this in the IMSA series of 1981. Basically underpowered against the Porsche 935s, the MIC nevertheless earned two pole positions and three top six finishes.



Another photograph of the March 83G Porsche at Daytona. Note the characteristic front wing in between the fenders to help keep the nose glued to the ground at speed.

The March 82G followed and has the distinction of being the first car to be designed by Adrian Newey, who has gone on to become a most successful designer of F1 cars, first with Williams and presently with McLaren.



The Porsche engine of the Kreepy Krauly March. Note that, although it only has one (!) turbo-charger, it has two pop-off valves.

Designed as a "customer" car, the 82G was built with a honeycomb aluminum monocoque and was a simple, rugged design. The engine bay was capable of accommodating a wide range of engines from Chevrolet's V-8 to Porsche's turbocharged flat-6 "Boxermotor". To fulfill IMSA/Group 'C' regulations, the fuel was contained in a 120-liter bag tank/fuel cell between the rear bulkhead and the engine bay. The front suspension consisted of upper and lower wishbones with outboard coil spring and damper units, whilst at the rear, there were top rocker-operated inboard coil spring/damper units mounted alongside the gearbox.

The bodywork was designed and developed by Max Sardou who had designed the Porsche 917/20 "Pig". It featured front fenders reaching forward with an adjustable wing between the fenders. This "lobster-claw" front end was to become a March GTP trademark in the following years.

82G/1 was sold to Bob Garretson and gave the March company a flying start by finishing on the same lap at Sebring in the Twelve-Hour race as the winning Porsche 935. In Europe, a 'Works' car was run, fitted with a 5.8-liter Chevrolet small block. Sadly, it did not fare well and rewarded its drivers Eje Elgh and Jeff Woods with no victories. It was then sold to Randy Lanier who, with Marty Hinze, obtained a third and a sixth place in IMSA races.

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March 83G as it is today. This photograph was taken at Daytona on April 25, 2004. The owner, seen with his back to the camera on the right, won his class in the main race that day.

Dave Cowart and Kenper Miller were stalwart March customers, buying their first GTP car, an 82G, and having a BMW six-cylinder motor fitted. It was underpowered but reliable, the gearbox being the weak point of early Marches. Cowart/Miller finished in the top six at three races in 1982.

Success came March's way in 1983 when Al Holbert bought two of the five 83Gs made and made subtle improvements to them. Holbert won the IMSA Championship for March with these cars, winning at Miami and Laguna Seca (after which he sold the Chevrolet-powered

83G-3 to Dave Cowart and Kenper Miller to replace their aging 82G), and Charlotte, the latter with a Porsche-powered car, 83G-4. Holbert then won at Brainerd, Minnesota, Sears Point and then the Daytona Finale in November with this same car. Incidentally, Cowart and Miller were second at the Daytona Finale, having had Holbert Racing fit a Porsche 935 engine to their 82G. Jim Trueman, Holbert's co-driver, drove the first 83G to victory at Mid-Ohio where he shared the victory with Doc Bundy and Bobby Rahal. Pepe Romero and Doc Bundy were on the pole for the Road Atlanta race but a succession of problems dropped them down to finish fifth.

Al Holbert then sold his 83G, immediately after the 1983 season, to the newly formed "Kreepy Krauly" team from South Africa. Sarel van der Merwe, Graham Duxbury and Tony Martin won the first race of the 1984 season, the Daytona 24-Hours, to give March a great start to the year. At Laguna Seca, the March-Porsche won again but by that time, the opposition, in the form of Randy Lanier's "Blue Thunder" March GTP team had taken over and they won the Championship.

After 1984, the 83G was sold to the John Hotchkiss team, who used it until they bought their 962. Thereafter, it languished, until bought by the current owner, who has had a meticulous restoration carried out to turn the car back to its "CRC" sponsored form, as Al Holbert raced it in 1983.

The March series of GT prototypes were fast, user-friendly cars that filled out the bulk of IMSA races during 1983 to 1985. It's interesting to note that only Al Holbert Racing seemed to be able to make a Porsche-powered March win consistently, but then again, Holbert ran a very professional organization and had considerable help from Porsche's engineers.

Used by the top teams and drivers, March GTP cars rewarded their owners with success until once again, Porsche turbo power took over in the shape of the 962.

MARCH GT PROTOTYPE HISTORIES

83G/03: 1/83. Holbert Racing. 366 Chevrolet.

1983:

Miami GP: Holbert/Trueman; 1st.

Riverside: Holbert; 2nd.

Laguna Seca: Holbert; 1st.

Sold to Cowart/Miller.

83G/04: 5/83. Holbert Racing.

1983:

Porsche 3-liter 935 Turbo engine
Charlotte 500 Km: Holbert/Trueman; 1st.
Brainerd: Holbert/Trueman; 1st.
Minnesota: Holbert/Trueman; 1st.
Portland 3-Hours: Holbert; 1st.
Sears Point 3-Hours: Holbert/Trueman; 1st.
Daytona Finale 3-Hours: Holbert/Trueman; 1st.

1983 IMSA Championship winner.
Sold to Sarel van der Merwe. Kreepy Krauly sponsored.

1984: Rebuilt as 84G.
Kreepy Krauly sponsored. #00.
4-5/2: Daytona 24-Hours: van der Merwe/Martin/Duxbury; 1st OA.
26/2: Miami G.P.: Van der Merwe/Martin; 8th OA.
24/3: Sebring 12-Hours: Der Merwe/Duxbury/Martin; DNF.
29/4: LA Times GP, Riverside: Der Merwe/Martin; 6th.
06/5: Laguna Seca: Der Merwe; 3rd.
20/5: Charlotte: Der Merwe; DNF.
28/5: Lime Rock: Der Merwe; 1st.
10/6: Mid-Ohio: Der Merwe/Martin; 5th.

Sold to John Hotchkiss.

1985:
28/4: Riverside 500 Km: Hotchkiss/Adams; 5th

1988: STP0.

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