

## Press Release - December 2019

**Masters Historic Racing** has kindly given Denis Welch Motorsport permission to reproduce their Special Feature on **Nils-Fredrik Nyblaeus** when he spoke about his passion for racing his beloved Austin Healey.

**"I WANTED TO RACE WHEN I WAS 11. AT 55, I WENT FOR IT!"**



Nils-Fredrik Nyblaeus in his Austin Healey at Paul Ricard in March 2019

**"HERE ARE THE KEYS – GO DOWN AND GET IT ...."**

**Q. You are probably Sweden's most established contribution to historic motor racing. Where did it all start?**

It actually goes back to when I was 11 years old. I spent the summer with my much older sister, and her brother-in-law owned a Triumph Spitfire. I helped him convert it into a racing car, and then on a Saturday night he let me drive it after dinner. 'Here are the keys – go down and get it.' So I did. Then the arrival of a visitor with a Porsche 356 was announced. I waited for hours and hours, and when he finally got there I so hoped that he would let me drive it – and then he let me! It's the experiences you have as a kid that stay with you all of your life.

**"IT'S THE EXPERIENCES YOU HAVE AS A KID THAT STAY WITH YOU ALL YOUR LIFE"**

**Q. And does your passion for Austin Healey stem from the same period?**

I always had an interest in Healeys ever since I saw one in England in 1964, as a 13-year-old boy. I then thought, someday I'm going to own one. But then other things got in between, like a family and a career, so it wasn't until 2002 that I actually bought one!

#### **Q. And does your passion for Austin Healey stem from the same period?.... continued**

The Big Healey is a fantastic combination of beautiful lines and a relatively large engine. The racing started when my wife and I went to England for our 30th Wedding Anniversary in 2004. I somehow managed to sneak into a historic meeting at Silverstone, and when I saw the smiles on the old boys' faces, and it didn't matter if they were first or last, I thought – that's what I want to do! By that time I had got two concours Healeys and won a Worldwide Healey concours in Switzerland with one. On the back of that win I joined a few Healey clubs, and through that I got a Healey 100M which I acquired from the former chairman of the Healey Club USA. I drove that at Le Mans and in the RAC Woodcote Trophy as well as in Sweden and the other Nordics.

**"I SOMEHOW MANAGED TO SNEAK INTO A HISTORIC MEETING AT SILVERSTONE..."**

#### **Q. Best car you ever drove?**

It must be the Healey 3000. When you're full throttle doing 250kph on the Mulsanne straight with no front-end grip, that's just an amazing feeling...

#### **Q. And the worst?**

I won't mention any makes as I wouldn't like to upset people, but the worst car that you can drive is a car not properly set up. When you're scared in a car and don't trust it, that is just the worst experience.

#### **Q. Your favourite circuit?**

Spa is absolutely top of the line. In Sweden, we have Anderstorp, the former Grand Prix circuit, but all other Swedish tracks are smaller, with no high-speed corners. Spa has those – the speed as well as the variety. I also like the Maggotts-and-Becketts combination at Silverstone. Finally, Zandvoort is quite good for the Healey because of its flow. And you feel welcome as a racer there, the local people are actually proud of having the circuit.

**"THE RACING STARTED WHEN MY WIFE AND I WENT TO ENGLAND FOR OUR 30<sup>TH</sup> WEDDING ANNIVERSARY IN 2004"**



#### **Q. Your best mate in the paddock?**

That's got to be Jeremy Welch. But it's all the people you meet, I'm so lucky to have made lots of racing friends from all kinds of countries. My wife is also my best mate. She almost always joins me at the circuits, she came close to racing herself before deciding that one racing driver in the family was enough. She really appreciates Masters because of the people and the hospitality. Masters supports the camaraderie quite well. It's really special in that respect.

Nils-Fredrik Nyblaeus hatching plans with Jeremy Welch before a race

### **Q. The rival you respect and fear the most?**

That's an easy question – Keith Ahlers and Billy Bellinger! In Masters Gentlemen Drivers, we're always trying to beat Keith and Billy in the Morgan SLR, and we only ever succeed when they have a problem. But it's a positive challenge!

### **Q. Are you in it to win it – or do you race just for fun?**

To be honest it is both. My non-racing life has always been very competitive too. For me, racing is a combination of love and hate. I'm always nervous before the start, and thinking, why am I doing this? But as soon as I'm in the car I'm all fired up again. Racing has always been my passion. I discovered at 11 that I wanted to do this, and I was 55 when I actually decided to do it!

**"I'M AIMING TO DO RACES LIKE THE  
NÜRBURGRING 24 HOURS"**



Nils-Fredrik on the podium with Jeremy Welch at Paul Ricard

### **Q. You've been a long-time supporter of Masters. Can you remember your first-ever Masters event?**

I got involved with Masters through Jeremy Welch. I needed expert help with my 100M and turned to Jeremy. He gave me excellent support. Two years later I bought my 3000 at Spa in 2012, also with the help of Jeremy. His father Denis had known the car for many decades. So my first race with Masters was in 2013, and Jeremy has mostly been my co-driver ever since. It's a fantastic benefit for me because I learn a lot from him – he's been racing Healeys all of his life. You have to earn your relationship with Jeremy but once you've proved yourself he's very open.

### **Q. You've added a Ford Falcon in Masters Pre-66 Touring Cars this year. What is the attraction of that car and the series?**

I wanted a V8! It couldn't be a GT car as I wanted to keep racing the Healey, so it had to be a touring car. And really, the Falcon and the Healey are not that hugely different. They are both reasonably light cars – the Falcon has a lightweight chassis. Both have strong engines, and both are heavy at the front. I got this one in Sweden. I've only done one race in it so it's hard to say how different the racing is compared to GTs. I've also recently acquired two modern touring cars: two ex-Rickard Rydell cars, the 2011 STCC-winning Chevrolet Cruze and his 2013 WTCC Honda Civic. I'm aiming to do races like the Nürburgring 24 Hours in them, so an entirely different challenge.



Nils-Fredrick Nyblaeus at the Grand Prix de France Historique

**"I DIDN'T KNOW IF WE WERE FIRST OR LAST ...."**

### **Q. Your best day in motor racing?**

The Three Hours race at Magny-Cours in 2017, no doubt. It was not the best of races – the weather was terrible, with torrential rain and thunderstorms. But to take an outright win was so unexpected! I was driving the final stint and I knew we were leading halfway through, but when they showed the chequered flag I was at the end of the queue. I didn't know if we were first or last! It turned out we were one lap ahead of everyone... Last year's Le Mans Classic was another highlight. We drove both Healeys, finished 6th and 7th and took class wins in both.

Nils-Fredrick Nyblaeus

### **Q. And your worst?**

That's hard to say. There were some days that were 'not that good'. For instance, years back, I broke the crank of my 100. But I managed to save the block, so even on that occasion there was a bright side to it. But the most frustrating day must have been at the Nürburgring a couple of years ago. We were for once leading the Morgan SLR when I got a drivethrough penalty. I refused to come in because I hadn't done anything. After three more laps Jeremy was almost jumping out on the track, and in pure frustration I spun at the end of the straight and came in on the next lap. We dropped down to third. The clerk of the course claimed that I had crossed the white line coming out of the pits and that they had it all on video. I had not! As it turned out they had looked at the wrong video – I had crossed the line the other way coming by on the straight. We later managed to prove that with the in-car footage, but then it was too late to change. So it does happen that you're disappointed, but you know that's all part of racing.



**"I'M ALWAYS NERVOUS BEFORE THE START... BUT AS SOON AS I'M IN THE CAR,  
I'M ALL FIRED UP AGAIN!"**

### **Credit and thanks to:**

Masters Historic Racing  
Interviewer Mattijs Diepraam



### **ENDS**

#### **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

Denis Welch Motorsport has developed a worldwide reputation for performance development of Austin Healey, Jaguar and other high performance cars and engines for over 40 years. The company aims to provide the very best motorsport service available, whether for road, race or rally. Denis Welch Motorsport has helped many champions and other successful clients to achieve results.

Denis Welch Motorsport offers a comprehensive range of services from routine maintenance, bodywork, MOT testing, engine building & dyno testing, to pre-preparation, race support and development, all backed by parts manufacturing and a fully-stocked parts store with International mail order capability offering over 9500 product lines.