

SEEING IS BELIEVING

RACERS TAKE ADVANTAGE OF TAG HEUER NIGHT VISION

BY JAN TEGLER



■ UNTIL RECENTLY, THE Rolex 24 at Daytona featured the most hours of darkness of any 'round-the-clock race. The 24 Hours of Dubai now holds that distinction, but racing at Daytona still challenges drivers with almost 13 hours of nighttime competition.

During January's 51st edition, five drivers—Tommy Milner, Nelson Piquet Jr., Felipe Nasr, Christian Fittipaldi and Max Papis—combated the darkness by wearing the latest version of TAG Heuer's Night Vision eyewear.

Originally released in small numbers in 2007, the yellow-tinted glasses have undergone two development phases. Designed for use on-track or the street, the new glasses—part of TAG Heuer's Squadra collection—come to market in volume this year.

"I spent two minutes after I left the car trying to take my helmet off without being able to figure out why it wouldn't come off," said Stevenson Motorsports Chevrolet Camaro GT.R pilot Tommy Milner, fresh from his first stint in darkness. "Oh yeah, I still have the glasses on. I forgot I was wearing them but I did notice that I wasn't straining to see the reference points I look for. At the end of the

stint, I wasn't squinting like I do sometimes."

The lenses function in opposition to reading glasses, actually decreasing magnification rather than amplifying it as typical concave/convex lenses do.

"In darkness, we all become night myopic," explained Bill Thomaris, vice president for product development at Groupe Logo, the French eyewear design firm that produces TAG Heuer's collections. "Humans, even those with 20/20 vision, lose between 0.18 and 0.30 diopter of correction at distance at night. Less ambient light enters the retina, our pupils dilate and our corneas enlarge. Our eyes just don't function as precisely as in daylight."

Reduced magnification and a special yellow coating enhance contrast and definition in low-light conditions, improving visual acuity at a distance while decreasing the work eyes must do to focus properly.

"When you put them on outside of a race car, you see a difference right away," said NASCAR Nationwide Series driver Nelson Piquet Jr. Wheeling the No. 5 Corvette Daytona Prototype for Action Express Racing, Piquet emerged from the car similarly



XXX To say Kyle Busch (upper left No. 18, top in the No. 54) dominated Texas is an understatement. Above, Martin Truex Jr. is in for one of what he thought were too many pit stops.

unaware he was still wearing the glasses. "They make reading the dash in the DP and the 30 switches we have there a bit easier too," he added.

Piquet has worn the Night Vision eyewear on ovals, as well, first donning the glasses at last year's Camping World Truck Series race at Texas

Motor Speedway.

For GP2 Series hotshoe and Formula One hopeful Felipe Nasr, co-driving with Piquet in the No. 5, glare reduction was the glasses' main benefit.

"I think they really help with the glare from other lights on track," he said. "They don't distract you as