

# WINNER TAKES ALL



*The superlatives have been exhausted. But what else is there? The 911 is quite simply the most successful race car of the past five decades. For its anniversary, thirteen outstanding representatives assemble in the parking garage of the Porsche Museum.*

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Targa Florio winner  
911 Carrera RSR (left),  
and factory driver  
Marc Lieb with the  
Cup 911 (1997)



Porsche 935 "Baby":  
279 kW (380 hp)  
from just 1.4-liter  
displacement suffices  
for 270 km/h

**F**ifty years of motor racing with the 911 means five decades in which the three digits 9 1 1 have become a magic number. A synonym for victories, titles, and trophies wherever a 911 rolls up to the starting line: on the road, racetrack, or rally course. For its anniversary, the 911 is encountering its own glorious racing history. At Porsche-platz. In the parking garage of the Porsche Museum.

The eldest of the wild thirteen brings the 1970s into view with a "zoom," and reminds us of a race that succumbed to the onslaught of modernity, surviving only as a legend: the Targa Florio, 72 kilometers (44.7 miles) in tight loops

through the Sicilian hinterland. "Blistering heat down here," notes a contemporary. "Specters rise suddenly from the asphalt. The eyes, tormented by the seeming blurriness of the images transmitted to the brain, tear up and burn." The picture of the Porsche 911 Carrera RSR crossing the finish line in 1973 captures the feverish enthusiasm of the *tifosi* for all eternity. They push, shove, and crane their necks. Between the race cars on the pavement and the toes of the bravest of them, there is hardly the width of one hand.

With eleven overall victories in seventeen years, Sicily becomes Porsche-land. In 1973, it's the 911 Carrera



The 911 SC "Safari"  
from 1978 (rear),  
and the Paris-Dakar  
winner from 1984:  
the 911 Carrera 4x4

RSR that bests the Italian competition and launches Porsche's involvement in GT racing—a new era in customer racing. Its six-cylinder boxer engine puts out 243 kW (330 hp). Porsche celebrates overall victories at the long-distance classics Daytona and Sebring. The triumph of the 911 in 1973 brings the great run of the Targa Florio to an end.



Marc Lieb had not even been born yet. At the anniversary celebration, he looks at the forty-year-old car, lost in thought. With six championship titles and ten victories

in 24-hour races, the Porsche factory driver has himself written a chapter in the 911 success story. "I would have liked to have driven the RSR in Martini colors," says the 32-year-old.

The Martini colors also adorn the 911 that enters the 1978 Safari Rally: With 28 centimeters of ground clearance, the high-stepping 911 SC "Safari" is the polar opposite of its racetrack cousins, whose obsession with downforce glue them to the asphalt. Its martial-looking front end lends it a powerful shot of aggressiveness. The 5,000-kilometer (3,100-mile) "dash" through Kenya is regarded as one of the toughest tests of endurance. And



Le Mans champion 911 GT1 (rear), winner of the 1977 Manufacturers' World Championship: Porsche 935/77

in 1978 the trophy was missing from Porsche's collection. In Björn Waldegaard, Porsche picked the ideal driver, a man who defied even the deluge visited on Kenya that year. The Swede already had a 46-minute lead by the time he set off toward the Taita Hills. Journalist Herbert Völker wrote, "They soar into the heights as if the devil had built a fortress." There, in the sinister mountains, a mud-covered boulder put the rear suspension on Waldegaard's 911 out of action. The Kenyan team in the second 911 crossed the line in Nairobi in

second place. But it was cold comfort. Without a victory, the Safari Rally chapter remains incomplete.



After that, Porsche initially kept its distance from the vagaries of off-road racing until sports-car ace Jacky Ickx captured the ear of technology board member Helmuth Bott. As a result, three Carrera 4x4s were built for the Paris-Dakar rally. Even today, a faint smell

of gasoline and dust permeates the cockpit of the first all-wheel 911. The view from the driver's seat overlooks four gigantic auxiliary headlights that turned night into day in Africa in 1984. The operation was a success. The victory in the all-wheel-drive 911 went to desert specialist René Metge.

At the time, Porsche was working in parallel worlds. But the battle against the forces of nature remained a sideline adventure, a dalliance discontinued after the

one-two finish in the groundbreaking 959 at the Dakar in 1986. Porsche's terrain was, is, and always will be the contest for supremacy on paved circuits.



One of the standouts in this illustrious line is the Porsche 935. The star of the years 1976 to 1982, this widened 911 has an extremely flat front section, massive spoilers, and the waistline of a supermodel. It's



The first Cup Porsche,  
based on the  
964 (rear);  
the successor is  
based on the 993



Supermodel  
of customer racing:  
911 GT3 RSR  
from 2005 (right)  
and 2011

also a lightweight that reached the minimum weight of 970 kilograms only through the addition of lead plates. With a displacement of 2,857 cc, the 935/77 puts out 463 kW (630 hp). In 1977, Jochen Mass and Jacky Ickx drove it to victory in the six-hour race at Silverstone. Meanwhile, wins at Watkins Glen and Brands Hatch, among others, kept Porsche ahead of the pack in the long-distance races of the Manufacturers' World Championship.

In the most powerful version of the 935, affectionately known as "Moby Dick," its six-cylinder turbo engine puts out 621 kW (845 hp). But Porsche can do the smaller classes too. The runt of the litter goes by the name of 935 "Baby," and its gestation period was short

indeed. After a mere three months in development, it started in the German Racing Championship. With a reduced engine displacement of 1,425 cc, it put out an impressive 279 kW (380 hp). But the little upstart carried the same winning genes in its makeup.

Divining the 911 bloodlines in the 911 GT1 requires a little trick: you have to squint your eyes just a bit. For the company's fiftieth anniversary, it gave Porsche its sixteenth overall victory at the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1998. No other car manufacturer has taken the checkered flag in the long-distance classic as often. The 911 GT1 was the most extreme interpretation of the 911 genre and the first completely carbon-fiber race car from Porsche. Ground clearance was all but non-existent. Its silhouette



was sleekly stretched out; only the rule-conforming width in the rear was a small affront to the aesthetic whole. The cockpit was rife with carbon fiber, and the doors were so light that they could be opened with a pinkie.



After the one-two finish at Le Mans, the company put factory-team competition on the back burner for a time. By then, the Porsche one-make race series was already a great success. The first race, the Porsche Carrera Cup in 1990 in Zolder, Belgium, proved the spark for a raging success that ignited across the world and led to nineteen one-make race series. Since 1998, the Supercup car has been based on the 911 GT3 and is thus known as the 911 GT3 Cup. Since then, Porsche has built an impressive 2,395 Cup race cars.

And the next generation is already in the starting blocks. In 2013, the new 991-based speedster will test its mettle in the international Porsche Mobil 1 Supercup—at first on its own. Before 400 guests at its world premiere in Weissach in early December, the new Cup 911 already whetted appetites.

Walter Röhrl was among the competitors in a Cup race of the first Supercup season in 1993. The car was based on the 964—and that's exactly what it looked like.

Visionary:  
The 911 GT3 R Hybrid  
wins long-distance  
races at Nürburgring



Cup future:  
The new 911  
GT3 Cup will be  
racing solo in the  
2013 Supercup

Except that the interior was freed of ballast, stripped down to just a safety cage, bucket seat, and six-point seat belt. “The race car had just 265 hp,” says Röhrle with a shake of the head. “That’s how we raced in those days. Incredible.”

At the reunion of racing 911s, two especially ambitious representatives from the present day are also on hand. The 996-based 911 GT3 RSR won race after race from 2004 to 2006 before its successor (model 997) took over in 2007. “Both cars were the absolute state of the art in the GT class,” says Marc Lieb. “Extremely fast, reliable, fuel-efficient.” In more recent iterations of the GT3 RSR, the side and rear windows, doors, and hood are made of plastic. The lever for sequential gear shifting

protrudes prominently from the cockpit, while the timelessly beautiful round instruments are replaced by a cool display. “Technologically, the car pushed the envelope.”



The 2011 season was nothing less than outstanding. Porsche won everything there was to win in GT racing with the RSR. The 98th class victory at Le Mans in 2010 was a textbook 24-hour marathon. “All we did was change tires, add oil, and fuel up,” says Lieb. On his personal scale, however, his fourth overall victory at the 24-hour race on the Nürburgring the following year meant more: “With the Manthey Team, we were able to beat the factory teams with minimal outlays.”

Albeit by the skin of his teeth. Yet another Porsche almost nipped him at the line: the 911 GT3 R Hybrid. With its technology, it is transforming the future into the present. At the end of the day, just one hour and 45 minutes separated it from a sensation—victory for the hybrid 911 at the 24-hour classic on the Nordschleife. Twenty-two hours and 15 minutes into the race, the white-and-orange 911 GT3 R Hybrid was forced to abandon its lead and the race due to a defect. On the same stage just a few weeks before, it had celebrated victory in the fourth running of the long-distance championship. The hybrid 911 needed one less refueling pit-stop than its competitors. In the fall of 2011, the car once again im-

pressively demonstrated its capabilities. In the eighth running of the American Le Mans Series in Laguna Seca, the hybrid 911 was the first GT class car to cross the finish line out of competition.



With the conclusion of the 2012 season, the life cycle of the current 911 GT3 RSR has also come to the end of its run. Its successor, based on the new 911, will debut in the Sports Car World Championship in 2013. It is set to write a new chapter in 911 history. At stake is nothing less than the start of the next five decades. ●