

Rusty's amazing Porsche quartet

25/03/2020 Motorsport stalwart Rusty French has one of the most extensive Porsche collections in the world. A rare quartet were on display at the recent 2020 Formula 1® Rolex Australian Grand Prix.

One of the unique attractions at this month's Australian F1 Grand Prix was a spectacular car display adjacent to the Porsche PAYCE Carrera Cup Australia pit paddock.

With the cancellation of the event on Friday morning, it meant that racing fans were only able to access the Albert Park Grand Prix Circuit for one day.

One result of the cancellation was that Cameron Hill became the only winner of this year's event, winning the Thursday evening Carrera Cup endurance race. As the voice of Porsche Motorsport Australia Richard Craill noted, the Canberra driver will forever be the answer to a cryptic trivia question.

Another ramification was that an amazing quartet of rare Porsche sportscars was on display for just one day. The planned Sunday morning on-track demonstration of all four cars was cancelled.

Making the Porsche display even more remarkable is that the four cars are all owned by the same person, serial Porsche owner and racer Rusty French.

Black and gold

Like many of the performance cars that French has owned and raced over the years, each one is liveried in black with gold wheels and details.

The four cars on display were:

- Porsche 935
- An original 1978 Porsche 935
- Porsche 911 GT2 RS Clubsport
- Porsche 911 GT2 RS

The Australian debut of the latest edition of the 935 was the culmination of many months of planning by French.

"I planned to own one of these very special cars since Porsche announced plans in 2018 to build just 77 as a homage to the famous 'Moby Dick' 935/78 Le Mans race car," said French.

"Getting one wasn't easy. Although I own more than 40 road and racing Porsche, that alone wasn't a guarantee that I could purchase one. So I had to list all the models, when I bought them and so on.

"Then I also had to fill out a form detailing my racing history before Porsche would issue me an invitation to order one."

Porsche pedigree

That racing history included French finishing second in the 1982 Australian GT Championship in a Porsche 935; winning it the following year in another 935 and having a further two 935 coupes, making for a total of four classic 935 race cars in his private collection.

The Melbourne businessman also has a strong international racing record in 935s, including winning the 1989 British GT Championship, the 2005 Japanese Le Mans Classic and successive victories in the Monterey historic races at Laguna Seca in the United States.

French also finished ninth outright finish in the 1984 Le Mans 24 Hours co-driving a Kremer-entered Porsche 956B.

"Once Porsche agreed to invite me to purchase a 935 I even flew to the factory to take delivery of it," said French.

"There's a plaque on its dashboard confirming it as chassis number 67 of the 77 built.

"It was one of just two sold to Australians."

Taking advantage of the intense qualification process to purchase his 935, French decided to also order a new 911 GT2 RS Clubsport and take delivery of it at the same time. After the handover and special dinner, the two ultra-high-performance Porches shared transport arrangements to Melbourne.

Carbon is the new black

Like the majority of French's road and racing Porches, all four were presented in his trademark black, a preference dating back to his early Ford Customline days, although his new 935 is a notable exception.

"As its body is made entirely of black carbon fibre, I just had my body shop buff it back on its arrival, then apply two clearcoats with another buff in between," said French.

"Painting it wasn't necessary".

Track debut awaits

Taking delivery of such a rare Porsche was a milestone moment, even for a serial owner and racer like

French, but it included a complication.

Of the four cars, only the GT2 RS is road registerable in Australia – the 935 and 911 GT2 RS Clubsport are track only race cars. The Albert Park event provided the perfect opportunity, thanks to Porsche Cars Australia's invitation, to not only display four of his special cars, but also have all four drive on track in a special demonstration run on Sunday morning.

"Driving the new 935 for the first time on the Albert Park GP circuit would have been a very special moment," said French.

With the cancellation of the Grand Prix, French is now hoping to drive both his new 935 and GT2 RS Clubsport at a private track day at Phillip Island, but with the current COVID-19 situation, this is on hold for the time being.

Which does he think will be quicker?

"I'm fascinated to find out."

Rusty's amazing Porsche quartet on display at the 2020 Australian F1 GP

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