

Ice dream

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04/02/2020 With the GP Ice Race marking its second year in the Porsche family's home of Zell am See, co-founder Ferdinand "Ferdi" Porsche reveals how his ice dream became a reality.

A team of people are working hard with their shovels. It's the day before the GP Ice Race and one of the snowbanks at the track entrance isn't quite right.

In the middle of the flying snow, one member of the team is leading by example, showing the rest not only how he wants the top of the bank profiled, but also how to use the awkward long-handled shovels to maximum effect. Then one of his radios crackles and he's called away to deal with another last-minute issue. With a hoot of laughter and pats on the back all round, Ferdinand "Ferdi" Porsche dashes on.

The 26 year-old architect has obviously inherited plenty of the drive of his illustrious forebears, not least the grandfather who founded a certain sports car manufacturer. Over the last couple of years, this

has found an outlet in the rebirth of ice racing in the picture-postcard Alpine beauty of Zell am See. Later that evening, at a star-studded party organised by the Californians behind the air-cooled cult Luftgekühlt, Ferdi reveals how the GP Ice Race came about.

“The GP Ice Race is the baby of a friend of mine, Vinzenz Greger, and me. During our time at university, we could never work out why it seemed like so few of our generation were as into motor sport as we were,” he explains. “And then, one time when we were in Zell am See to do some skiing, we were looking at the spiked tyres of my father’s [Porsche] 550 from when it competed in ice racing. I knew a little about the races that had been held here years ago – but not much and I couldn’t think why it had been so long since they had been last held.

We started by talking to Hans-Joachim Stuck and Richie Lietz, asking what it would take to hold the race, whether people would come and so on. Then we met the mayor, the people from the local tourism authority and the Austrian Motorsport Federation and it all started to come together. Eighteen months later, the first GP Ice Race happened. We didn’t expect all that many people to turn up, so were really surprised when a few thousand did. I guess the motor sport community is quite a tight one, and always looking for cool new things …

We’ve already been blown away by what’s happening this year. Look at this – we’ve got Luftgekühlt here in little Zell am See. We’ve got competitors coming to my beautiful town, my family’s home for the last few decades, from all over the world – even one from New Zealand.”

Over the next couple of days, the GP Ice Race showed why so many people have put their faith in Ferdi. On a 600m track built on top of 40cm of ice, interesting cars, beautiful cars, historically significant cars and sometimes just cool cars, slipped and slithered and raced their way into the history books. Many, in the controlled environment of the race track, towed ski racers behind them in a renaissance of the lost art of skijöring. Two Porsche brand ambassadors were among them: Le Mans driver Jörg Bergmeister had the Norwegian Olympic ski champion Aksel Lund Svindal in tow*(Professional driver and skier. Closed road. Do not attempt)* .

Priceless historics ventured out and the crowds cheered them on, and then cheered even louder when the locals competed against them with cars worth a tiny fraction of their cost. Famous racing drivers did demo runs in a fleet of Taycan Turbo S electric sports cars, there were works rally cars, and, in among it all, car nuts ran a hugely diverse selection of cars ancient and modern, hugely expensive and held together with tank tape and cable ties. And they loved every moment of it.

Watching the 16,000-strong crowd is almost as fascinating as watching the cars at the GP Ice Race, with a real mixture of people mingling in a shared enthusiasm for all things four-wheeled. In these times of Instagram moments, exquisitely curated displays of museum-quality cars, lit and displayed with the snow-capped mountains in the background, helped launch countless selfies. As the sun set, the tempo of the party atmosphere intensified, with music from both the DJ and the magic of internal combustion acting as perfect accompaniments.

People have started describing the GP Ice Race as being like a Goodwood on Ice, and in Ferdi Porsche and Vinzenz Greger, it certainly has the right sort of detail-obsessed, motor sport-enthusiast bosses. In terms of numbers of cars and guests, there are many similarities to when the Goodwood Festival of Speed first started in 1993, but it is aimed at a new generation of motor racing fans for whom the party and the social media moments are as important as who finished which race in what position.

As an architect, Ferdi Porsche's satisfaction comes from seeing something that he has designed become real. In the GP Ice Race, he has designed something that has every chance of becoming a diary-blocking annual reality for every motor racing enthusiast.

Consumption data

Taycan Turbo S (Predecessor model)

*Further information on the official fuel consumption and the official specific CO_2 emissions of new passenger cars can be found in the "Leitfaden über den Kraftstoffverbrauch, die CO_2-Emissionen und den Stromverbrauch neuer Personenkraftwagen" (Fuel Consumption, CO_2Emissions and Electricity Consumption Guide for New Passenger Cars), which is available free of charge at all sales outlets and from DAT (Deutsche Automobil Treuhand GmbH, Helmuth-Hirth-Str. 1, 73760 Ostfildern-Scharnhausen, www.dat.de).

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