

Best of both worlds: full-time engineer, part-time instructor

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23/10/2023 The best instructors not only know how to drive a Porsche safely and quickly. They can also precisely explain what is happening in the vehicle when it is running at the limit. This can result if development engineering is their main profession in Weissach. Like in the case of Christian Wolfsried.

It is the enchantment of the extremely short days that Christian Wolfsried remembers with particular fondness. "The few hours of winter sunshine in the Arctic Circle are magical," he enthuses, recalling one of his first assignments for Porsche. Like phantoms, powder snow clouds rise at minus 20 degrees in Swedish Lapland, only to settle in a new formation. Developing something new was also Wolfsried's task in 2016 during the cold test of the first Taycan, with both the car itself and the test location being a secret at the time.

When he started as a development engineer in Weissach, he was 27 years young and had just

completed his Master of Science in vehicle and engine technology at the University of Stuttgart. He would become the chassis calibration engineer for the torque management/torque vectoring of the first fully electrical sports car from Porsche. To put it simply, the aim is to translate the new degrees of freedom of the electric drive, with one autonomous electric motor per axle, into optimal torque distribution for all driving situations. Because Wolfsried not only has the theoretical chops, but is also hard on the pedals and precise at the wheel, he drives the thriving prototypes on various test sites and racetracks. "Being able to design and coordinate a significant part of such a vehicle is an absolute privilege!"

Doing research while driving requires experience. As part of Wolfsried's job interview, his future boss climbed into the passenger seat. After a few laps on the Weissach test track, he gave the thumbs up. Wolfsried has a high degree of vehicle control, drove karts and has already competed in long-distance races on the Nürburgring Nordschleife. His enthusiasm for cars can be traced back to his family history. Christian Wolfsried is a second-generation chassis engineer; his father Stephan works for Mercedes. Early trips to the racetrack also shaped Christian's sister Lisa, who is two years younger than him – her job is designing the Porsche Lifestyle Driver's Selection. Appropriately enough, his parents' house is in Waiblingen. This district town on the outskirts of Stuttgart has achieved a certain international prominence thanks to the Winkelhock racing family as well as being the home of touring car pilot Bernd Mayländer. It is there that Wolfsried keeps two garage treasures: his own Taycan and – the contrast could hardly be greater – his 1976 Corvette C3 Stingray. "The first car I bought." This took place in California, where he was studying abroad for a year. (A brief digression on the chassis of his high-displacement childhood sweetheart leads to the summary: "Great for driving straight ahead.")

In the development center at Porsche, the new employee learned that there are three internal driving licence levels – Base, Turbo and Supersport – and started at the highest level straight away. Braking and evasive manoeuvres are the basics. Finding the ideal line, switching off the control systems, and driving on ice and snow were among the other skills to be mastered in training, rounded off with special qualifications such as the Nordschleife.

The organisers of Porsche driving events quickly became interested in Wolfsried. "But at that time I was already on the road for up to 38 weeks a year and was happy about every minute I got to spend at home," he says, looking back. In 2020, he switched to project management as Manager Chassis Product Line Taycan. In his role as project manager, his area of responsibility includes the technical definition of the chassis requirements, driving systems and certain parts of the drivetrain. The Taycan is a matter of the heart for Wolfsried. He was driven by the "immense potential of e-mobility in the area of environmental protection, emission-free mobility and also in sporty driving". He nevertheless began to miss the latter in his new position.

He missed the adventure of testing in the far north or on the demanding Porsche test site in Nardò in southern Italy. He was simply not born to be a swivel chair pilot. “When my business trips became less frequent, I immediately asked if I could become an instructor.” It was a deal. Wolfsried signed a second employment contract and now works part-time in the broad field of experience packages. Porsche supports this special symbiosis of development expertise, driving experience and customer contact. On

average, a handful of Weissach engineers lead such a double life – and the benefits are bidirectional. On the one hand, participants experience first-hand how the driving dynamics and handling qualities of a model came about and how they work. On the other hand, the company benefits from direct customer feedback. Market research could hardly be more lively, competent and authentic.

Wolfsried has thus been back on the road and behind the wheel since 2020. "I immediately noticed how much fun I had when conveying and explaining things," he says enthusiastically. “And I take even more pleasure in the feedback and the reactions. When participants get along with the Taycan the way we imagined seven years ago, that is the greatest confirmation of our work.” When racing professionals like Timo Bernhard and Jörg Bergmeister are on board at events, the discussions go deep into the details of the set-up. The engineer appreciates this exchange not only for his development tasks – he also dreams of competing in a 24-hour race himself one day.

It is evident that this 6-foot-tall man does a lot of sport in his limited free time. Physical fitness and extensive knowledge combine to foster a sense of calm sovereignty. As an instructor, he deals with overzealous candidates as well as timid participants. He reins in the over-motivated by taking an exciting and credible look at the large part that technical and physical understanding plays in personal progress – and how little courage and talent have to do with it. Approaching the limit from below is more effective. Trying it from above can be expensive and painful." Understand, implement, experience, enhance. He also detects which drivers are a bundle of nerves and combat their fears by providing them with knowledge. "Anxious people usually have no idea what our vehicles can do," says Wolfsried. "But their shyness crumbles away as soon as I take them on a demo ride and explain the systems." With each light-bulb moment, their faces relax more. "At some point they will all shine – no matter which model or which drivetrain we are using."

Thinking of Porsche without the numbers 911 is not an option, even for the biggest fan of e-vehicles. "Of course it's an absolute treat when I get to drive a GT3 or another super-sporty derivative at the events." Wolfsried's field assignments are diverse in every respect. At product presentations, he sometimes gives lectures every 30 minutes; other times, he is training interested new customers or ambitious sports drivers on the courses of the Porsche Experience Center, on Formula 1 racetracks, in the desert and in secluded winter wonderlands. From time to time, the portfolio also includes curious appearances: for example, a drive in the 1898 Egger-Lohner C.2, the oldest surviving vehicle on which Ferdinand Porsche worked, for Top Gear magazine. A top speed of 14 km/h on a British airfield. Or the dynamic duel of skill with Hollywood stunt driver Sera Trimble in the Taycan GTS at the Willow Springs Raceway in California.

One thing always happens: as soon as people realise that they are dealing with a real development engineer, they want to talk to him about more than just driving. "There are hundreds of questions – about the brand, about our different models, about my job." He is happy to provide information. Only when it comes to his current work in Weissach does the now 34-year-old abruptly become silent. The development of the future Taycan remains undercover, as do the coordinates of that mystical place in Lapland where he worked on the torque distribution of its predecessor in 2016. His diary is as densely filled as the Excel log of a chassis test and our slot has now expired. A warm farewell – and Christian

Wolfsried returns to the future that lies on his desk.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES



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Consumption data

Taycan GTS (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).

Image Sublines

Path: Best of both worlds: full-time engineer, part-time instructor/Images/img_1.jpg
Title: Christian Wolfsried, Weissach, 2023, Porsche AG
Subline: Deep in secrecy in Weissach: the developments in the hallowed halls normally remain under lock and key.

Path: Best of both worlds: full-time engineer, part-time instructor/Images/img_2.jpg
Title: Christian Wolfsried, instructor and product trainer at Sport Driving GmbH, 2023, Porsche AG
Subline: Out in public in Austria: Wolfsried as a popular and competent trainer at the Red Bull Ring in Spielberg.

Path: Best of both worlds: full-time engineer, part-time instructor/Images/img_3.jpg
Title: Christian Wolfsried, Manager Chassis Product Line Taycan, 2023, Porsche AG
Subline: Jacket: in the office in Weissach, he is responsible for the further development of electric driving dynamics.

Path: Best of both worlds: full-time engineer, part-time instructor/Images/img_4.jpg
Title: Christian Wolfsried, Manager Chassis Product Line Taycan, 2023, Porsche AG
Subline: Shirt: at the Porsche Development Center test area in Weissach, he knows every curb by heart.

Path: Best of both worlds: full-time engineer, part-time instructor/Images/img_5.jpg
Title: Christian Wolfsried, Manager Chassis Product Line Taycan, 2023, Porsche AG
Subline: Helmet: from karting to the Nordschleife, he has experienced it all. A participation in the 24-hour race on the Nürburgring is still on his wish list.

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