

How the Porsche 956 made racing history

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02/01/2018 It is said that the engineers of the 956 were far ahead of their time. Through their innovations, they made the Porsche into one of the most successful racing cars of all time. Its greatest successes and most breath-taking moments – here and in the latest episode of 9:11 magazine.

It all begins in August 1981: The FIA introduces a new sports car prototype class into the World Sportscar Championships beginning with the 1982 season. World championships are held for these "Group C" vehicles for ten years. The new regulations mean that Porsche has free rein to build a new racing car. The regulations mainly concern fuel consumption, so there is plenty of room for innovation.

The birth of the world champion

Under the direction of Norbert Singer, race engineers begin using the Porsche Doppelkupplung (PDK)

for the first time in the 956. Another new addition is the development of the five-speed gearbox. With its progressive injection system and 2.6-litre turbo engine, the 956 achieves a power output of 620 hp.

In particular, its unique aerodynamics make the racing car into a success story. Thanks to the strong downforce produced by the car's underbody tunnel, drivers of the 956 reach record-breaking cornering speeds on the racetrack: The "ground effect" allows a speed of 350 km/h to be measured on the Mulsanne Straight.

After the final completion of the critical features such as the duralumin monocoque chassis, the racing car is test-driven for the first time on the test track in Weissach in March 1982. The privilege of driving the number 001 is given to the world-class driver Jürgen Barth – who would achieve third place in the 956 at the 24 Hours of Le Mans race that same year. First and second place also go to drivers in 956 models.

The 956's technology guarantees success

It was the beginning of a series of victories: With this model, Porsche does not only win all of the FIA World Sportscar Championship titles between 1982 and 1984, it collected both the drivers' and manufacturers' championships on each occasion. In addition, Stefan Bellof drives a 956 (chassis no. 007) around the Nordschleife of the Nürburgring in a record-breaking time of 6 minutes 11.13 seconds, which remains a record even today.

Drivers, designers and racing fans are captivated by the unique capabilities of the 956 – in 1983 and 1984, Porsche's engineers even build copies for customers.

9:11 magazine brings the successes of the exceptional 956 model back to life. Episode 5 travels back to the 1980s, reliving historical moments and revealing the special something that makes the 956 such an object of desire.

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