

Porsche helps European bicycle land speed record to be broken

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18/09/2018 Neil Campbell becomes the fastest European ever on a bicycle, achieving it in the slipstream of a Porsche Cayenne Turbo.

The record attempt took place at Elvington Airfield in Yorkshire. Forty years after Jean-Claude Rude attempted to set a new speed record behind a Porsche 935 Turbo, Neil Campbell used the slipstream of the Porsche Cayenne Turbo to beat his own record of 135 mph, set in June.

Supported by a loyal team of volunteers, to set the record took stamina and immense strength on Campbell's part, as well as two specially selected machines. Campbell's bicycle was created by Cheshire-based Moss Bikes, designed to be incredibly strong and stable at speeds of up to 200 mph. Formed from a mix of carbon fibre and 3D printed parts, it has interchangeable gears, a wheelbase that's much longer than a conventional bicycle and tyres specially rated for the purpose.

The second machine was a Porsche Cayenne Turbo. The record attempt was made more precarious by the use of a relatively short runway – just two miles. This meant Campbell and his team needed a car that was large enough for both the bicycle and its rider to tuck in behind, yet could accelerate very quickly and sustain high speeds. A further demand placed on the car was a rig, acting rather like a parachute, providing an aerodynamic cocoon for the bike and rider.

The Porsche Cayenne Turbo was ideally suited to the task

Powered by a turbocharged 4.0-litre V8 engine producing 550 hp (404 kW; Fuel consumption combined 11.9 – 11.7 l/100 km; CO_2 emissions 272 – 267 g/km) and 770 Nm of torque, the Porsche Cayenne Turbo has the capacity to accelerate from rest to 62 mph in 4.1-seconds and 100 mph in just over 9-seconds. It has a top speed of 177 mph. With a rig mounted to the back of the car, disrupting the airflow, the Porsche needed to use all of its 550 hp to exceed 150 mph as it travelled down the runway.

Driving the Porsche was Andy Frost – a British drag racing champion whose usual car is a 4,000 hp, fire-breathing dragster called 'Red Victor'. It was the driver's task to remain in constant contact with Campbell and to ensure every stage of the runs occurred like clockwork to allow the best chance of capturing the record.

The record attempt took place as part of a Straightliners Event – with certified timing equipment and an empty runway, the events attract a wide range of adrenaline enthusiasts.

Campbell: "The acceleration of the Cayenne was incredible"

On the final run of the day, the two machines accelerated – the bicycle was towed behind the car until they reached just over 110 mph, at which point Campbell disengaged from the car and accelerated through pedal power to push through the record speed. Having passed through the speed traps, Neil's immediate task was then to brake as hard as he could before he reached the end of the runway.

Neil Campbell said: "We've got so little space that it was essential that we got up to speed as quickly as possible. The acceleration of the Cayenne was incredible – it was like being strapped to a rocket. I was pedalling throughout, harder and harder, before I released from the car at just over 100 mph and got my head down and gave it all I could. All the time the Cayenne was right ahead of me, clearing the air – it was so stable. I look back on the pictures and think 'what was I thinking' but I was focussed I didn't really take it all in. It's an incredible feeling – to get 149 mph on such a short runway is beyond anything I expected. We're within touching distance of the world record. I can't thank my team and supporters enough for the help and confidence they've given me."

While the Moss Bikes bicycle ridden by Campbell was far from standard, the Porsche Cayenne was a conventional road car albeit one being put to an extraordinary purpose. Both the rider (although a little tired) and the car emerged from the record attempt unscathed. Campbell's focus now turns to bettering the outright World Record.

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