

Porsche congratulates Valentin Schäffer on his 95th birthday

06/10/2026 With technical precision, practical experience and an exceptional understanding of complex engineering relationships, Valentin Schäffer is one of the defining figures in Porsche engine development. His work ranges from early racing engines to the most powerful prototype engines of their time. On 8 October 2026, Schäffer will turn 95.

Valentin Schäffer is one of the people who have had a lasting influence on engine development at Porsche. On 8 October 2026, the former Porsche engineer will celebrate his 95th birthday. “Valentin Schäffer never viewed racing engines as machines, but as precisely tuned systems that have to function under extreme conditions,” says Thomas Laudenbach, Head of Porsche Motorsport. “His work continues to demonstrate today just how closely technical understanding must be intertwined with practical experience in order to succeed in motorsport. We thank him for his tireless commitment to engine design and development, and wish him all the best on his 95th birthday.”

Valentin Schäffer was born in Hungary on 8 October 1931. In 1955, in his mid-20s, he began his career as an engine mechanic at Porsche. It was a time when development work was still directly linked to the

physical object itself. In the 1950s, components were not merely calculated; they were dismantled, measured and reassembled. Anyone working in this field develops a keen understanding of technical processes that goes beyond mere theoretical knowledge.

Learning at the limits

In 1961, he passed his technician and master craftsman examinations. At the same time, his responsibilities at the workshop grew. Schäffer worked on various engine designs, analysed their performance in use and developed solutions that had to prove themselves not only on the test bench but also on the track. The range of engines he was involved in developing stretched from compact four-cylinder units to complex twelve-cylinder engines. As early as 1956, Schäffer was involved in work on the Type 547/2 – a four-cylinder engine for the Porsche 550A RS Spyder. This was followed by the Type 753 and 771 eight-cylinder cross-plane engines, with which Porsche celebrated victories in Formula 1, the European Hillclimb Championship and the World Sportscar Championship.

“The eight-cylinder 771 was my absolute favourite engine. And it was the best engine for hill climbs. I spent a long time working on this engine every day, tinkering with the exhaust system to squeeze out a few more PS,” says the father of two, referring to the racing engine with a power output of 138 PS per litre. Sometimes he’d even get the urge on a Sunday morning: “I’d drive to the test bench and keep tinkering until I’d got the engine running,” says Schäffer. The wide variety of projects helped Schäffer gain a historic understanding of engine development. Each engine presented different challenges in terms of performance, cooling and durability.

Responsibility for key engine projects

In 1966, Schäffer – who was not only exceptionally hard-working but also highly talented – took over as head of racing engine development. It was a role in which he demonstrated his ability to manage complex processes. His superior was Ferdinand Piëch, who had been in charge of the entire development department since 1965; one of his colleagues was Hans Mezger. Under Schäffer’s leadership, the six-cylinder engines for the 906 Carrera 6 and 910 models were developed. At the same time, he continued to develop the eight-cylinder engine for the Porsche 908, as well as the Type 916 six-cylinder boxer engine, which served as the basis for the Porsche 908 and for trials on the Type 912 twelve-cylinder engine in the Porsche 917.

His work on the twelve-cylinder engines of this vehicle was particularly influential. The 912, 912/51 and 912/52 engine variants marked successive stages in the development of the Porsche 917.

This is where Schäffer’s engineering philosophy became most evident: his ability to increase performance and integrate it into a stable overall system.

Performance under extreme conditions

One particularly significant day for Schäffer was 9 August 1975. A world speed record was set at the Talladega Superspeedway in a Porsche 917/30 fitted with the 912/52 turbo engine. Mark Donohue achieved an average speed of 355.78 km/h on the 2.66-kilometre-long oval.

From 1956 to 1982, Schäffer oversaw numerous racing campaigns. The Targa Florio, the Can-Am series, the 24 Hours of Le Mans – different formats with completely different demands. What they have in common is the immediacy of the engine's response. For development work, this means that theory must always be put to the test against practice on the track. Schäffer remained committed to this philosophy throughout his entire career. He was there on 14 June 1970 when Porsche secured its first Le Mans victory with the 917 KH, driven by Hans Herrmann and Richard Attwood. A year later, he completely redesigned the turbo engine from the ground up, which quickly earned him the nickname 'Turbo-Valentin'.

Alongside his development work, he attended numerous races in person and fed the insights gained there directly back into the design process. In 1989, his active career at Porsche came to an end and Schäffer retired, though he remained in Porsche's service for many more years.

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Image Sublines

Path: Porsche congratulates Valentin Schäffer on his 95th birthday/Images/img_1.jpg
Title: Valentin Schäffer, former Porsche engineer, 2026, Porsche AG
Subline: Valentin Schäffer

Path: Porsche congratulates Valentin Schäffer on his 95th birthday/Images/img_2.jpg
Title: Valentin Schäffer and Karl Dubies (l-r), on the way to the pretraining at Le Mans, on the van a 904, 1964, Porsche AG
Subline: 1964 on the way to the pretraining at Le Mans, on the van a 904. Valentin Schäffer (left) and Karl Dubies.

Path: Porsche congratulates Valentin Schäffer on his 95th birthday/Images/img_3.jpg
Title: Gerhard Küchle and Valentin Schäffer (left), manufacturing an engine for the Porsche Type 917, 1969/70, Porsche AG
Subline: Gerhard Küchle and Valentin Schäffer (left) manufacturing an engine for the Porsche Type 917, 1969/70.

Path: Porsche congratulates Valentin Schäffer on his 95th birthday/Images/img_5.jpg
Title: Le Mans 1974 with 911 Carrera RSR Turbo 2.1. Persons in the back (from left to right): 2nd from left Gijs van Lennep, Herbert Müller and Norbert Singer, in the front (from left to right): Fritz Spingler, Roland Bemsel, Martin Müller, Wolfgang Stuible (with red cap), Ludwig Lehner, Valentin Schäffer, 1974, Porsche AG
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