

Gravel challenge for man and machine

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24/02/2023 Porsche accompanies Florian Nowak on his attempt to set a new record in the Dolomites. The Porsche Taycan Cross Turismo was a loyal companion in his preparations.

05:00, Kronplatz base station. Florian Nowak is getting ready next to the Taycan Cross Turismo in the car park of the Kronplatz cable car lift. The sun is still too low in the sky to bathe the surrounding mountaintops in warm light or to burn off the chill of this early-autumn morning. This professional cyclist is about to face a testing solo challenge – to set the fastest known time around and on the Kronplatz.

The fastest known time, or FKT, is a form of competition that became an increasingly popular measuring stick in the world of cycling during the COVID-19 lockdowns. With races cancelled, riders went in search of an alternative form of competition and Nowak was no exception.

The Taycan Cross Turismo as a trusty scouting partner

“Porsche was an important partner in finding a route and my preparations for the Kronplatz record attempt,” says Nowak. Inspired by the versatility of a gravel bike, the Taycan 4 Cross Turismo was an ideal match for the different sections of the Kronplatz route. “The standard Gravel Mode in particular was perfect during preparations and the section checks,” explains Nowak. “In a project like this, you can’t leave anything to chance and have to know the route inside out. So beyond my test rides on the bike, it was extremely important to me to have a reliable and versatile automobile partner at my side.”

In Gravel Mode in the Taycan Cross Turismo, the throttle characteristics are specially adapted in terms of power delivery and control precision to meet the demands of driving on loose ground. At the same time, the distribution of torque is optimised for maximum traction on poor surfaces when moving off at lower speeds, which proved a huge advantage, particularly on the steeper gravel sections of the Kronplatz, which features gradients of up to 25 per cent.

“I was able to gather a lot of impressions in the car and put them to use in my rides on the bike,” says Nowak. “After the route planning, I drove the route twice to be sure that it was perfect. I not only knew every curve but also the critical spots in the steep climbs and in the technical descents, which enabled me to optimally coordinate not only my bike setup but also my food plan, my clothes and my training schedule.”

A race against the clock

Back to the day of the record attempt, 07:30 on the dot: there are no spectators or official starters, just a single rider setting off on a quest to test his limits. It is a one-man race against the clock. The memorised route details become marker posts to be reached, steep climbs to conquer, and technical descents to master with absolute concentration.

“I opted for a new FKT route and not one on which someone else had already posted a best time,” says Nowak. “I just found that more inspiring. I already knew the area well from skiing and wanted to explore it some more.” Not only that, but this famous Italian summit has twice hosted mountain stage finishes in the Giro d’Italia bike race.

Reaching the summit

“The Kronplatz is unique in the world of Alpine summits,” says Nowak. “It’s relatively low compared to other peaks and has been cleverly converted into an outdoor playground that draws nature-lovers in both summer and winter.” The summit is also known for the extraordinary architecture of the Lumen Museum of Mountain Photography and the Messner Mountain Museum. But Nowak has soon left these in his wake.

With a look of steely determination, he pulls up his sleeves and bolts down the mountain to reach his destination. “Here again what I learned from the test drives was crucial because the braking phases were almost exactly the same as in the Taycan,” he says.

As the morning rush of Austrian and German tourists is making its way up to Kronplatz in the cable car gondola, Nowak barrels down to the finish and wraps up his FKT. He shakes off his sweat- and dirt-caked arms. The stopwatch reads: 2:49:06. A time that is now a new challenge to all others.

The inner drive to get better

A fleeting grin crosses Nowak’s face as he takes in what he has just achieved. There are no cheering crowds or prize ceremonies – just a few people on the terrace of a café near the place where he set his finish line. But that’s exactly what draws him to FKT attempts: the primal drive to get better. “My motto is that you’re in charge of your own story and you decide for yourself how, where and when you ride. Yeah, you feel the validation of having set an FKT. But that just leads to the next goal that you put everything into.”

Info

Photo credit: Phil Gale

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Consumption data

Taycan 4 Cross Turismo (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).

Video

https://newstv.porsche.com/porschevideos/235469_en_3000000.mp4

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