

From right-foot brakers and left-hand starters

30/10/2019 It's not just the same blood that flows through Dario and Marino Franchitti's veins; it's the same passion for petrol, too. They share a love of motor racing. At their home in Scotland, they met up with two others who are tuned to the same wavelength: the Porsche 718 Spyder and Cayman GT4.

Knockhill Racing Circuit, Scotland – United Kingdom. Marino Franchitti bends down and places his hands on the tarmac. "I've got a deep connection with Knockhill," explains Franchitti, who was born in Scotland but can trace his roots back to Italy. "I drove a racing car for the first time here," explains the 41-year-old. "And I hurtled into the gravel for the first time here," interjects his brother Dario with a smile.

He is now able to laugh about this minor crash – perhaps because he has since put an accident with much worse consequences long behind him. It happened in 2013. As part of the IndyCar Series. After successful championship races in the DTM and NASCAR, Dario made his IndyCar debut in 1997 and then went on to win four Indycar championship titles and three Indianapolis 500s in the years that followed.

At the penultimate race of the 2013 season in Houston, a collision sent him catapulting through the air and into the catch fencing. Dario Franchitti rolled over several times and spent several weeks in hospital. He ended up pulling through. Due to the severity of the injuries to his spine and brain, Franchitti's doctors recommended that he give up his career as a professional driver.

“That was doubly frustrating. In spring 2013, I had met Porsche in Weissach and we spoke about my future driving the 919 in the LMP class,” says Dario.

“It was really tough after my accident not to be able to deal with Porsche. Driving for Porsche's works team, winning Le Mans... Don't all racing drivers dream of that?” sighs Dario, who is incidentally a right-foot braker. He is one of the few drivers to have retained their driving style even though the clutch pedal has disappeared from the majority of cars.

His brother Marino – who has enjoyed just as much success in motor racing with a range of championship titles under his belt and is still active in the sport – takes advantage of the pause and claps Dario on the shoulder in encouragement. He points towards the red sports car that brought the pair to Knockhill Circuit.

“You found that one, for dad,” says Marino, putting his arm around his brother. If the Franchittis suffer from an addiction to sports cars, then it is this 911 that triggered the family's passion for Porsche. The G model in Guards Red belonged to their father when Dario was seven and his brother Marino was two. "It's the first car that I can remember, it's where my love of Porsche started."

“Our mum tells the story of the hospital phoning to tell Dad that she was in labour and being ablte to hear him screaming along the road in the Porsche", explains Marino. The brothers laugh. “However, dad sold the Porsche in 1982 to support me with my driving career. I will be forever grateful to him for that,” says Dario proudly.

Their dad's injection of funds paid off. In 1984, his first year of racing, Dario won the Scottish Junior karting Championships and then went on to win the British Championships. “And then in 2009, we actually managed to find the Porsche again,” explains Dario.

“I just happened to spot the 911 on the front page of a car magazine and from then on, it never left my sights. When it finally came up in an auction, I pounced. We then did a full restoration and gave it back to Dad, he was very surprised to see his old sportscar again! I have so many links to this Porsche. As a young boy, I would often sit behind the wheel of the 911 and dream of becoming a racing driver,” says Dario.

The two petrol heads are passionate about motor racing and Porsche. So, today is like a dream come true for both of them as they get together for a test drive in the Porsche 718 Spyder and Cayman GT4. At Knockhill Circuit, their childhood racing track.

Two laps later and the pair are as excited as two small kids: “Driving these two Porsches with my

brother here at Knockhill Racetrack is pretty amazing," says an excited Dario, who chose the Cayman GT4. Following right on his tail is the Spyder driven by his brother, who has always had a particular penchant for soft-top sports cars.

They keep switching back and forth. Sometimes one of them is leading and then the other takes over. "This isn't just down to horsepower. Most sports cars are too powerful for the road. The driving physics of the GT4 are extremely well balanced. It has been so finely tuned; it's just great. I am impressed. Any room left on the waiting list?"

Marino is also full of enthusiasm about his version of the 718. "There's not a single line on the Spyder that I don't like. The feeling of pure power – completely unfiltered thanks to the open top – is huge," enthuses Marino. "And when you want, the roof is back up again in no time at all. Not the worst option, particularly here in Scotland," he sums up with a smile.

The Franchitti brothers are visibly enjoying this extra special excursion. Later on, there's a trip through the Scottish countryside. They are quite reluctant when it's time to hand back the keys to the two sports cars. Luckily, the red 911 that started it all is waiting close by.

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