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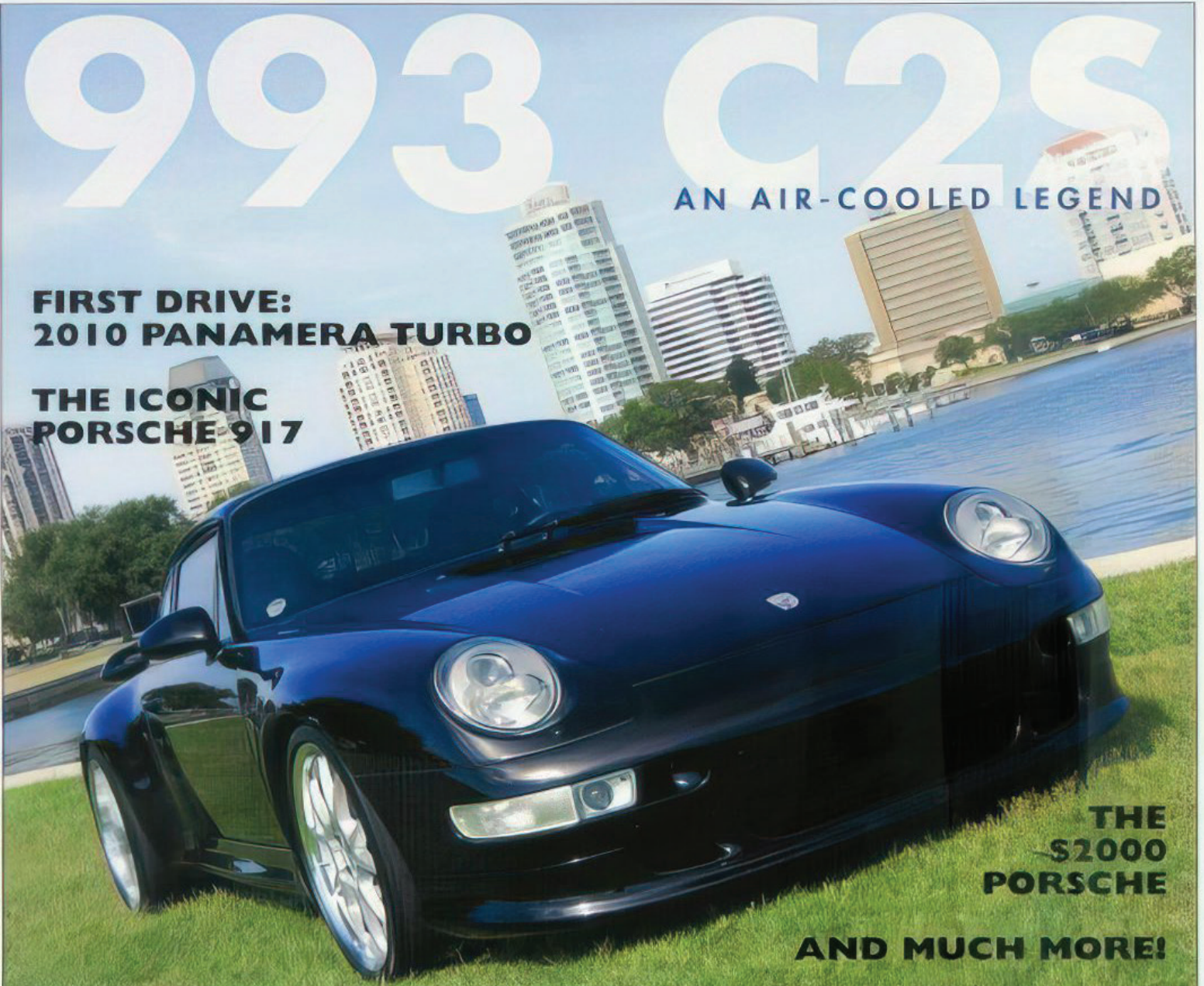
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STREET LEGAL FACTORY RACER

By **Alan Morrison**
Photos By **Dave Wendt**



In 1987, Porsche Motorsport North America imported nine 944 Turbo Cup race cars.

*This one was **never** raced.*



More than any other manufacturer except perhaps Ferrari, Porsche's genetic code is woven tightly around a core of racing. From the legendary Porsche No. 1 onward, competition has continuously improved the breed.

One long-lived branch of Porsche's racing heritage is its Cup-series cars, those designed and built for single-marque competition. In a Cup series, drivers compete in race cars factory-built to a common, strictly-enforced configuration. And for the last twenty years, Porsche has built their Cup racers on the company's evolving 911 platform, from the original 964 Carrera Cup cars first raced in 1990, to today's newest 997 GT3 Cup racers.

But when Porsche's first Cup series premiered in Germany in 1986, it used not the familiar 911, but instead factory-modified 944 Turbos. This first "Turbo Cup" series was very successful, and quickly led to further development of the cars, both by upgrading to the 1987 944 Turbo platform, which had drastically improved suspension and brake systems, and by making many additional competition modifications to the cars. The new 1987 design was used in Turbo Cup race series in Germany, France, South Africa, and Canada. But in the U.S., the cars had an even more important role.

In America, Porsche's racing reputation was under attack in SCCA competition from the new Corvette and others. The

944 and 944 Turbo were the weapons of choice to defend Porsche's honor, and what better vehicles to use than Porsche's factory racers?

In some arenas, success came easily. A 944 won the 1982 "Longest Day of Nelson," a 24 hour endurance race on the punishing Nelson Ledges track in Ohio (now the site of the popular annual 944Fest gathering). And in the 1984 Longest Day event, a prototype 944 Turbo driven by Jim Busby, Rick Knoop and Freddy Baker won the race with a staggering 42-lap lead over the second-place car- which was also a Porsche.

In the SCCA Escort Endurance series, although the standard 944 won the '86 Championship, success for the 944 Turbo was elusive. An SS (Super Sport) class was added for '86 and '87, contested only by Corvette and 944 Turbo racers. Although the Porsches ran competitive lap times, even winning one pole position, the Chevrolet entries required fewer pitstops for fuel and brakes, and won every event. In addition, the SS cars were so much faster than cars in the other classes that after the 1987 season the class was eliminated.

But in the shorter races of SCCA's Showroom Stock National Championship, Porsche dominated, with 944 Turbos winning the GT class three years straight, in '86, '87 and '88.

Our feature car is a time capsule- a 1987 Turbo Cup factory racer that was

never competitively raced, and is still in the possession of its original owner.

In 1987, Ohio native Paul Allen was in the right place at the right time. The manufacturer of Escort radar detectors sponsored the SCCA endurance series, and Allen was the company's VP in charge of product development and marketing. Company president John O'Steen drove for the Porsche factory team.

"O'Steen came in one Monday after a race weekend, and said Porsche had brought in nine Turbo Cup cars for the Escort endurance series, and one still needed an owner. Ten minutes and one phone call later, I had bought the car," he recalls. After flying to Porsche's racing headquarters at Holbert Racing in Pennsylvania, Allen drove the car home to Ohio, roll cage and all. It was a bumpy ride, but well worth it.

"There's just something special about a factory race car that you can drive on the street," Allen says. At the time he owned a 904 GTS, and had planned to use it as a street car after swapping the exotic 4-cam for an early 911 engine. But as the value of the 904 soared, that plan was shelved, and the Turbo Cup car took its place.

Twenty-three years later, this Turbo Cup car has covered only 19,000 miles, between street use, autocrossing, PCA and BMWCCA track days, and even several years with Brian Redman's Targa 66 track group.



"It's just a great all-around track car, very fast, with very neutral handling" says Allen. "Some drivers complain about the lack of power steering in the cars, but I've never found that to be a problem at all."

As far as rarity, correspondence from the factory confirms the car's provenance, stating, "This vehicle is one of nine 1987 Turbo Cup USA cars sold to Al Holbert of Porsche Motorsport North America as racing vehicles." After a one year search a few years ago, the other eight cars were located in an extensive Rennlist thread (still active at www.tinyurl.com/951cup).

It's somewhat surprising that Porsche was able to import the nine Turbo Cup cars in full race configuration, with full roll cages and no airbags, but with street car titles. In contrast, five years later, when planning the U.S. Carrera Cup series, Porsche imported those 45 cars in street trim, with plans for Andial to convert them to race cars. (Unfortunately, that 1992 series was cancelled, and all the cars were returned to street trim before they were sold. Nonetheless, the U.S. Carrera Cup cars are among the rarest and most desirable 964 models.)

The full list of factory modifications of the 944 Turbo Cup cars reads like a wish list of every track driver: more power, less weight, and better brakes, steering, handling and reliability.

Although Porsche's Turbo Cup cars were initially developed for one-car





eliminated were power windows, seats, locks and mirrors. Obviously, the cars were built without air conditioning, audio system, sunroof, headlight washers, rear wiper, storage pockets, and the list goes on and on. Even noise insulation and undercoating was eliminated. The result is a reduction of approximately 400 pounds, even with the added weight of the roll cage.

The car's handling was transformed, starting with a stiffened, seam-welded chassis with strengthened strut towers, brace bar, and racing suspension mounts. Although most Turbo Cup cars used Bilstein components, the nine U.S. Escort Turbo Cup cars used Koni suspension, fully adjustable for both ride height and damping. Larger sway bars were also used, with the rear adjustable. Although the car came with strengthened lower control arms, Allen upgraded them to the unbreakable Fabcar arms originally mandated by IMSA, and used by most serious 944 racers.

The braking abilities also received huge factory upgrades, with a system built around 928 S4 components, cross-drilled rotors, and 959 brake pads. A console-mounted switch allowed drivers to switch the ABS on or off as desired. Although some drivers preferred conventional braking in dry conditions, when the rain fell the ABS capabilities were appreciated by all.

Safety items include a full Matter bolt-in roll cage and Recaro racing seat with embrodered Porsche crest, with five-point Sabelt racing belts securing the driver. Finally, interior and exterior power kill switches were provided.

The end result of these changes is a thoroughbred race car that drives nothing like a street 944 Turbo. Most experts agree that the Turbo Cup cars are the ultimate 944 Turbos, and a significant chapter in Porsche history. One even resides in the Porsche Museum at the factory.

When a club member asked PCA's Senior Technical Advisor Bruce Anderson his impressions after driving one of the U.S. Turbo Cup cars, Anderson's reply was direct. Writing in the June 1989 Porsche Panorama, he said simply, "I've never driven anything as fast as that car, including some pretty wild 930s. The car is just incredibly fast, but there were only nine of them made." Other in-depth articles about the cars appear in the 2/88 and 12/04 issues of Excellence.

Although Allen has offered his car for sale a few times over their 23 years together, at this point in time it is probably the only one-owner Turbo Cup race car in the world. And maybe that's the way it will stay.

"This car is great for just about anything—from a Sunday drive to a track event, auto-cross or concours. And now it could even do vintage racing," he says.

Rare, fast, reliable, collectible, and even street legal. Truly, this is one Porsche race car that can do it all. 🏁