

# A PORSCHE CHRONOLOGY

If it's true that racing improves the quality of production cars, then Porsche is the proof.



Porsche's first factory refinement of a production machine into a serious racer came in 1951, when the firm prepared a few Austrian-built, aluminum-bodied Model 356 cars for that year's LeMans 24-Hour race. The car shown here was later brought to the U.S. and raced by Fritz Koster.



Porsche's first pure racing cars were these coupes, winners of the 1953 LeMans 1.5-liter class. Pushrod-engine cars, they were also the first mid-engine racers to run in that event.



Porsche racing cars reached a production status, of sorts, with the open 550 Spyders that were regularly sold to customers. Their time frame was 1954-56.



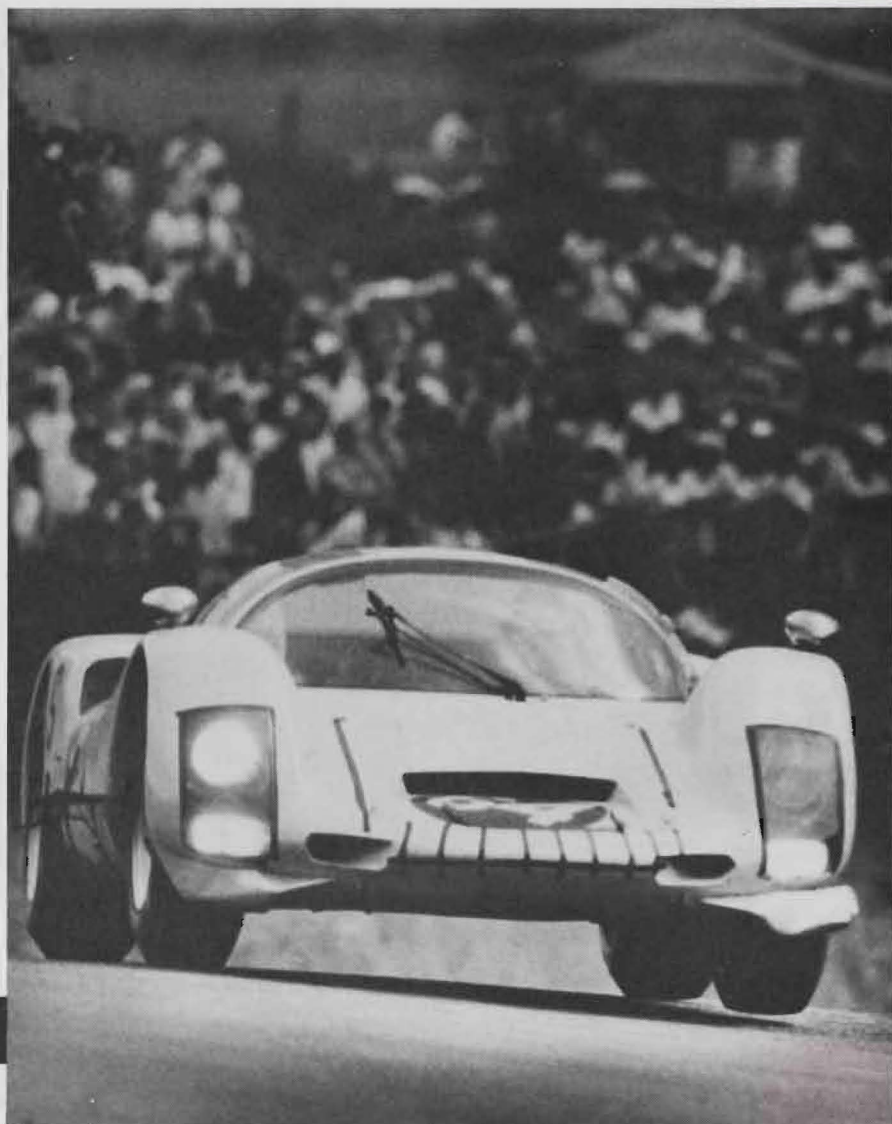
Then came the racing cars that set the Porsche name in the minds of many fledgling sports-car fans of the late Fifties and early Sixties. In late 1957, at the Nurburgring, Porsche first raced the RSK. It continued through 1959 and was replaced by the externally-similar RS60 and RS61. In the hands of such legends as Wolfgang von Trips, Stirling Moss, Joakim Bonnier and Dan Gurney, the cars became giant-killers. They even managed outright victories over the more powerful Ferraris in races like the tricky Targa Florio in 1959 and the Sebring 12-Hour in 1960. American drivers such as the late Ken Miles, Bob Holbert, Bruce Jennings and Roger Penske duplicated those successes in the U.S.



To bolster their fortunes in Grand Touring racing in 1960-61, Porsche had Italian Carlo Abarth build just under 20 special-bodied Carrera GTLs (Graham Hill driving in this case). Based on street machines, they were light, aerodynamic and one of the prettiest Porsche racing cars ever.



Porsche's 904 (also known as the Carrera GTS) was the last of the great Porsche four-cylinder racing cars. Announced in December 1963, it had a fiberglass body and the same basic powerplant as the street Carrera 2. The car was not only a consistent class winner on the track, but one even finished second in the 1962 Monte Carlo Rallye.



In 1965, the factory raced a 904 with a six-cylinder engine. This was the prototype for the 906, also called the Carrera 6. A two-liter car, it used the engine of the just-announced 911 and although it first raced in 1966, it was successful in various races for years. There are still a few in active competition.



Developed from the RSK were the first Porsche open-wheel racing cars — 1.5-liter Formula Two racers. Their most serious racing came in '60, driven by Bonnier, Moss and Hans Herrmann.



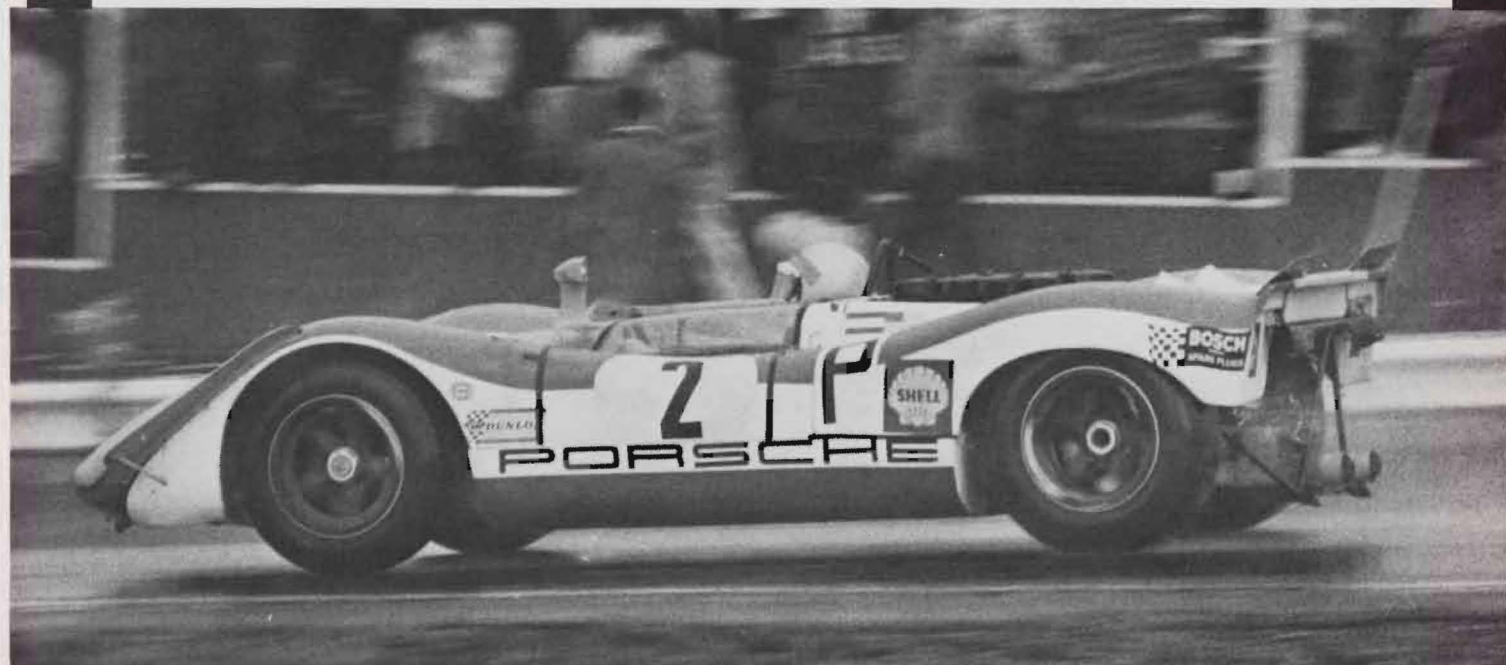
The success in Formula Two made a continuation into the 1961 1.5-liter Formula One class seem logical. Despite Dan Gurney's win at the French Grand Prix in 1962 (above) in the new eight-cylinder car, Porsche felt the return from its investment was too little and withdrew from Formula One racing at the end of the 1962 season.



The Porsche numbering system goes a bit haywire in 1967, as the car developed from the 906 was designated the 910. Now everything was lighter—the chassis, body and suspension. With the 910, the racing Porsches began a gradual switch from six- to eight-cylinder engines.



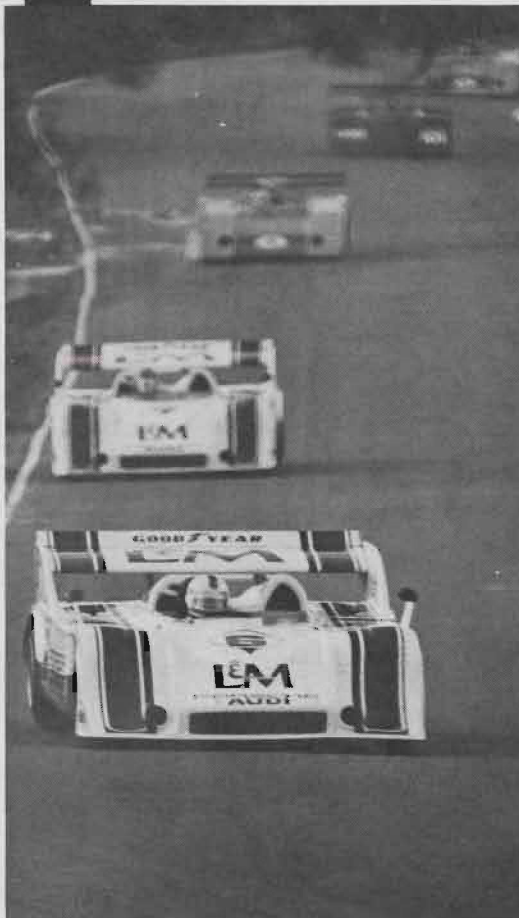
For 1968, Porsche reverted back to number 907, which was a further development of the 910. For the first time, long tapering tails appeared on the cars for such high-speed tracks as LeMans or, shown here, Daytona (1968).



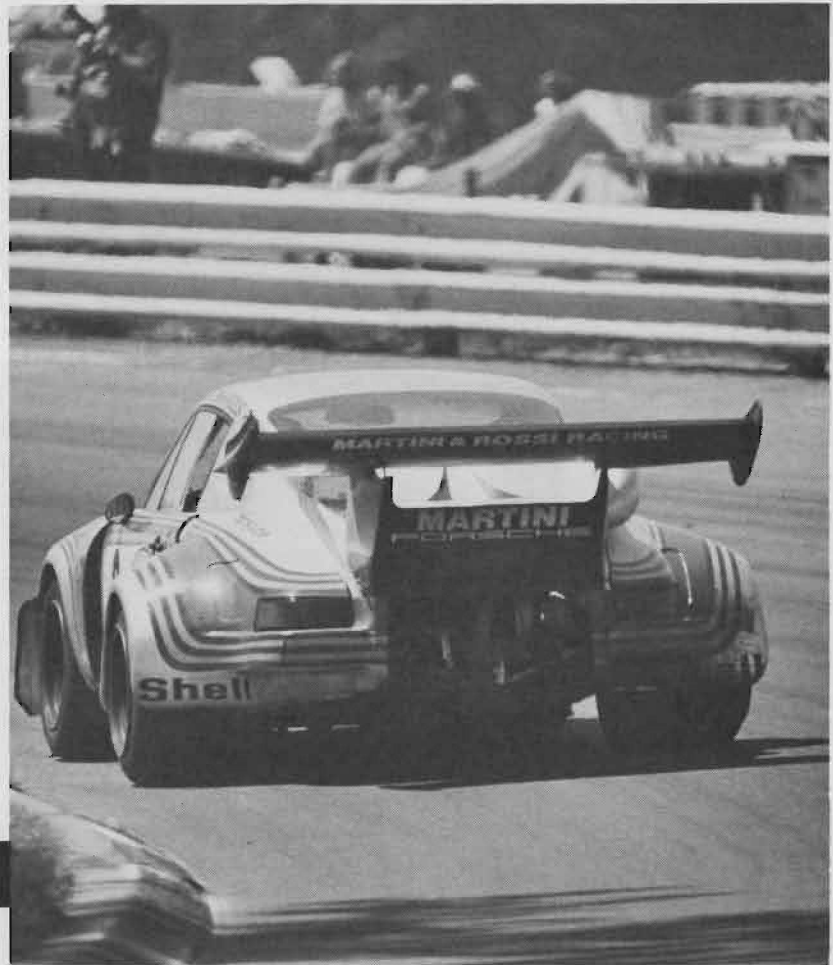
That thinking progressed with the 908, a new car used for the majority of the 1968 season. There were three tails for this three-liter, eight-cylinder car—the normal one with a 185-mph potential, the 200-mph long tail and short deck, 175-mph Spyder (shown).



All the development that began with the 906 came home with the already legendary, 12-cylinder 917. Almost every major sports-car road race in the last five years has been won at one time or another by some type of 917.



That happened because the same endurance car was developed into the turbocharged Can-Am cars that Mark Donohue and George Follmer used to dominate that series. Sadly, the 917 seems to be the end, at least for the moment, of the pure Porsche racing cars.



Not that the 917 hasn't a worthy successor. The full-winged Turbo Carrera seems the next step in the Porsche racing chronology. It should be a successful one, since the series for which it has already been developed doesn't even start until 1976.