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Rally Revival

Pavement or Not, Porsches Have Found Victory

By Scott R. Lear
Photography by the author

Advertising is necessary when you're a sports car manufacturer, and winning races is the ultimate sales pitch. It's hard to beat a front-page photo of a car surrounded by smiles, covered in champagne and ticker tape, and parked under a huge "VICTORY" headline banner. Take the checkered flag often enough, and your brand will become synonymous with success.

The Porsche 911's shape is iconic, and it didn't get that way by lingering in the background while others took the glory and the podiums. If it's a race series that requires fenders, chances are that at some point in its history a Porsche 911 has burned the necessary gas to take home the big trophy.

While road racing is the current bread and butter of the 911, in the late 1960s and early '70s the shelves at Stuttgart were growing heavy with rally trophies as well. Dirt, pavement, snow, whatever, the Porsche 911 could win on it.

Stuttgart's Rally Recipe

While the 911 is one of the winningest cars in history, privateers deserve much of the credit. The Porsche factory was so busy building its purpose-built racers during the 1960s that they had little interest in fully backing the 911 for competition.

Fortunately, those in Stuttgart were savvy enough to recognize that people were winning races in Porsche 911s even without factory help. By giving privateers some factory-conceived upgrade options, Porsche could increase the odds of victory for their customers and the chances of free publicity for the company—it was a win-win situation for all involved.

Starting in 1966 with the arrival of the lightweight, performance-tuned 911S, Porsche made Rally Kit packages available for aspiring privateer racers. Teams could pick and choose from a selection of go-fast parts available straight from the manufacturer.

The standard Rally Kit provided anti-roll bars, upgraded brake pads and even endurance-minded options like a dead pedal for the driver. Power enhancements in the form of better venturis and jets for the carburetors and a racing exhaust could bump a 160-horsepower stock Porsche 911S to 175 ponies and beyond—all from two liters of displacement. With rally in mind, protective items like stone guards were also available. Thanks to these tweaks, it's no surprise that in 1967 the Porsche 911 recorded a slew of victories all over the planet in the hands of privateer racers.

Cashing in at Monte Carlo

In 1968, as a result of FIA homologation difficulties and performance potential, Porsche shuffled things around a bit. Once the policy-writing pens were down, the Rally Kit could be legally fitted to either of two Porsches, the standard 911L model or the "entry-level" 911T.

The 911L was legal for FIA Group 2 Touring competition, where the car made as much as 150 horsepower. As one moved higher up the performance ladder, though, things got confusing: The Porsche 911S and 911T would have been in the same FIA GT Group 3 class, but since the less-equipped 911T weighed 115 pounds less, it became the base for the brand's other rally effort. The result was the Porsche 911T Rally Kit, a car now commonly known as the 911T/R.



