

CLASSIC DRIVER

Preparing Porsche's greatest racing cars at Crubilé Sport in France

Lead

From 906 Carrera 6s and 917 Langhecks to 911 Carrera 2.8 RSRs and 962Cs, there's scarcely a significant Porsche racing car out there that hasn't been breathed upon by Jacques and Sébastien Crubilé, the father-son duo behind the renowned marque specialist Crubilé Sport near Paris...

"Take a seat," says Sébastien Crubilé as he swings the metallic silver Porsche 917's featherlight door upwards and ushers me into the tiny leather-strewn interior. We've been at [Crubilé Sport](#) for just a few minutes, but before I know it, I'm cocooned inside the special car and Sébastien is gesturing emotively and taking photos.

The car in question is 917K chassis 030, which [Count Rossi of Martini & Rossi famously persuaded Porsche to sell him as a road car in 1974](#), leather seats and blinkers included. It also happens to be one of the most original, and thus valuable, examples of Porsche's seminal Le Mans winner in existence. That I was so enthusiastically told to hop in is telling not only of Sébastien's infectious passion for Porsche but also his overwhelming desire to share it.



They say the apple doesn't fall far from the tree, and this is certainly true in Sébastien's case. His father Jacques' love for Porsche can be traced back to an endurance sports-car race at Reims in the 1960s, when he was captivated by the shape, speed, and sound of a 906 Carrera 6 for the very first time. A few years later, as an amateur racing driver, he realised his dream of owning and competing with a 906. That was until Sébastien arrived, forcing him to sell his beloved prototype in order to buy a workshop and provide for his family. "My father cried when he sold that car!"

Though Jacques' workshop was initially established to service BMWs, a chance encounter with a stranded Porsche 910 and its well-to-do owner on the roads nearby promptly changed that. Realising Jacques' profound knowledge of his car and ability to fix it, the man brought Crubilé more significant Porsches to repair, restore, and prepare. And when word spread, so, too, did many others.



"When I was three years old, I remember going to my father's workshop at the weekend and watching him prepare a Porsche 911 Carrera 3.0 RSR for Dany Snobeck, the famous French racer," Sébastien recalls as we wander deeper into his giant toybox, trying not to become too distracted by the 910- and 935-shaped elephants in the room.

While Jacques encouraged Sébastien to study engineering, which resulted in short spells at Peugeot, Renault, and other big automotive enterprises, he also sought to teach his son how to rebuild old racing Porsches. "He thought it would be a good idea for me to learn how to rebuild a 906, so we found one and did it together," continues Sébastien. "He tested it twice and then participated at the Tour Auto with my mother, just for fun. Alas, the car burned to the ground and it was a very sad day. When my father returned to me, with his eyebrows singed, I knew we had to work together from then on."



And so, in 2003, the father-son duo founded Crubilé Sport, a company utilising Jacques’ wealth of experience and Sébastien’s modern-day knowhow to sympathetically and authentically preserve and prepare important competition Porsches. In the 16 years since, there’s scarcely an important Porsche that’s not visited Crubilé, from the 917 Langheck that belongs to the Le Mans museum and the Carrera 2.1 RSR Turbo ‘R5’ to Group C 965s and a Sebring-winning 935 K3.

And if those cars don’t give you a tantalising flavour of the automotive calibre typically dealt with by Crubilé Sport, a glance around its workshops today should do the trick. In addition to Count Rossi’s 917K (which, by the way, is flanked by the famous Malardeau-liveried Kremer-built 917K/81), there’s a smattering of significant Carrera 3.0 RSRs, an ex-Daytona 910, and the famous 993 GT2 Evo art car by Peter Klasen. Incidentally, the latter is poised to take centre stage at Rétromobile in Paris this week.

Restoration and race preparation are the two pillars of the business and almost all work is carried out in-house by Sébastien, Jacques, and their talented team of engineers. “With regards to originality, we always respect it when a car’s worth preserving – take the Le Mans museum’s Langheck or ‘R5’, for example. But we’ll never turn a sausage into a concours winner!”



For Sébastien, who’s raced since he was a child, Crubilé Sport is something altogether simpler. “For me, it’s a tool that allows me to touch my dream,” he tells us. “It’s as simple as that. Improving the mechanics of these cars is in my blood and to drive them afterwards is to sample my work, just as a chef tastes his food. When I cannot drive any longer, I’ll close the workshop!” Suffice to say, he’s driven almost every seminal Porsche prototype and GT model, save only for the monstrous Can-Am variants of the 917.

“Each car has an identity and I love driving a 910 as much as I love driving a 917 or 956. But the car I have the fondest memories of driving is the 936 – it’s the perfect sweet spot between the angry 917 and the downforce-heavy Group C cars.” Despite having driven various special cars from other manufacturers, including a Ferrari 333SP and the wild turbine-powered Howmet as last year’s Le Mans Classic, none gets his blood flowing like a Porsche.

Sébastien’s also a serious peddler of modern sports car and has had numerous successes in the European Le Mans Series among others. Most notable was probably his class victory at the 24 Hours of Dubai with a 997 GT3 Cup, his and his eponymous team’s maiden 24-hour race. His contemporary racing peak, however, came in 2013 when he shared a Porsche 997 GT3 RSR at Le Mans with his good friends François Perrodo and Emmanuel Collard.



“That was the year Allan Simonsen fatally crashed,” he recalls solemnly. “Emmanuel was in the car when it happened, and he knew Allan had died. Every time I passed Tertre Rouge, I thought about him and his family. It was very sad. I drove mostly at night – at dusk, you can smell barbeques at the Porsche Curves! – and despite two burst tyres, we finished ninth in GT. Historic racing is all about the fun and the pleasure of remembering old motorsport, but modern racing is a proper sport and I love to push the limit.”

Located just an hour’s drive from the centre of Paris, we heartily recommend a visit to Crubilé Sport when you’re next in the French capital. Rest assured, Sébastien would be delighted to show you around the awe-inspiring facility that’s, quite literally, littered with special Porsches. It’s also recently doubled in size thanks to the activities of Ateliers Diva, the stunning 964-based restomod that Sébastien and his business partner Jeremy Garamond are building and selling using all their knowledge and passion. More on that to come on Classic Driver very soon...



I pose a figurative question to Sébastien before we leave: if I owned a Porsche 906, why should I bring it to Crubilé Sport? “Because I know every nut and bolt on that car from nose to tail,” he replies. “Plus, we share the same dream – my customers are special people with whom I share a passion. They’re obliged to accept my way of thinking, just as I’m obliged to listen to them and accept theirs. Together, we always create something truly special.”

As I leave, Sébastien has his oil-stained engineer’s coat on and is stood over a 917’s engine block deep in discussion with his father Jacques. The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree, I remind myself – Porsche is truly the lifeblood of this family.

Photos: Rémi Dargegen for Classic Driver © 2019

Gallery

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