

The 993 911 Turbo. Not only was it one of the last of the air-cooled Porsches, its ferocious power delivery instilled fear in many drivers with less-than-pro levels of talent. So much so when the next 911 iteration, dubbed the 996, was released, people thought Porsche had grown soft. ❖ And this was despite the fact that 996s were generally faster and more powerful than the 993s that preceded them. Nevertheless, the 996 GT3 and GT2, two of the sportiest variants, did not live up to the reputation that the venerable 993 Turbo had established many years before. ❖ The 997 series fared better. Motorsports budgets increased, paint jobs harkened back to former days, more powerful engines brought back some of Porsche's



2011 Porsche GT2 RS

Life on the edge with
Porsche's premier Turbo

BY CALVIN KIM PHOTOS BY MARC URBANO

machismo and a general crispness to the suspension that wasn't there before all helped. The second half of the 997 model run, internally designated 997.5, has been of particular interest to us due in part to the sheer number of models that are oriented for track duty. The 997.5 GT3 RS and Turbo S have shown especially well, each managing to one-up every single iteration of 911 that has come before.

And now, just as the 997 series is about to step aside for the next generation, Porsche releases the GT2 RS. With its twin-turbo flat-6 engine, rear-wheel drive and manual transmission, many consider it the modern-day equivalent of the 964 Turbo that we've all been waiting for. Only 500 of them will be built, so when we had an opportunity to put one through its paces, we wasted precious little time.

For us, that meant heading to Miller Motorsports Park in Utah for some quality track time with the GT2 RS, a GT3 RS and Porsche factory driver Patrick Long. In other words, the makings of a pretty sweet day.

At the track, we let Long take the wheel and run a few sessions in both cars to get acclimated and offer good back-to-back impressions. Afterward, Porsche trucked the car back down to our El Toro test track for our usual battery of tests.

But first, let's get on with the car. The GT2 RS is not available with much in the way of driver aids, like performance-oriented traction control or Porsche's double-clutch gearbox. Fully defeatable stability and traction control are it. Unlike other Porsche models, though, these controls will remain off even after the ABS is triggered, a huge boon for track days.

Its 3.6-liter flat-6 engine uses two variable geometry turbochargers, VarioCam

List price	\$245,000
Price as tested	\$260,980
Curb weight	3230 lb
Test weight	3410 lb
Weight distribution, f/r	39/61
Engine	alum. block & heads, twin-turbo dohc 3.6-liter flat-6
Horsepower	620 bhp @ 6500 rpm
Torque	516 lb-ft @ 2250 rpm
Transmission	6-sp manual
Tires, f,r	Michelin Pilot Sport Cup, 245/35ZR-19, 325/30ZR-19
0-60 mph	3.5 sec
0-100 mph	7.1 sec
0-1320 ft (1/4 mile)	11.3 sec @ 130.3 mph
Top speed	205 mph
Braking, 60-0 mph	111 ft
Braking, 80-0 mph	187 ft
Lateral accel (200-ft skidpad)	1.02g
Speed thru 700-ft slalom	75.9 mph
Our mileage	est 17 mpg
EPA city/hwy	16/23 mpg



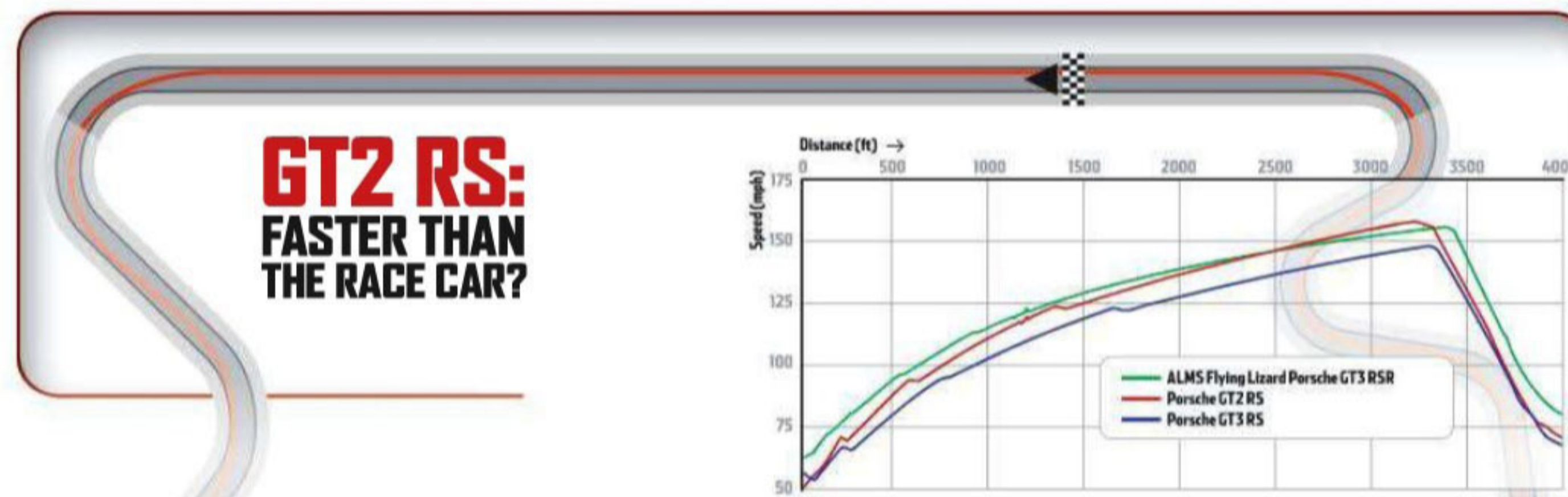
Plus (Porsche's variable valve timing and lift system) and an intake manifold that helps cool the intake charge by slightly decompressing it before it goes into the heads. Pumping 23.5 psi at max boost, the turbos are the motive force behind the production of an insane 620 bhp at 6500 rpm and 516 lb.-ft. of torque from 2250 rpm. It's the most powerful production car Porsche has ever made.

Thanks to such prodigious power, the PDK gearbox cannot work with the GT2 RS, so it's manual only. A single-mass flywheel (versus dual-mass for the regular GT2) and a shorter-ratio gearbox are racetrack-oriented pieces, and the setup features perfect shifter-action feel. Getting the power to the ground are wide 325-mm rear tires on 19-in. pin-drive wheels; 245-mm fronts keep the nose pointed in the desired direction.

Those thinnish front tires and resultant understeer hurt the GT2 RS on the track. But it's nothing a good race alignment couldn't partly alleviate. You see, the struts on the GT2 RS can be adjusted for ride height and preload, and like any other car, camber, caster and toe. This recipe of settings is crucial with a heavy hitting car like the GT2 RS.

Despite this, Long was able to lap nearly 3 seconds a lap faster than the GT3 RS (2:02.52 versus 2:05.44) around a hot and sandy Miller Motorsports Park track. "With the turbos and all that horsepower at the rear, I thought the GT2 RS was really going to test my car control skills, but that wasn't the case," said Long.

Even more telling is the GT2 RS' top speed down Miller's long front straight: 157.97 mph. In contrast, the GT3 RS mustered 148.08 while the standard GT3 and Flying Lizard ALMS GT2 cars from our Ultimate GT Showdown cover story (November 2010) hit 146.49 and



155.97 mph, respectively.

If you keep in mind Miller's 4400-ft. elevation that starves cars of much-needed oxygen, the ultimate capabilities of the GT2 RS are greater still. Thanks to its turbos and RS-pedigree suspension, the car is a certified track monster. Yet at the same time, it's a practical everyday supercar.

When you drive the GT3 and GT2 RS back to back, for example, you notice the ride, noise and, most importantly, the power delivery. The GT3 RS feels light, agile and frenetic, while the GT2 RS, with its shocks set to Sport, feels heavier and bit slower on fast transitions like our slalom. It's as if the suspension is saying, "You better be careful, the shocks can just barely keep up." And then, when you disable Sport mode, a plusher car emerges. While the RS has less sound-deadening material than a regular GT2, the turbos absorb much of the engine raspiness that characterizes the GT3. That gives this car a different aural presence, more jet engine than race car, with those massive Michelin Pilot Sport Cup tires transmitting lots of road noise straight into the stiffened suspension bushings and subframes. And then there's the power. The GT2 RS accelerates on par with no less than Porsche's most recent

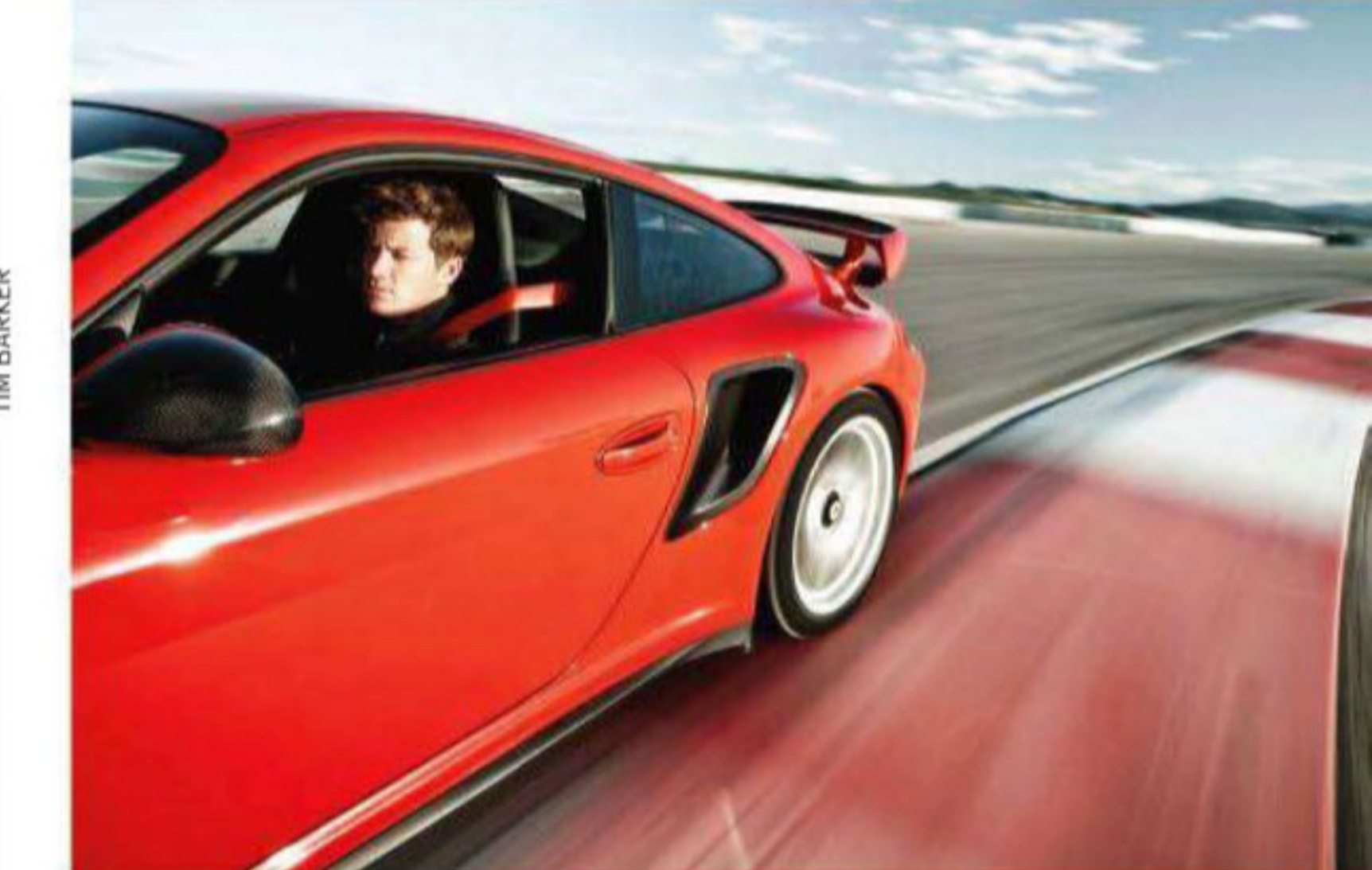
supercar, the V-10-powered Carrera GT. During an acceleration run, you'll feel nearly a g pushing you back in your seat through the entire range of 1st gear, with the rate of acceleration actually increasing to a full g after the 1-2 shift. This fierce, unrelenting acceleration is intense. And it happens all the way to 3rd gear! It's a supremely visceral experience.

Even still, the GT2 RS is a heavy beast of a car, one that commands tremendous respect. Yet in many sections at Miller, it was on par with or out-accelerated the Flying Lizard 2010-specification ALMS race car on slicks.

Consider the gravity of that. A fully developed street car that's actually faster (in a straight line, at least) than the competition machine, and more functional to boot. It even has a navigation system and cupholders.

But at the end of it all, the GT2 RS is held back by its street/track mission statement. To extract the most out of this glorious car requires larger front tires and a suspension engineer. Nevertheless, as Long points out, the laps times show that it outperforms a GT3 RS, a true benchmark. We'd expect no less from the fastest street-legal Porsche ever made.

The graph above represents the long front straight at Miller Motorsports Park. You'll see the GT2 RS and GT3 RS coming out of the slow left-hand turn (on the top right of the track map) at close to identical speeds, while the ALMS GT3 RSR is noticeably faster. Note the seamless shifts from the Flying Lizard race car, while the two RSs have to deal with clutched shifts. Still, the GT2 RS quickly begins to out-accelerate the GT3 RS and even posts a higher peak speed than the RSR racing car. We fantasize about what a GT2 RS with wider front tires and more aggressive suspension settings would do on the Miller track.



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PHOTO BY BERT SWIFT

roadandtrack.com/GT2RS