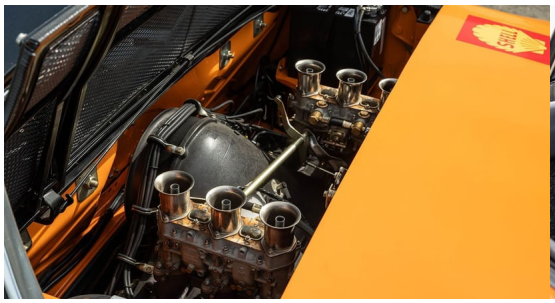
Is this Rallye Monte Carlo veteran the world’s finest Porsche 914/6 GT?

Lead
Raced by Gérard Larrousse at the 1971 Rallye Monte Carlo and restored by Porsche factory engineer Walter Näher, this 914/6 GT could be the finest example of the model on the planet. Now it’s heading to Broad Arrow Auctions’ Amelia Island sale.

Whether it was down to the joint development with Volkswagen, or the puzzling symmetry between its front and rear, the 914 didn’t receive the usual warm welcome Porsche models tend to enjoy. However, just a year after the 914’s launch 1969, while others were busy arguing about whether it was “a real Porsche”, Porsche’s own engineers were already excitedly tapping into the potential of their new mid-engined racer to be. And, in 1970, the covers were pulled off the totally reworked and invigorated 914/6 GT.

Porsche could have shoe-horned a 911 engine into the 914 and called it a day, but the upgrades are, somewhat unsurprisingly, far more rigorous than that. The 914/6 GT was lowered with competition shock absorbers, while the body was reinforced to withstand the demands of battle. Larger brake callipers and rotors were added, while long-stud wheel hubs and spacers were fitted to accommodate wider wheels shod in racing rubber. The body, too, was widened with steel fenders flares, while weight savings were made thanks to fibreglass body panels on the front and rear hoods and a simplified interior.



Now that the chassis had been beefed up, the next port of call was obviously the engine, in this case a motorsport unit (Type 901/25) boasting hard-chromed racing pistons, cylinder heads with polished intake and exhaust ports, Weber 46 IDA carburettors, dual ignition, and racing camshafts, all fitted to a special exhaust system and a gearbox that featured a competition clutch. Finished off with a larger air intake grille, front bumper oil cooler cutout, and a standard 100-litre fuel tank, the 914/6 GT now made an impressive 220 horsepower and screamed all the way up to 8,000 rpm.

The 914/6 GT immediately demonstrated its on-track prowess by winning its class and finishing sixth overall at the 1970 24 Hours of Le Mans, and with that Porsche turned its sights to the 1971 Rallye Monte Carlo. Having enjoyed a hat trick in the previous three years thanks to their ever-potent 911s, Porsche was hoping to continue the winning streak with their new mid-ship prodigy. Three factory works cars were built to FIA Group 4 specification, each featuring a sequential chassis number (139, 140, 141) and a sequential internal project number (914/56, 914/57, 914/58), while all were finished in matching Signal Orange paintwork.

Naturally, Porsche employed the most talented hot shoes they could find for the rally, with our star car today, chassis number 141, being assigned to Gérard Larrousse. Of course, road registration was required to compete, and chassis number 141 received the Stuttgart license plate “S-Y 7716”. While a talented driver was one way of getting a leg up on the competition, the Rallye Monte Carlo also awarded additional points for those who started in their race cars from afar, and so the three factory 914/6 GTs drove to the event start from Warsaw, Poland, as noted by the Varsovie decals on the doors.

Upon reaching Monaco and being assigned the start number 1, Larousse and his co-driver Jean-Claude Perramond must have felt luck was on their side, but fate had other plans. As inch upon inch of snow fell on the Rallye Monte Carlo course for the first time in years, a slew of retirements saw almost 90 percent of the field drop out before the finish. Yet, despite the arctic conditions, it wasn’t the snow that scuppered Larousse’s dreams. A broken clutch lever put an end to their Monte Carlo effort, and upon returning to Stuttgart post-retirement, the odometer allegedly already showed 8,683 kilometres, proving just how far they had already come.

Despite the unfortunate outing, Porsche’s plans for chassis number 141 weren’t yet at an end. After new engines were installed in each of the three Monte Carlo 914/6 GTs to test various developments, they lent this Signal Orange racer to none other than “Quick Vic” Elford as transportation to the 1971 Targa Florio, where he used it as his recce car ahead of the event. While Elford didn’t repeat his 1968 feat of winning the famed competition, he did manage to secure the fastest lap and the Ignazio Giunti Trophy, no doubt thanks to the help of chassis number 141.

After the Targa Florio, chassis number 141 returned to its birthplace of Stuttgart with 15,240 kilometres on the clock, and was promptly put to work in Heinz Bäuerle’s test department. Around two years and 10,000 kilometres later, factory race engineer Walter Näher became its first private owner, marking the start of his 30-year-long custodianship. Näher had joined the Porsche engineering team in 1969, and after dedicating his early years in Zuffenhausen to road car development, he steadily rose through the ranks to become Stefan Bellof’s 959 race engineer, before going on to join Peter Sauber’s sports car and Formula One team.

It was only during the later years of his ownership that Näher began chassis number 141’s restoration. Disassembly began in 2002, upon which it was discovered that this 914/6 GT was in remarkably original condition, having avoided any serious accidents during its short racing career. Additionally, beyond being fitted with a new engine by Porsche themselves after the 1971 Rallye Monte Carlo, chassis 141 was not modified with any additional performance upgrades, unlike many other racers of the era. And, thanks to Näher’s lofty position with Porsche’s racing department, he was given special access to parts and personnel throughout the restoration, meaning chassis number 141 was treated to many of the rare components unique to the 914/6 GT, including a correct Type 901/25 specification engine that was rebuilt to the 1971 Monte Carlo specification.

While Porsche scrapped one of the three Monte Carlo 914/6 GTs, and the other was converted to Herbert Linge's ONS safety car, chassis 141 remains the sole example correctly restored to its "as raced" 1971 Monte Carlo rally specification. Recognising the significance of this stunning Porsche, noted collector, racer, and filmmaker Jeff Zwart purchased chassis number 141 in August 2010. After acquiring a pair of original 1971 Monte Carlo rally plates and tuning the carburettors, Zwart commented that he was more than satisfied with chassis number 141's condition, a real testament to the quality of Näher's restoration. If you needed any more convincing of this car's impeccable state, Zwart recalls attending a Sunday morning car show where none other than Gérard Larrousse was in attendance. There, the Frenchman was pleased to see that his narrow fixed bucket seat, personally requested in 1971, remained in the car!

Chassis number 141's almost unbelievable state of preservation was rewarded in 2015, when it won First in Class at the Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance out of a plethora of fabulous 914 road and race cars. Zwart passed chassis number 141 on to its current custodian in August 2019, who continued to use it as intended, attending the 2020 GP Ice race at Zell am See. However, this remarkable piece of Porsche history is now looking for a new home, and will be heading to Broad Arrow Auctions' Amelia Island sale on March 1st, where it is estimated to achieve between 1,200,000 and 1,500,000 dollars. So, we ask you, are there any doubts that this peerless 914/6 GT is a real Porsche? We certainly don't think so!

Photos: Robin Adams | Period Photos: Motorsport Images

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