

AUTOMOTIVE

Porsche celebrates rich history at Le Mans in new effort

June 22, 2021



Timo Bernhard and Fritz Enzinger with the 356 SL from 1952. Image credit: Porsche

By KATIE TAMOLA

German automaker Porsche is highlighting its vibrant history at the 24 Hours of Le Mans, which spans more than 60 years.

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In the first installment of a new series, viewers are guided by Timo Bernhard, Le Mans overall winner and Porsche brand ambassador, and Fritz Enzinger, vice president of Porsche motorsport. In the short film, the pair reminisce, analyze Porsche's connection to the race, discuss what their victories meant to them and take a test drive in a 356 SL.

"A series like this gives viewers a real in-depth look at Porsche's immense racing history from people intimately associated with its countless motorsports successes," said David Undercoffler, editor in chief at [Autolist.com](https://www.autolist.com), San Francisco. "It gives Porsche an invaluable authenticity by making clear just how long it's been racing and how deeply embedded this history is in all facets of the brand."

"This particular installment seems aimed more at the existing Porsche and racing fan than it is at luring in newcomers," he said. "This is a low-key but factoid-rich video will give Porsche enthusiasts plenty to chew on but it probably won't grab the attention of newbies given its presentation."

Success at Le Mans

Mr. Bernhard is excited to greet Mr. Enzinger, who arrives driving a Porsche 356 SL. When Mr. Bernhard asks how many of these particular vehicles were made, Mr. Enzinger tells him that the car is only one of ten.

The Porsche 356 SL was manufactured in 1952 and has always been owned by the Porsche family. The very car featured in "Le Mans: The Porsche Success Story" won the Liege-Rome-Liege race in 1954.

Porsche has secured 107 class victories and 19 overall wins at Le Mans

The intimate and inviting feel of the video, which tracks as Mr. Bernhard and Mr. Enzinger look inside the car, makes viewers feel as though they too are a part of the ride. Various closeups of different aspects of the vehicle are spliced together as the pair converses.

When Mr. Bernhard asks what modifications were made to the car decades ago, Mr. Enzinger talks about aerodynamic alterations, like trimming parts on the wheel rim and side as well as increasing the tank capacity to 78 liters so drivers could drive longer.

For its first trip to the 24 Hours of Le Mans, the Porsche 356 SL was cleared for race and road, with the team initially getting in the car and driving it to the race.

The two began to reminisce on their winning experiences, with Mr. Enzinger said he had the same hotel room for every Le Mans race he participated in with Porsche. He first attended at the iconic endurance race with the automaker in 2014.

Mr. Bernhard then spoke about the emotional energy participants have to muster before the race, with Mr. Enzinger agreeing, saying that the entire week prior is both mental and physical preparation.

The two then look at some special artifacts, including a diary from the Porsche archive, penned by Karl Rabe who was head designer and documented his days of traveling to the Le Mans race precisely.

After a full historical recollection, Mr. Bernhard suggests they take the 356 SL for a test drive.



The pair looks at a diary from Karl Rabe, former chief designer at Porsche. Image credit: Porsche

The video concludes with Mr. Bernhard asking Mr. Enzinger if he can still feel the emotions of having represented Porsche at Le Mans.

"Competing in Le Mans is one thing, but then to win it too," Mr. Enzinger says. "If you win in a Porsche, well, you can't top that."

Porsche has secured 107 class victories and 19 overall wins at Le Mans. Mr. Bernhard won the iconic endurance race with Porsche in 2002 and 2017.

Porsche x Le Mans

This is not the first time the German automaker has crafted a video series around the Le Mans race.

Porsche returned to the race track with the second season of its "Road to Le Mans" documentary series following actor Michael Fassbender in November of 2020. The first season premiered in 2019 and followed the actor's participation in the Porsche Sports Cup ([see story](#)).

In 2015, Porsche promoted its participation at Le Mans on social media by posting on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. The automaker also created a short video that it shared on its Web site and Facebook page ([see story](#)).

Porsche will be releasing five new episodes of the "Success Story" series on a weekly basis. The 2021 24 Hours of Le Mans is scheduled for Aug. 21 and 22.

"Other brands may be joining the trend of highlighting their racing involvement but for Porsche, doing so is nothing new," Mr. Undercoffler said. "Porsche has long rested its reputation and image on the shoulders of its decades of victories at some of the most notable racetracks in the world."