

1974 PORSCHE RS 3.0'S IN FRANCE



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Back in the 1980s, whilst I was living in England, I used to own a somewhat used (read "ratty!") 1974 Porsche RS 3.0 Carrera that had placed twelfth overall and won the Group 4 GT class at Le Mans in 1976. Apart from it being a shagged out old racecar that was all I knew. I kept it for a couple of years, raced it at a few tracks, and then sold it to my then partner, who in turn sold it through me to a very nice American, then living in Baltimore, Paul Gilbreath.

A couple of years ago, I found Paul again, who had by now moved to Pensacola in Florida, and brokered the car from him to the present owner, a very knowledgeable English Porsche enthusiast and racer who lives in Australia. He asked me to get 911 460 9034 restored and, whilst I was overseeing this process at Heritage Racing here in Largo,

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Florida, I delved more deeply into 9034's history, which entailed me looking into the histories of all the RS 3.0s that had been sold to France and what I found astounded me.



The factory says that they built fifty-four RS 3.0s and, of those, it appears that ten cars were initially delivered to France, with another three or four being subsequently built up in period (1974 to 1976) on various other 911 chassis, plus at least one or two others being imported from Germany in 1975-76. Seven of these RS 3.0s were delivered to their new owners via the now defunct Sonauto Porsche dealership in Paris, one went via the Porsche dealer K.D. Balsa, one went via the Almeras Freres dealership in Montpellier, and one went to its new owner, Gerard Meo, via the Porsche dealership of Jean Egretaud in Bordeaux, a keen racer himself.



At this time in France, a keen racer could compete in several International races and rallies in a Group 3 car, which was what an RS 3.0 Carrera was homologated to do. There was, of course, the 24 Hours of Le Mans, the Monte Carlo Rally and the Tour de France Auto, to say nothing of the National and local rallies around France in those days, the Criterium des Cevennes, La Ronde Durance, the Rallye d'Armor, the Rally de l'Ouest, the list goes on and on. Virtually a rally every weekend somewhere. Additionally, there were races for Group 3 cars at venues such as Montlhery, near Paris, Dijon, Clermont Ferrand, Magny Cours, Nogaro and...and....and. Finally...Hillclimbs somewhere every weekend too, or "Corse du Cotes", to give them their French titles.



Of course, the really keen racer could slip over the border to Belgium next door and race at Spa-Francorchamps, or go over another border into Germany to race at the Nordschleife at the Nurburgring, or Hockenheim, or go over France's southern border to Italy and race at Monza, Imola, Vallelunga. The list goes on and on. Also, if our keen racer wanted to install a twin plug RSR engine into his RSR, he now vaulted into the Group 4 class and could compete against RSRs.

So it's no surprise that ALL the RS 3.0 Carreras delivered to France were used as race cars in period; Indeed, for one or two of them, I'm certain that, over the period 1974 to 1978, they probably competed in over one hundred and fifty races/rallies/hillclimbs each! As an adjunct, don't forget the 911Ss, S/Ts and RS 2.7 Carreras that were also raced there and most were upgraded over the years to the latest spec. in order to remain competitive. Those that were crashed badly were usually re-shelled and thrown back into the fray because.....



During this period, France was slightly different in how it ran cars like the RS 3.0 Carrera to the rest of the World. The cars were owned and run by race preparers such as Raymond Touroul, Louis Meznarie, the Almeras Freres, Jean Egretaud and Sonauto itself. These companies would rent out their RS 3.0s to drivers who were well known names in France then, such as Jean-Claude Andruet, a great Rally specialist, Jean-Pierre Rouget, Bernard Beguin, Michelle Mouton, Guy Frequelin, Christian Poirot, Francis Roussely, and Christian Lefebvre. All these drivers were featured in the motoring and national press in those days and this was the system that they operated in.

Of course, many of these very well used RS 3.0s were crashed; in those days, cars used in rallying had to be registered for the street, so as the plates were of the "stick on" variety, it's probable that some of the plates would have been swapped to another RS 3.0 in the team when one car was back at base being repaired but I digress....



To bring us back to the present day: I have spent the past few years tracking down the histories of these "French" RS 3.0 Carreras and have updated my records accordingly. Hopefully, this year, we will be publishing another edition of our "R to 935" book, which will feature a completely updated set of histories of these great Porsches. Watch out for more information as to when exactly that will be!

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