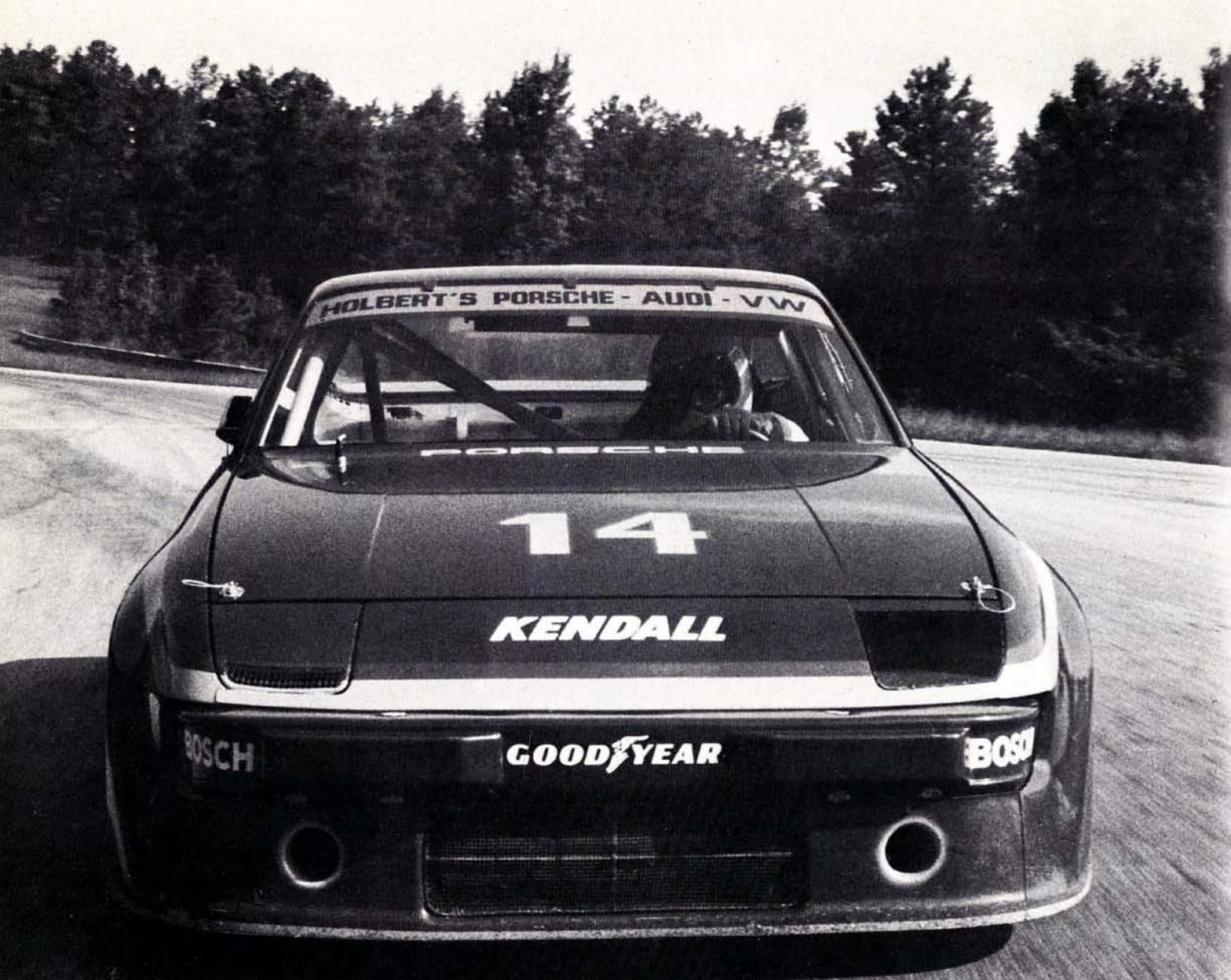




# Porsche's D Production 924

Landmark German Engineered "Kit Car"  
Heralds New Era for Sports Car Club of America  
Racing Scene





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Peter Worth

## Of Milestones Marked on the Production Class Trail

By Steve Nickless

**M**anufacturer involvement in the Sports Car Club of America amateur racing program has changed the face of it—irrevocably, forcefully and, most will agree, positively. The world's car makers have taken what was once a gentlemanly sport of white gloves, social affairs and passion for four-wheeled steel beauties and whipped it into an intense forum, with huge advertising budgets—and often larger sales figures—at stake. The club, the racer and the manufacturer have benefited from one of the most symbiotic business relationships of all times.

The change, highly dramatic and obvious as it is, has not happened quickly—especially in the racers' mode of "quick." Rather, it has been a steady evolution, signposted with four significant occurrences.

The first came in 1962 when, after 15 years of hard-line policy, the SCCA relaxed its stance against open manufacturer financial support. While behind-the-scenes "assistance" had been going on for years, contingency programs were quickly brought aboveboard. Many, many amateur racers would profit over the years from this revolution, as would the number of manufacturers who cultivated the adage, "Win on Sunday, sell cars Monday." Standard-Triumph and BMC, predecessors of today's Jaguar Rover Triumph, led this movement, creating the pseudo-factory teams owned by Bob Tullius, Kas Kastner and Joe Huffaker, and the splendid motor racing which those men and their cars would spark.

The next fundamental change followed quickly on the footsteps of the contingency programs: the opening of the factory's or importer's competition parts shelf. With access to this, a would-be racer could purchase technology within his budget—financially or chronologically. Again, the forerunners of JRT were pioneers of the concept, but through the '70s Datsun and competition boss Dick Roberts have shown to what lengths such programs can go. Roberts pioneered the active *marketing* of the racing parts shelf and literally thousands of Datsun enthusiasts have reaped the rewards.

As production car racing grew more and more complex—and technology more and more expensive despite the best efforts of the SCCA's competition board and governors to control it—the direction of sports car racing changed still further. Its path was now steadily away from the original concept, that of taking a showroom machine with taped headlights and flogging the nearby racing circuit. Complexity sparked the third major trend as manufacturers began to make available "bodies in white." No longer would the construction process need start with a trip to the used car lot or junkyard and weeks of work in stripping carpeting, insulation and undercoating. A number of car makers now offer body shells which

make a convenient platform; the most widely advertised, perhaps, is Fiat's X1/9 for F and G Production.

Which brings us to the new decade of the '80s and an aside: "Production car" racing has long suffered from the misnomer; the tag, of course, more aptly applies to what we call formula cars and sports racers where factories large and small, American and European, crank out any number of identically-matched chassis—true "production cars."

Walk beside the grid, sometime, at the start of an H Production race; all Austin-Healey Sprites and MG Midgets. Are they identical? Hardly. Each is an extension of its builder's individual ideas, personal finance and inclination.

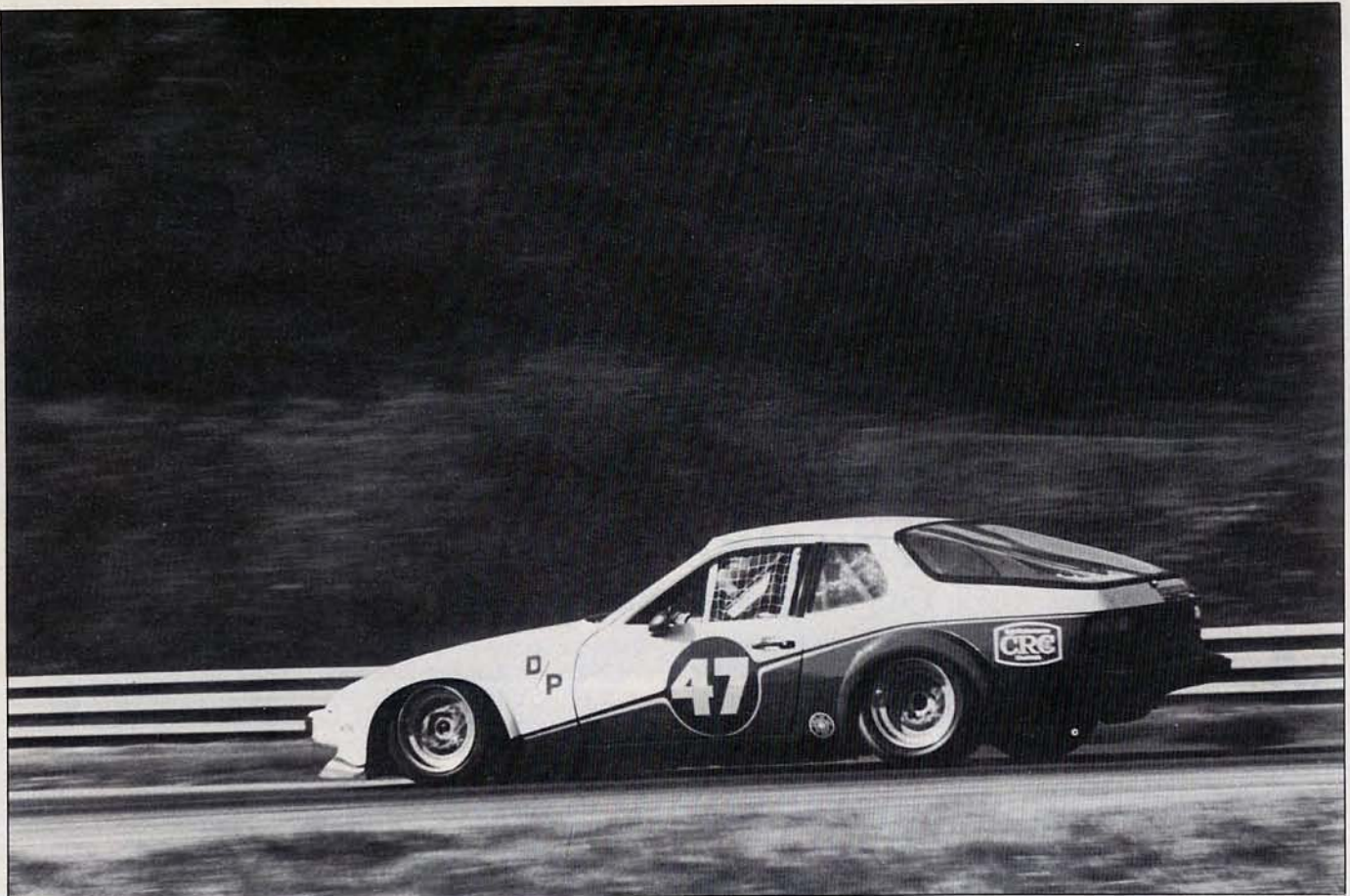
But, like all things in motor racing, the winds of change are blowing strongly on this from a western European direction. It is Porsche's turn to lead a revolution in club racing and it has done so, quietly at first but with an evergrowing ground swell of interest. Ten years, perhaps five years, down the road, club racing historians will look back on the D Production 924 coupe and say, "Here is another club racing milestone."

What Porsche has done is put the "production" back in Production Class racing with a full-bore racing machine which can be ordered as a kit—complete to the last nut, bolt and seat belt—by telephone. Its design was technologically as thorough, they tell us, as only the wizards of Weissach can do it and its development through the 1980 season produced an enviable record (every 924 DP car built qualified for the CSPRR National Championships). Porsche has demonstrated that while one may not have the finances to develop a car with one's own wind tunnel or test track, one can purchase the lessons learned.

Now, quite obviously, a \$40,000 kit car is not within the realm of every SCCA driver's pocketbook. Nor is it the purpose of this special section to comment in dollars-and-cents terms on the evolution of this large segment of amateur motor sport. SPORTS CAR's® editors *do* agree, however, that the kit or modular idea is here to stay. In that lies the significance of the next few pages.

There is also a statement in them which bears reflection. Beyond the lure of the DP 924 as an interesting new race car is the excitement in Porsche, as a manufacturer which has made its reputation in professional spheres, recognizing SCCA club racing as a viable, marketable commodity. The National scene *does* have importance and *does* have stature or this investment would not have been considered.

How did the DP 924 project come about? What does it represent? Where will it take the sport in future? Those are questions asked of writers Bill Wallace, Tom Davey, Doug Carleton and William Hassell. Their reports comprise a fascinating fast lap... ●



Jeff Zwart

# Background: Porsche's DP 924

Not Time Yet For Sentimentality

By Bill Wallace

**S**entimentality is not an emotion found often in the racing community—at least when it comes to cars. For the majority, that collection of parts kept off the pavement by four rubber tires is nothing more than a means to an end, a tool to be cruelly abused and then discarded when its useful life is over.

Perhaps, then, it is a sense of history rather than subjectivity which dictates the attention paid each morning to the Porsche 924 D Production coupe that currently adorns the floor of the Holbert Porsche+Audi dealership in Warrington, Pa. The care with which its red, white and blue flanks are dusted, and the religious check of its tire pressures indicates a competition record of some note.

Yet this 924's log book displays only a single event—the 1979 Road Atlanta CSPRRC—where it posted an undistinguished finish outside the top 10. In this case, however, it is not achievement but presence which matters. The value of the Holbert Porsche is as a progenitor—the first Weissach-built prototype of



Larry Griffith

the West German manufacturer's next generation of GT contenders.

That Porsche chose the United States and the SCCA as the engineering test ground for its new mainstay racer is the result of two primary objectives: The need to provide the 924 with a racing heritage converged with the absence of hard-core engineering data in creating a car meeting the new 1982 FIA international GT regulations. Even so, there was a reluctance on the part of the factory to undertake such a project, the Weissach engineers preferring their well-researched 911s and transmute turbo 935s to the unknowns of converting the 924 to racetrack readiness.

Logic prevailed—due in large measure to the fast-talking Josef Hoppen, special vehicles manager for Porsche+Audi in the United States. Caught in the middle between the reticence of the Weissach engineers and the desires of his marketing people, Hoppen shaped the D Production program to meet the wants of both sides. "It took a great deal of effort," he says now with a smile, "but I convinced both

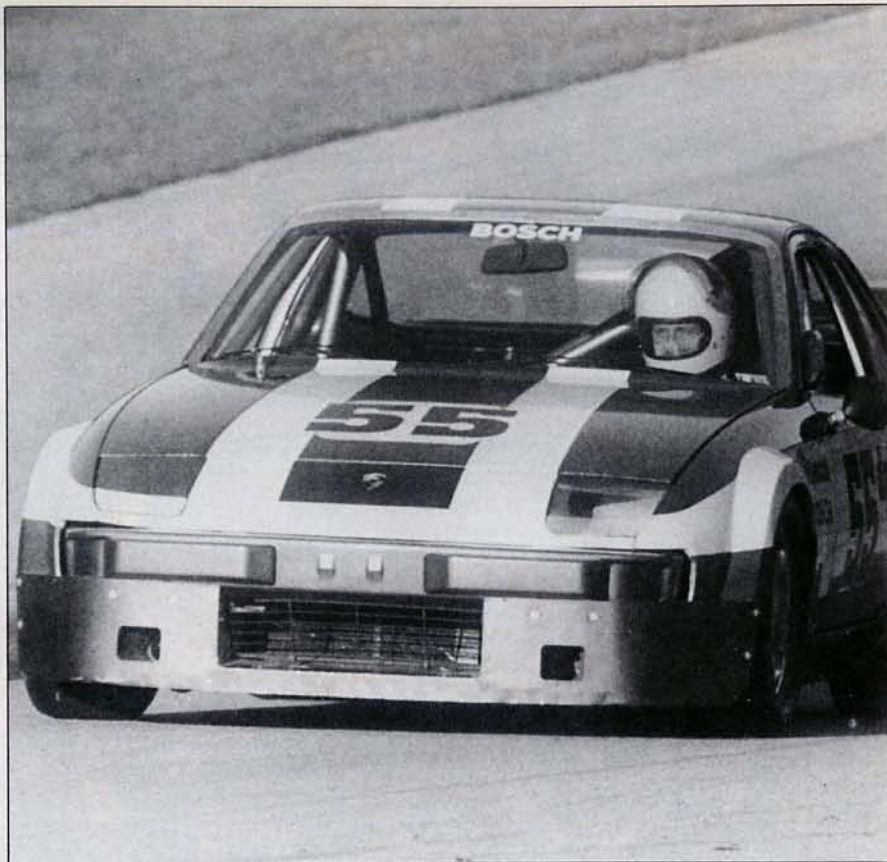
of them they were getting something for nothing." (For more on this subject, see Page 36.-Ed.)

If there were trade-offs, Hoppen, one of the more experienced negotiators in the motor sports industry, made sure they didn't upstage the advantages. Even so, his smile was forced until the Porsche hierarchy agreed in the late summer of 1978 to supply 924 D Production cars in knocked-down kit form.

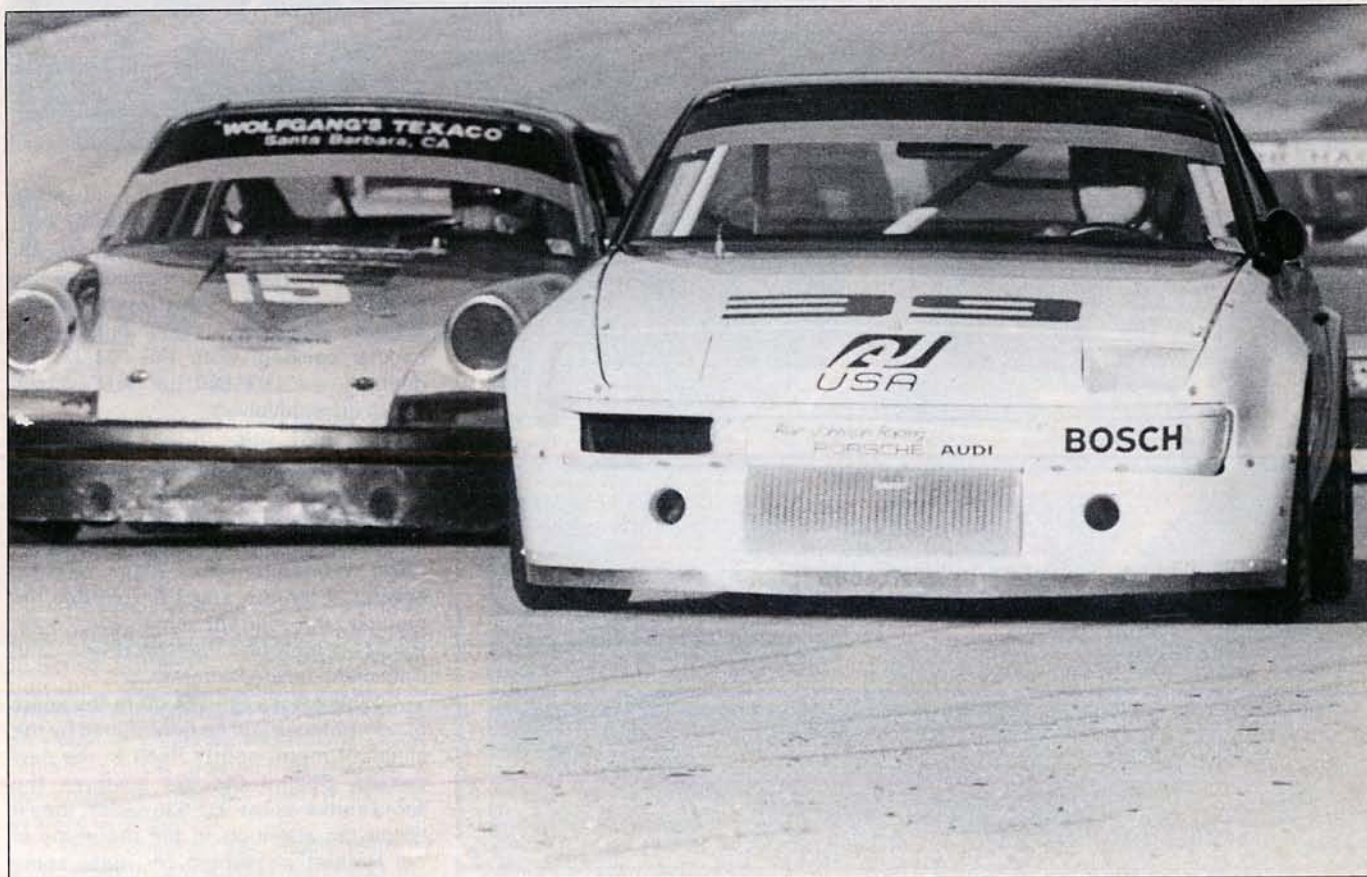
Ten months and \$500,000 later, a rather scruffy prototype rested on pit lane at Road Atlanta ready to begin a full scale development program under the guidance of Al Holbert and Doc Bundy. "The factory sent us a fundamentally good car," said Holbert at the time. "What we've got to do is dial it into the American racing scheme of things."

By now the trials of the D Production project are well documented, its successes and failures cataloged for reference and advertising authenticity. Interestingly, though, the ink was hardly dry on the telex reporting on the 1979 CSPRRC when the Weissach inhabitants were at work on job number two—a 924 turbo for the Le Mans 24-hour classic.

While in America the designated Porsche + Audi 924 dealer teams were assembling and testing their new kit cars, the engineers were at the Paul Ricard circuit in the south of France



Dealer team involvement is a key facet of the 924 program: (Above) the Heshman Porsche + Audi entry, driven this year by Steve Pieper; (Below) Greg LaCava in the Alan Johnson Porsche + Audi machine.





Jeff Zwart

(ABOVE) The Holbert team's first 924 and (BELOW) its second.

trying out their second generation prototype. This past June three slightly modified versions of what was now called the 924 Turbo Carrera showed the information fed back from the United States (added to the factory's results) could lead to success at Le Mans. All three cars ran in the top 10 during the 24-hour enduro, one taking the final flag in sixth.

Given what Porsche has done in the past, there's no way of predicting the ultimate 924, but a degree in mysticism isn't required to see that while the D Production cars represent the first and present progression on the development ladder, the Le Mans project is the next step into the future.

Already ticketed is a mating of an updated D Production chassis with the Le Mans motor for the SCCA's C Production contest in 1981, this while the factory evaluates the prospects of the CRC Chemicals Trans-Am and long distance events.

The commitment to the D Production program hasn't been forgotten either. "We entered the DP arena," explains Hoppen, "because we believed then, as



we do now, that it provides us with the broadest possible base to display what the 924 can do. I think that in the recent past the cost of our technology has limited the appeal of our motor sports program to those with considerable financial backing. With the 924 D Production cars, we can get the average SCCA driver involved."

For 1981, some of the dealer teams will remain in D Production. Others will move into CP. Those that stay in the smaller class will be joined by purchasers of the 924 DP kits. In addition to the CP turbo teams, tentative plans call for several 924 turbo Trans-Am entries, including the current champion, John Bauer—a longtime Porsche driver—and Canadian Ludwig Heimrath, Jr.

Where does the 924 go in the years to come? Much will be determined by the shape of motor sports itself in the new decade. Still, if the 924 achieves the same status as the 911-935 series, they'll be paying attention to the prototype in the Holbert showroom for quite some time. A historical artifact deserves no less.

Shan Clinton





# From Kit to Racer: How To Build an SCCA 924

By Doug Carleton

**R**evolutions are funny things. Some come through the front door complete with fireworks and a "charge the palace steps" philosophy, while others sneak in the back unnoticed—rather like the Porsche 924 in D Production.

Over the years, the SCCA's National Club Racing program has seen its share of newly introduced machinery. None, perhaps, has been so unique as the 924. The twist with Stuttgart's coupe lies not so much in either its technology or its record—critical though they may be—but rather in the fact that it can be ordered by telephone.

Frank Sinatra could easily identify with those in SCCA National racing because they, like Sinatra's song says, have traditionally done it "Their Way."

The average production-class race car as a finished creation is an expression of its builder in terms of approach, technique and ability; the term "production" has long seemed a misnomer for that very reason.

With the 924 the situation is far different. No homemade street conversion where solutions to problems are based on pragmatic time and financial considerations here; the Porsche D Production entry is nothing less than an assembly-line item in knocked-down kit form, embodying much of the same engineering which in the past has generated the wondrous 917 and 935 turbos.

As Josef Hoppen, Porsche + Audi's American competition boss and the man behind Porsche's entrance into SCCA National competition, puts it: "In re-

viewing our American racing efforts we felt we needed to expand beyond the 935, which was financially out of reach to all but a very few. To change that we created our 924 SCCA program utilizing the technology of the 935s, but at a price many SCCA members/drivers can afford."

Now the \$40,000 plus it takes to purchase a complete D Production kit is expensive, but is not out of line for a high-grade race vehicle bristling with the same kind of innovation which has made the 935 such a consistent winner.

Kit owner Stefan Edlis, a past National Champion, sums it up by saying, "We would have taken half a season to get to the same level of preparedness the kit provided us with at the start. As far as I'm concerned, that's invaluable."

## Kit to Racer

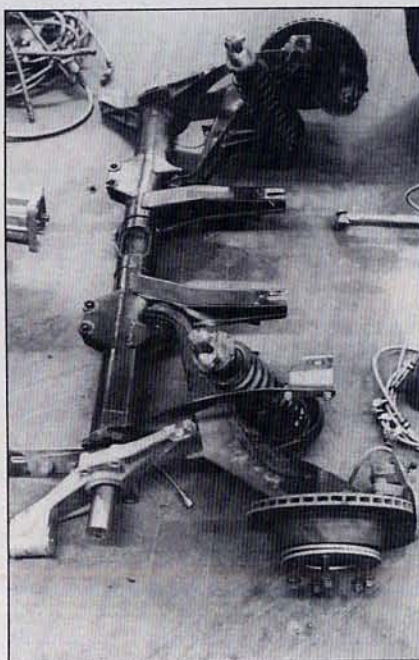


Make no mistake: Building a 924 kit isn't a matter of a few hand tools and one or two nights in the garage. Even so, the advantages of Porsche's "head start" 924 over a "from scratch" chassis are both obvious and considerable.

Deciding on whether or not to go the 924 kit route begins with a call to either Volkswagen of America's Special Vehicles Department (Porsche's U.S. motor sports headquarters) or Holbert Racing in Warrington, Pa., (the primary developers of the SCCA 924 and one of five dealer teams who are parts sources for the program).

Because the 924 kit is modular in nature, it can be purchased complete or by the piece, something which gives the potential customer a great deal of flexibility. "Suppose," says Hoppen, "a man has access to a chassis but needs everything else. Or suppose he has an engine and wants the rest from Porsche. Either way, we can accommodate him." On the other side of the ledger, Holbert can and will assemble a kit if the purchaser so desires.

Assuming, though, the new 924 owner is going to do it himself, his first look at his new racer will come at the nearest Porsche + Audi warehouse. When he picks it up he will find three separate packages: a stripped 924 bodyshell with an already installed rollcage; a crate containing a fully assembled engine; and a second crate with suspension, transmission, brakes, wheels, steering, body parts and other pieces. Other than the windshield, fuel-cell bladder and tires, the kit contains every-



(TOP) Body shell with "pre-fab" roll cage; (ABOVE) rear suspension.

thing needed to make a working race car.

The first step in putting one together, says Alan Johnson, the southern California Porsche dealer whose racing department has already constructed a pair of kit 924s, is to lay it all out and take an inventory of pieces. With this out of the way, attention turns to the bodyshell where the initial step is to remove all the excess tabs and brackets for those street parts not included in the finished racer. (This can save up to 30 or 40 lbs., Johnson adds.) Any individual modifi-

cations to the rollcage should also be made at this point, after which all the holes in the bodyshell should be covered.

Next the body, along with the doors, fenders, hood and bumpers, is painted, following which the fuel, brake and electrical lines and harnesses are installed. Then the suspension, brakes, steering rack and transmission, along with the oil coolers and radiator, are bolted in place.

The wheels and tires come after this so the car can be taken off the jack stands. The engine must then be mated to the body, the last major operation before "detailing," the overly-simplistic term for installing such items as the windows, seat, instruments, body panels, fire extinguisher and safety gear.

The time between uncrating and tightening down the last screw will vary, depending on the number of people working on the 924, the number of hours they have to spend and, of course, their experience at this sort of thing. The average SCCAer should expect, according to the Special Vehicles Department, to require anywhere from one to two months in turning the kit into a race ready car.

No matter how long it takes, advice and counseling are available from Holbert and the other dealer teams. Indeed, since they will be the primary parts source, it's a good idea for the 924 racer to get to know them early.

With the dealer teams—and with the factory behind them—Porsche's 924 telephone revolution is well connected.

One can see it now: "Reason for DNF— dialed wrong number...." ●



## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS Porsche 924 D Production Racer

ENGINE .....	4-cylinder in-line	BODY .....	Fiberglass fender flares, Plexiglass side and rear windows
Bore .....	86.5 mm (3.41 in.)		Front, rear spoilers
Stroke .....	84.4 mm (3.32 in.)	SUSPENSION .....	Independent, ride height adjustable, Bilstein gas pressure shock absorbers, adjustable sway bars
Displacement .....	1984 cc (121 cu. in.)	Front .....	MacPherson Struts
Compression ratio .....	11.9:1	Rear .....	Diagonal arms
Horsepower (DIN Net) .....	185 at 7500 rpm	BRAKES .....	4-wheel vented disc brakes, adjustable brake bias
Engine block .....	Cast iron	WHEELS .....	BBS forged alloy, 7"x15"
Crankshaft .....	Forged steel, 5 main bearings	TIRES .....	Goodyear 22.5 x 7.5 x 15, 23.0 x 8.5 x 15, 24.0 x 8.5 x 15
Pistons .....	Aluminum alloy	DIMENSIONS/CAPACITIES	
Cylinder head .....	Aluminum alloy	Wheelbase .....	2400 mm (94.5 in.)
Valve train .....	Overhead cam, spur belt-driven	Track: Front .....	1469 ± 3 mm (57.8 ± .1 in.)
Induction system .....	Bosch/Kugel-Fischer mechanical injection	Rear .....	1443 ± 3 mm (56.8 ± .1 in.)
Lubrication system .....	Dry sump	Length .....	4320 mm (170 in.)
TRANSMISSION .....	5-speed with Porsche synchromesh, limited slip differential; individual gear ratios to suit track conditions	Width .....	1817 (71.5 in.)
Clutch .....	Single dry plate with metallic friction "pads"	Height .....	1210 (47.6 in.)
CHASSIS .....	unitized body, reinforced with welded-in roll cage	Weight .....	1900 lbs.
		Fuel tank .....	17.4 gallons
		Oil system .....	10-12 liters (2.6 - 3.2 gallons)

### LATE NEWS LATE NEWS

## "Instant Legend"

**F**orgive the hand clapping. They had earned the right, that begrimmed band hanging on the pit straight rail in the gathering Road Atlanta twilight. All were listening to the crisp notes produced by throttle pressure nuances and gear changes as Tom Brennan guided the scruffy Porsche 924 D Production coupe through the coming darkness.

Twenty-four hours earlier, here at the site of the 1980 Champion Classic, Brennan's car was a collection of un-assembled kit pieces, parts of the standard package 924 that Porsche sells to those D Production entrants wanting off-the-shelf technology.

Indeed, the "racing car kit" concept had been proven during the course of the regular 1980 National Championship season, with the home-assembled Porsche coupes copping 15 victories and 17 second places in 70 starts.

No one, however, anticipated the test to which the kit building idea would be put at this year's Champion Spark Plug Road Racing Classic—certainly not Brennan whose Herman + Miller dealer team 924 was considered one of the favorites to win the D Production title.

The Danville, Ill., driver's hopes of competing, much less vying for that honor, however, seemingly took a permanent vacation on Wednesday afternoon when he crashed—and totaled—the racer against the bank at the start/finish line.

"I called home," he said sadly, "to let them know I wouldn't be running." At the time it was a prediction to take to a bank. After all, there was little



Jeff Zwart Photos

more than 48 hours to the DP title finale and there were no spare 924 coupes in the Porsche garage.

There were, however, two un-assembled 924 kits at the Holbert Racing shops just outside of Philadelphia and there was Porsche + Audi's Special Vehicles Manager Josef Hoppen.

"I asked his crew if they wanted to try and build him a car," reported Hoppen. "And, when they said 'yes,' I ordered one of those kits shipped to Atlanta."

On Thursday afternoon Hoppen and several other Porsche factory officials watched as the crates unloaded



what everybody hoped would be a running 924 DP machine by Saturday.

Those hopes were factored on the stamina of Brennan's band of merry

men and their friends on the other 924 teams present at Atlanta. In something which approached time-lapse photography, the unpainted 924 tub grew through the night and the next day into a duplicate of the team's original racer. By 3 p.m. Friday, the 924 was on its own wheels for the first time. By 5:30 p.m. the crew was on pit lane as Brennan took his exploratory laps. By 7 p.m. the car was at the bodyshop being sprayed black. And by midnight it was back at the track garage ready for a final alignment and other minor adjustments.

When Brennan buckled up Satur-



day afternoon, his mount was in every way the equal of the car he had brought down to the CSPRRC, a fact proven not only by his eventual fourth-place finish but by his wistful comment afterward on what might have been. "I think I could have won," said he, "if I didn't have to start from the rear of the field."

But, winning would not have changed the record Brennan and the Herman + Miller crew achieved in building a complete racing car in a single day—an exercise which even the Porsche factory admits should take a minimum of two weeks. It was truly the stuff of legends. **-Bill Oursler**



Larry Griffith Photos

# Fast in the Porsche Lane

By Tom Davey

**R**eaders of *SPORTS CAR*® need no introduction to Tom Davey. His words in this magazine are testimony to his skills as an author, while his on-track achievements in Formula Ford, Vee and Super Vee have earned him respect as one of the best drivers in the SCCA.

This year, in addition to his single-seater, Davey turned to what he likes to call "doorhandle cars," a GT3 VW Scirocco which he muscled to three National victories in a five-week period to garner a Road Atlanta berth. With these credentials, we felt he was the ideal choice to try out Al Holbert's Porsche 924 D Production contender at Road Atlanta. What follows, in the inimitable Davey style, is his account of that first meeting. -Ed.

"Tom, I trust you'll take good care of it. It's the only one we have."

Those words of encouragement from Al Holbert rang clearly as I strapped myself into the deep blue and yellow 924.

Page 34 Sports Car

Holbert seemed calm about my "hands on" test around Road Atlanta of Doc Bundy's Northeast Division DP title-winning coupe and, I suppose, so was I. As for Bundy—whose chance at winning the National Championship depended on my preserving his equipment—I couldn't say.

It took no time at all to get comfortable in the superbly clean, no-nonsense cockpit—although it was necessary to fit an official Gainesville Holiday Inn pillow, making up for the 6-inch height difference between Bundy and me.

Just before firing up, I asked Holbert to put a mark on the tach where he wanted me to shift. He smiled gently: "Don't worry, there's enough time before it gets to 7500 rpm. Overrevving isn't a problem."

He was right.

Pulling out of the pits, the pickup was more gradual than neck-snapping, owing perhaps to the long gears in-

stalled for the endless Road Atlanta straight and the basic characteristics of the long-stroke 924 motor.

What the 924 lacked in raw acceleration, however, it more than made up with smooth, predictable handling.

My first impression was just how "non-physical" this 924 is to drive. There is no arm-flinging or gear-banging. As a matter of fact, the car is so pleasant my biggest fear was it would lull me into forgetting just how fast I was actually going.

This excellent handling is the product of some hard work by the Holbert Porsche + Audi team. When the car arrived from Germany it was fitted with 1000-lb. front and 1200-lb. rear springs in order to control roll and eliminate bottoming. Each time the team tested, the springs were softened—eventually arriving at a setup of 350 front and 280 rear. They also added a 1¼-inch front sway bar and gave the suspension more travel. The result is not only neutral

handling but a ride that's amazingly smooth for a race car.

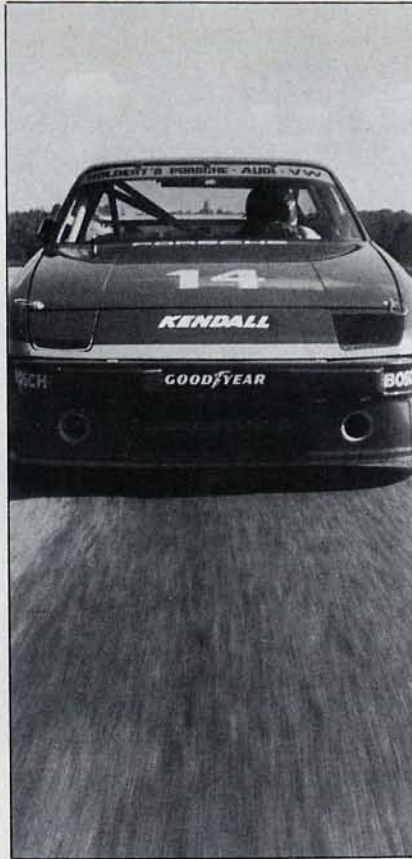
After warming the motor and familiarizing myself with the unusual five-speed shift pattern, I picked up the pace around the hilly Georgia circuit.

Rushing into Turn One I down-shifted from fifth to fourth, touched the brakes and pitched the car toward the apex. "Damn," I thought. "A foot too wide." (One characteristic of front engine cars is you must lead them into turns more than their rear or mid-engine counterparts.) Even so, the car took an immediate set and plunged up the hill just fine.

At Turn Three it's down into third and a quick flick of the steering wheel which sends the car to the right, just nicking the curbing. Another flick sends it back to the left and set for the esses. I found it a good idea to crowd the left entering the esses as the car has a tendency to both roll a bit and eat up road at a very fast rate through the esses themselves.

Even with this sliding, the esses can be taken flat out without any problem. At Turn Five I braked hard. Like most "door-cars," the 924 requires quite a bit of pedal pressure to make it stop. But once you do push, the brakes are excellent.

In deference to Al Holbert, I kept the car off the curbing through Five, but I am sure it's the quick way through. Out of



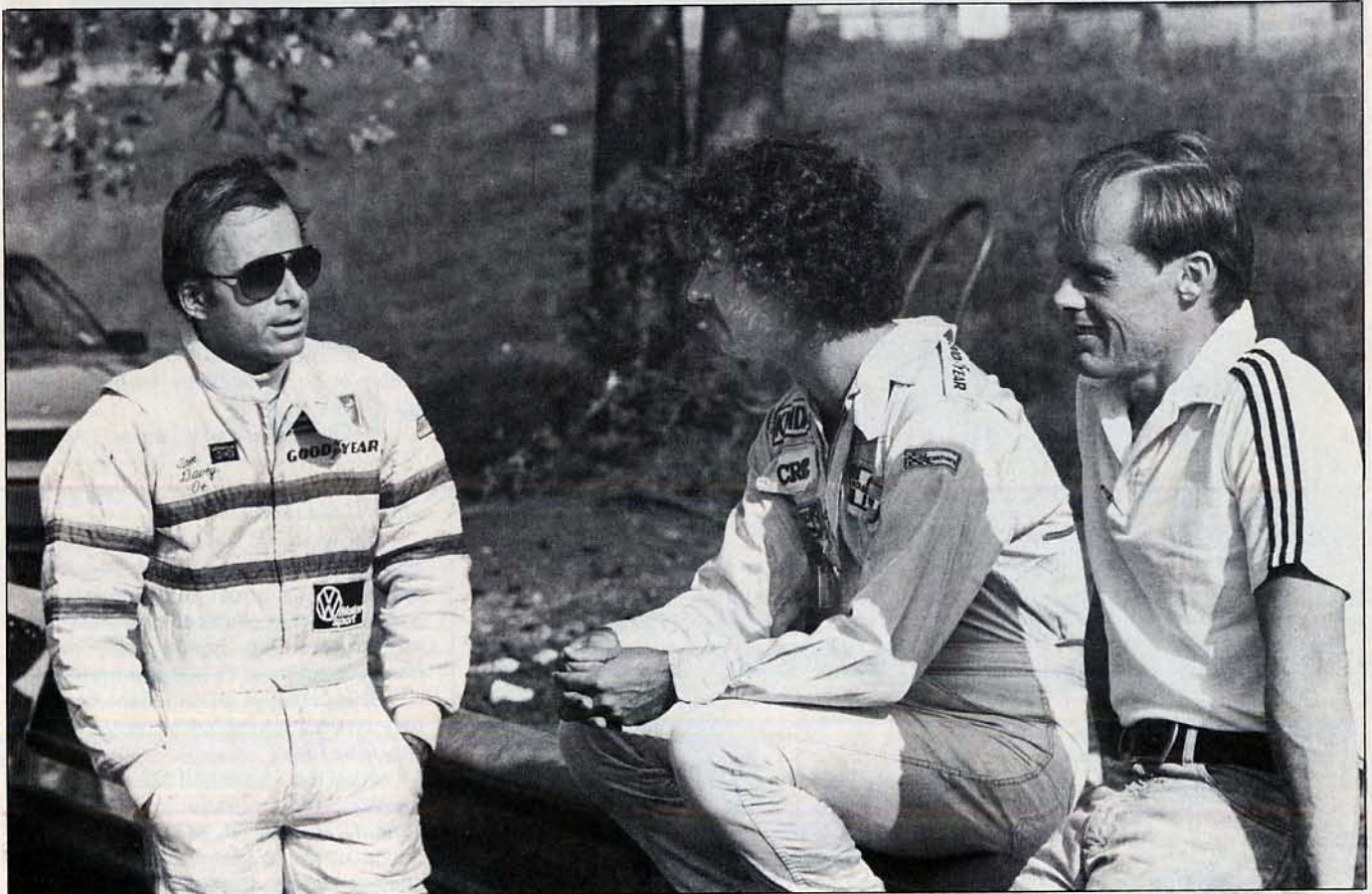
*Davey writing furiously....*

Five, it's up to fourth gear, which you hold right through Turn Six. Here the car also slides quite a bit, but it's most predictable and causes no difficulty.

You then brake hard for the slow Turn Seven—the tight right-hander leading onto the main straight. Here is the spot on the course where the car itself caused a bit of a problem: Bundy had warned me the second to third up-shift is a tough one—especially under cornering loads. (In fact, some drivers have installed a first gear lock-out to avoid trouble.) Therefore, I decided to chug through the turn in third rather than risk an embarrassing missed shift. (More about this later!)

The mile-long Road Atlanta straight seemed even longer in the 924 than it does in a Formula Ford, but that's probably because I wasn't used to driving it without a half-dozen or so of my "friends" buzzing alongside.

Just before the dip, the tach reads 7300. As you enter it, the needle jumps to 7800, which works out to a very impressive 144mph. You must brake very hard just past the first white line at the bridge. Bundy says you can take this turn in either third or fourth gear, but I opted for the more conservative fourth because of my unfamiliarity with the gearbox. Again, my lack of experience in front engine cars caused me to go wider under the bridge than I had wished, but

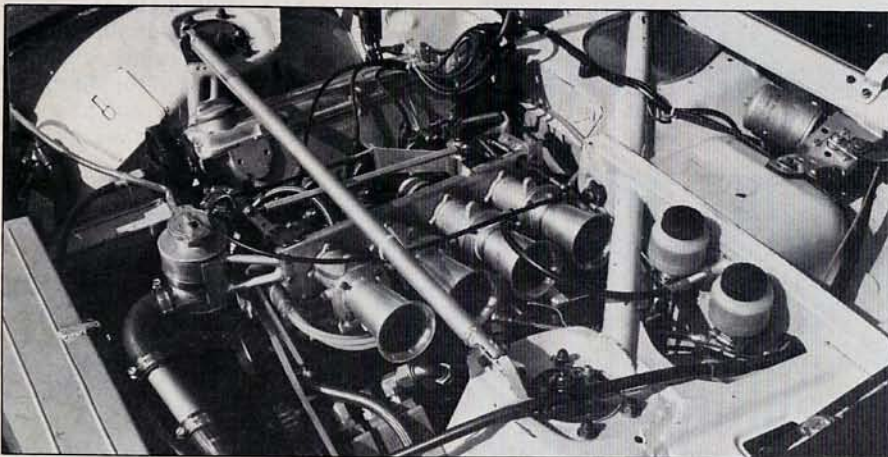


*Davey, Bundy and Holbert talk seriously: "Sorry about the nine thou!"*

## Porsche Lane



Larry Griffith Photos



Our scribe wants more!

again the car slid predictably causing no great excitement. Then it was down through Turn 11 which is taken flat out in fourth. Finally the shift to fifth just past start/finish, the lap complete. With Bundy at the wheel, it takes about a minute and 35 seconds—most impressive for a D Production car.

After cruising around for a while, I decided to try for a couple of fast laps—which forced me to go for the hard-to-find second gear entering Turn Seven.

Brrrapp!

Nope, that's not it...

I, too, had blown the shift. The tell-tale glared back: "9000." I considered reaching behind the dash to quietly reset the needle, but then remembered when you are on a circuit all by yourself, the folks in the pits can hear your every indiscretion. Sheepishly I trundled into pit lane.

"Nine thousand?" asked Holbert. "Don't worry about it. The motor can take it." Bundy didn't look all that worried either. I felt better.

All in all, I'd have to conclude that the D Production race car very much resembles its street-going counterpart. It is not outrageous, it doesn't have gobs of fire-breathing horsepower, and it doesn't lend itself to wild powerslides.

It is, simply, an excellent handling race car that lets you drive very fast with very little fuss.

Now that I have had a taste of racing the 924, though, I must confess I'd like more. Now what I'd *really* like to get my hands on is one of those new C Production turbos. When you get one, Al, will you let me know? Promise I won't hit 9000...!



## Two-Way Proposition

An Interview With Josef Hoppen

By William Hassell

**T**he smile can be deceptive. Behind the joviality and unruffled politeness, Josef Hoppen possesses one of the shrewdest—and perhaps most successful—minds in the motor sports industry.

Hoppen, the manager of Volkswagen of America's Special Vehicles Department, is responsible not only for VW's competition interests but those of Porsche and Audi as well. During his tenure, he has guided the 917 Can-Am and endurance programs, helped make American GT racing among the strongest in the world, watched the blossoming of

*Formula Vee and almost single-handedly created Formula Super Vee. Perhaps, though, no project has ever borne the Hoppen stamp more clearly than the current Sports Car Club of America D Production 924 Porsche coupe, a car which from concept to reality was an offspring of the Hoppen mind.*

"When our marketing people came to me in late 1977 with a desire to give the 924 a racing heritage similar to previous Porsches, I was intrigued. I saw an opportunity to achieve several goals in a single stroke. First, of course, was the car itself; I knew that because the

international endurance regulations were not scheduled to change until 1982, there probably would be no factory-produced competition version for sale until then. By starting the program here, we would fill that gap, get a jump on what would be the factory's first-line GT entry for the 1980s and reap the subsequent publicity. In return, the factory's engineers would receive a large amount of practical data and experience which could be applied to their car when it was produced.

"More importantly, I felt we could broaden Porsche's American motor

## Josef Hoppen

sports base by bringing in new people—those who found our 935 turbos out of their financial reach, but who could perhaps afford an SCCA National Championship version of a 924."

To Hoppen, the SCCA's top Club racing program was tailor-made for the 924 because it combined a single set of nationwide rules and a championship finale at Road Atlanta with a series of regionalized events. The package maximizes local sponsorship and promotional opportunities while sharply reducing travel costs to the potential competitor.

"The CRC Trans-Am, or its equivalent, is a place for touring professionals, but not for someone like one of our Porsche + Audi dealers who is, after all, a local businessman. To me, having one of our dealers race a 924 was important because it demonstrated faith in that product to his potential buyers. Competition on the National level focuses an entrant's efforts, while at the same time keeping the prestige of what ultimately is a coast to coast motor sports activity."

*Elucidating the rationale is one thing; translating it into reality is quite another matter as Hoppen discovered during the early months of 1978.*

"The problem was this: The Porsche factory had never before built a car specifically for the SCCA and its club racing division. There was considerable resistance, as you might expect, on the part of those used to creating machinery that could be used the world over. I had some hard selling to do, but I was able to convince both the executives at Porsche + Audi here and the men at the Weissach factory that SCCA was the way to go."

*Complicating Hoppen's position was the decision to market the SCCA racer as a kit car, a move designed to trim costs to the consumer.*

"Since we found that most SCCA club entrants are fully capable of building—rather than simply assembling—a race car, we felt justified in offering a kit so complete that the task of putting it together would be no greater than the annual season-beginning rebuild practiced by most SCCA participants."

*Hoppen saw in the kit concept a flexibility unobtainable any other way.*

"It gave the purchaser a wide range of choices. He could have the car assembled for him either by the factory or someone in the states. He could also purchase the unassembled package and do it himself. And, as the kit is modular in nature, he could choose to buy only those parts he wanted, supplying the rest from his own resources."

*By the fall of 1978, Hoppen's plan was accepted. Still, if he thought the hard part was in getting his logic adopted, he soon found out otherwise.*

"Keep in mind the Porsche factory



Stan Clinton

was used to building the ultimate. Now they were being asked to pull back a bit. There were difficulties."

*An example of this was the enforced redesign of the 924's suspension following a visit during the winter of 1979 by SCCA technical personnel who adjudged the original beyond the dictates of the rules book.*

*Various but normal developmental problems kept the prototype in Germany until the late summer when it was sent to Holbert Racing in Pennsylvania for further testing.*

"We were naturally disappointed that 1979 was such a late year for us, but we felt we should go ahead with our plans to enter the CSPRRC, showing the SCCA exactly where the D Production 924 stood. We didn't want any rumors; we wanted to have them see it for themselves. To Porsche + Audi, the 924 project was a two-way proposition. Not only did we want the car to gain a new image, but we wanted the company's participation to enlarge the public's view of the SCCA. In order to achieve this goal, however, we needed communication. That's why we were at Road Atlanta in 1979."

*With Tom Brennan—in a car fielded by the Herman + Miller Porsche + Audi dealership—joining the Holbert Weissach 924 driven by Tom Robertson, the*

*Road Atlanta results demonstrated a need for more development. Which, during 1980, is precisely what occurred.*

"We, I think, showed during this period our commitment to the 924 program in terms of parts, contingency money and advice from the factory. It has paid off for us. Next season we're going to increase our support in D Production not only with the dealer teams but with private entrants."

*Hoppen's comments, following a year in which the 924s achieved 15 National victories and one D Production Divisional crown, lead to the question of Porsche + Audi's 1981 plans for the 924.*

"There are many ways we can go. But I think it's safe to say we'll see a turbo in the SCCA before we go back to Atlanta. As of now, we're definitely preparing to enter C Production with a 924 turbo and it's my belief a Trans-Am version would be the next logical step. How many teams might be running 924 turbos and where, is, at this point, still speculation. But there's no question we'll expand our horizons for the 924 during this next year."

*Whatever the 1981 season does bring, the one certainty is the 924 will be there. So too will Hoppen. With a combination like that, can even larger success be far behind?*

## 924's Tackle Champion Spark Plug Classic

The true test of Porsche's D Production-class kit car concept came, of course, at Road Atlanta's Champion Spark Plug Classic, the week-long end-of-season showdown between the best amateur racers in the country. As it turned out, the DP show on Saturday, Oct. 25, which featured a Porsche-Triumph-Lotus-Datsun shootout, was one of the weekend's most spectacular... Harry "Doc" Bundy, the racing school instructor and Porsche 924-shod Northeast Division DP champion, emerged the victor after a thrilling race-long battle with Missouri's Dennis Wilson (Triumph), who in turn fended off the late advances of Lee Mueller (also in a Triumph).

If the race for the lead wasn't enough, there was high drama back in the pack as Tom Brennan, the 1978 DP Champion, started his rebuilt 924 (see sidebar, Page 33) at the back and stormed through the 24-car field to wind up a creditable fourth.

Bundy, whose margin of victory was slightly over two seconds, nabbed the race fastest lap on the very last of the 18 go-rounds. The record completed a clean sweep of the affair at the twisting 2.52-mile road course for the Holbert Porsche + Audi team as Bundy had also started from pole position.

All eight of the 924 coupes which attempted to qualify for this year's championship did so. Below is how each fared:



**#14**  
**Entrant**  
 Holbert Porsche + Audi  
**Driver**  
 Harry E. "Doc" Bundy;  
 Flowery Branch, Ga.  
**Qualified**  
 First (Time: 1:35.091)  
**Finished** ..... First

### Comments

Scored six wins on route to Northeast Division first place; led laps 4-8, 15-18; race fastest lap (1:35.280) on lap 18.



**#98**  
**Entrant**  
 Porsche + Audi North-  
 west/Continental P + A  
**Driver**  
 Mike Fisher; Portland,  
 Ore.  
**Qualified**  
 16th (Time: 1:39.729)  
**Finished** ..... 12th

### Comments

Late start to season, scored one victory, finished second in Northern Pacific Division.



**#54**  
**Entrant**  
 Herman Miller P + A  
**Driver**  
 Tom Brennan; Danville, Ill.  
**Qualified**  
 15th (Time: 1:39.550).  
 Started 24th with new  
 machine.  
**Finished** ..... fourth

### Comments

Three victories on route to second in Central Division standings; marvelous charge from 24th on grid: Was 11th lap three, seventh lap six, fifth lap eight, fourth lap 11 and finished just 19 seconds behind leaders.



**#10**  
**Entrant**  
 Apollo Pastics  
**Driver**  
 Stefan Edlis; Chicago, Ill.  
**Qualified**  
 20th (Time: 1:41.307)  
**Finished** .. 15th (one lap  
 behind)

### Comments

Scored one victory; finished fourth in Central Division.



**#93**  
**Entrant**  
 Hagestad Porsche + Audi  
**Driver**  
 Bob Hagestad; Littleton,  
 Colo.  
**Qualified**  
 14th (Time: 1:39.248)  
**Finished** ..... seventh

### Comments

Scored two victories on route to second in Midwest Division; had own tough battle at CSPRRC with Bob Griffith (Triumph), Jim Brown (Lotus) and Bill Swan (Datsun).



**#55**  
**Entrant**  
 Heishman Porsche +  
 Audi  
**Driver**  
 Steve Pieper; Herndon, Va.  
**Qualified**  
 19th (Time: 1:40.980)  
**Finished** ..... DNF (me-  
 chanical)

### Comments

First year of production car racing for former single-seat machine pilot; finished third in Northeast Division.



**#24**  
**Entrant**  
 Alan Johnson Porsche +  
 Audi  
**Driver**  
 Alan Johnson, Del Mar,  
 Calif.  
**Qualified**  
 11th (Time: 1:38.475)  
**Finished** ..... 10th

### Comments

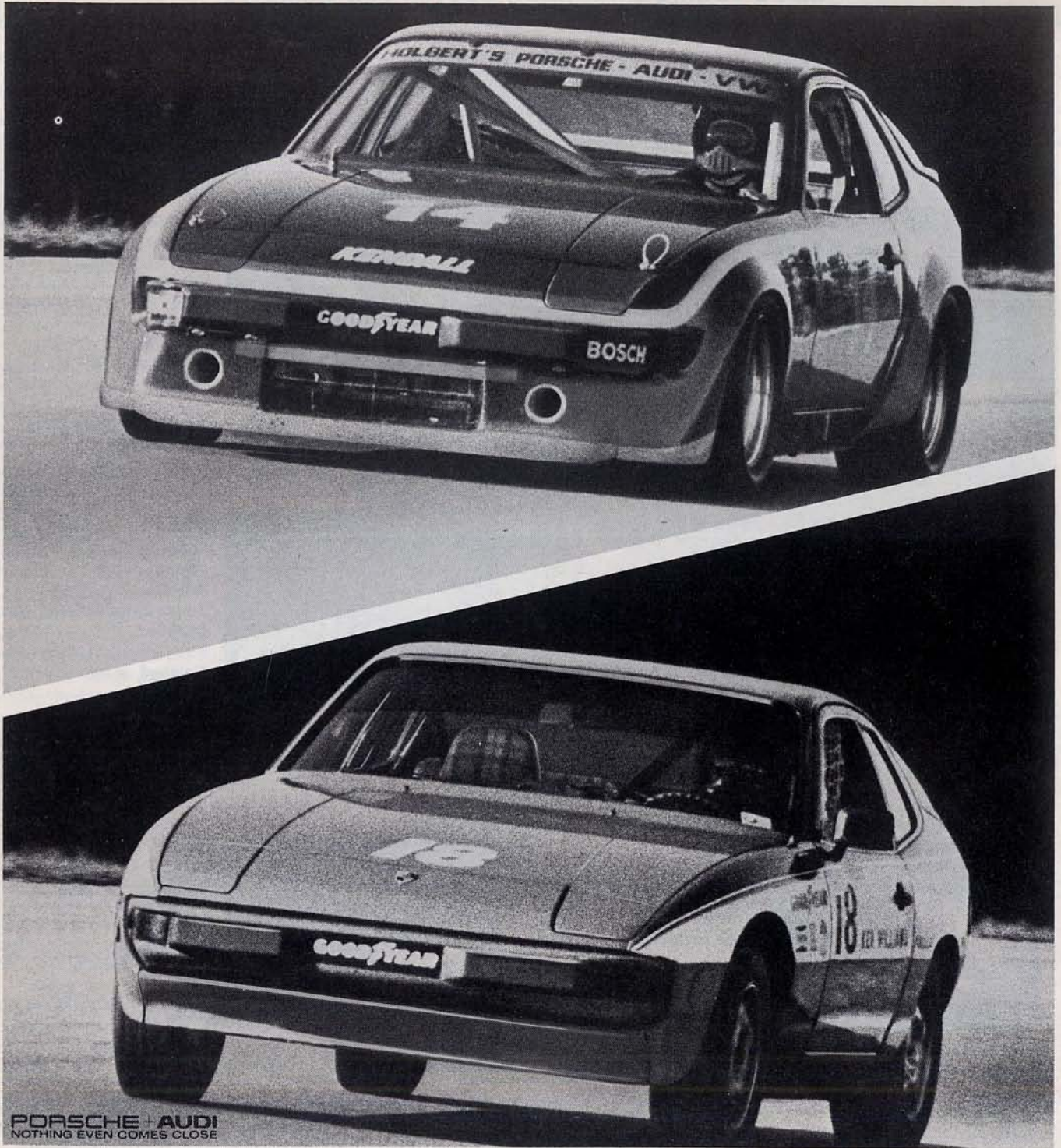
Used teammate LaCava's back-up 924 to score two victories in Southern Pacific Division title chase.



**#39**  
**Entrant**  
 Alan Johnson Porsche +  
 Audi  
**Driver**  
 Greg LaCava; Malibu,  
 Calif.  
**Qualified**  
 12th (Time: 1:38.940)  
**Finished** DNF (accident)

### Comments

Finished third in Southern Pacific Division.



PORSCHE + AUDI  
NOTHING EVEN COMES CLOSE

# The road to the top. Porsche 924

The Porsche 924 just distinguished itself at one of the most important sportscar events in the country. Not once, but twice. October 25 the 924 drove away with two victories at the SCCA National Championship Runoffs at Road Atlanta. Nothing even came close to driver Doc Bundy in the D-Production division. And driver Ken Williams helped keep Porsche in the record business with a thrilling victory in the Showroom Stock A 924. But then, it takes a racing classic to win a racing classic. And that's exactly what the Porsche 924 is proving to be. But you don't need a racetrack to prove this car is way ahead of the others. Just go to your Porsche Audi dealer for a test drive. With the 924, we've maintained a wonderful old tradition. Winning. And we don't mind repeating ourselves.