



Clear the Ring

*Porsche test driver Timo Kluck
and the 911 Carrera S are a strong team.
On the North Loop of the Nürburgring,
they both regularly push the envelope.
New record drive: 7 minutes and 37.9 seconds.*

By Holger Eckhardt **Photos by** Andreas Hempel





"You can never lose your respect for this extraordinary track just because you've done a few laps here. That can be fatal."



Timo Kluck (40) has been a test driver for Porsche for 12 years. He's done at least 6,000 laps on the North Loop

The Brännchen section:
During 24-hour races,
over 20,000 spectators
watch from here

The impish grin was there just a minute ago. Now, however, Timo Kluck's face is the picture of concentration. The Porsche tire-development test driver at the wheel of the red 911 Carrera S is about to undertake a daunting challenge: to run a perfect lap on the North Loop of the Nürburgring, merely the dream of sports car drivers the world over. The 20.8-kilometer-long, undulating asphalt ribbon through the Eifel region around the city of Adenau is legendary. Hatzenbach, Schwedenkreuz, or Galgenkopf—fans recite the names of the sections of track like a mantra.

Timo Kluck was born quite near here 40 years ago. He's an "Eifel boy," as he calls himself. Since the year 2000 he has been working for Porsche as a "wheel and tire technician," as it's officially called—a rather inadequate description of what takes place when Timo Kluck is plying his "technician's" trade. He leads a life at the limits, and not infrequently beyond them. For 200 days a year, racetracks all around the world are his home. However, despite the great sacrifices this means for his family life, it is quite simply his dream job.

The Nürburgring plays a special role in it. Here is where he had his first, definitive contact with Porsche as a young boy—at the presentation of that technological wonder, the 959. Today he can look back on more than 6,000 laps on the North Loop. He is a bona fide member of the rarefied club of Nürburgring pros. And yet he





The 911 in the Karussell:
The joints in the concrete bowl punish
man and machine

says: “You can never lose your respect for this extraordinary track just because you’ve done a few laps here. That can be fatal.” Indeed, the “Green Hell” is regarded as the most dangerous racetrack in the world. Those whose experience is limited to video game consoles have never known that feeling of lightness at the crest of Quiddelbacher Höhe. They have never felt their stomachs drop down into their toes in the Fuchsröhre compression or what it feels like when the joints in the concrete cauldron of the Karussell pound away at your backbone.



Seven minutes and 40 seconds is the official lap time for the 911 Carrera S with an optimal setup. The red Coupé has all the prerequisites: It has the 20 millimeter low-

er PASM (Porsche Active Suspension Management) sports chassis with an additional larger front spoiler lip. For its part, the rear spoiler extends outwards at a steeper angle. Porsche Dynamic Chassis Control (PDCC) ensures the greatest possible tire contact area by keeping body roll in corners to a minimum. The Porsche Ceramic Composite Brake (PCCB) lowers the unsprung weight and guarantees maximum robustness. The seven-speed Porsche double-clutch transmission with electronically controlled differential lock and the Sport Chrono package plus rocker switch on the steering wheel complete the driving dynamics setup.

But now it’s time to “torch the lab coat,” as Kluck puts it. Translation: It’s time to forget everything else around him, tune out completely. The tactic is simple: “I get in

and floor it.” But the execution is not without its challenges. Kluck: “There are a lot of difficult fast passages, for example, the approach to the corner after the crest on Flugplatz. A similar situation awaits you 500 meters later, behind the lip on Schwedenkreuz—just incomparably faster at around 250 km/h [155 mph]. If you brake too quickly going into the left turn and don’t wait till the car has absorbed the compression, you’re in trouble. The Fuchsröhre demands the utmost concentration, and pushes the chassis to the max. Then come Metzgesfeld, Wehrseifen, Wippermann, Pflanzgarten II. The North Loop has a few stretches that can really scare you.”

The 911 motors away along Döttinger Höhe, the slightly uphill straightaway. In his fast lap, Kluck will hit

speeds of up to 276 km/h (170 mph) here. This is just a warm-up—he has to get the series tires up to operating temperature. The front wheels, in particular, have to have optimal grip in the first section of the course with its numerous changes of direction. “The great advantage of the new Carrera is its almost stoic composure. But that only makes it easier at first glance,” says Kluck. “You have to bear in mind that the new 911 is 14 seconds faster than its predecessor on the North Loop. It’s pushing GT3 acceleration times. You have to be able to handle that as a driver. It’s a real challenge.”

Everything goes to plan on the course; Kluck floors it. A clean line without hectic movements, precise cornering without notable corrections—the video documentation



Timo Kluck (l.)
talks with his role model
Walter Röhrl

shows a composed picture. A glance at the speeds on the speedometer, however, reveals a different reality: The test driver is driving at the absolute limit. “The line between the right amount of aggressiveness behind the wheel and overtaking the car is very thin, he says. “It’s not like in a race car with slicks—a road tire has to be able to do a lot more. And it suffers more, too. Every unnecessary steering angle stresses the tires and unsettles the car.”



One interested observer is Walter Röhrl. He was the one who supported Kluck when he wanted to come to Porsche. And he is Kluck’s role model. “Walter still times every lap and then we talk about it afterwards—and about the car, too,” says Kluck. Röhrl watches as the

Carrera flies past. Shortly thereafter, a voice from the car declares: “Seven minutes and 37.9 seconds. That was it!” Kluck has bested the official time by over two seconds. When the test driver steps out of the still-humming car, moments later, the impish grin is back. ●

911 CARRERA S (TYPE 991)

Engine: Six-cylinder boxer

Displacement: 3,800 cc

Power: 400 hp (294 kW)

Maximum torque: 440 Nm at 5,600 rpm

0–100 km/h: 4.5 (4.3*) sec.

Top track speed: 304 (302*) km/h (189/188* mph)

CO₂ emissions: 224 (205*) g/km

Fuel consumption

City: 13.8 (12.2*) l/100 km

Highway: 7.1 (6.7*) l/100 km

Combined: 9.5 (8.7*) l/100 km

* with Porsche double-clutch transmission (PDK)