

ELECTRONICALLY REPRINTED FROM MARCH 2006

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A tale of two Turbos

✦ by Tim McKinney
photography by the author

Turbo

John Fanelli knew what he wanted. “You want something thrilling,” Fanelli said, “and I’ve always had Porsches.” A new 2004 996 Twin Turbo seemed just the place to start. A couple of years earlier, Jeff Romano had thought he knew what he wanted, just a “regular” Carrera. That lasted three weeks. A new 2002 GT2 had appeared on the showroom floor at Jack Daniels Porsche in Fairlawn, N.J., and Romano was totally captivated. “I like the limited production models,” he admitted. “I have a little car collection and just couldn’t resist.” Little did he realize what a siren song the silver Porsche would sing.



Both Fanelli and Romano enjoy exploring their cars—and their own—limits on the track. The pair have been especially dedicated over the past two years, attending numerous PCA and Performance Drivers Association events and becoming track buddies along the way. Said Fanelli: “The track time is a fantastic idea, you learn a lot of discipline and not to speed on the street. It’s a thrilling hobby.” Think of accelerating up through The Esses and on the back straight at Watkins Glen or feeling the front end get light as you crest the Uphill and head into West Bend at Lime Rock. It’s a good thought... and in a turbocharged Porsche, definitely a thrilling experience.

Filling the void left by the Carrera, Romano purchased a normally aspirated GT3 as a track car and contented himself with installing the factory carbon fiber interior trim kit, wing and mirrors for the GT2. “Having spent so much money, I didn’t take the GT2 to the track events,” he said. “I was worried about damaging it. Driving the GT3 I became comfortable with the PDA group. Then about six months ago I took the GT2 to the track and fell in love with it. The car is phenomenal; my lap times are unbelievable.”

A trip to PES for some equal-length headers, billet bypass valves, Fabspeed exhaust and GIAC programming raised the flat six’s output to 603 bhp and 603 lb-ft of torque. Already factory equipped with Porsche Ceramic Composite Brakes, a coilover suspension by H&R and KKK K24 turbos, there

was little left to improve in this thinly disguised racecar. Although, with speeds at places like Watkins Glen running well into triple digits, Romano did install a factory Tequipment roll bar. A B&M short-shifter makes grabbing gears that much more enjoyable. And don’t forget the stunning, one-piece Type 1 forged wheels from Brandywine Porsche. The 8x19-inch front wheels weigh only 15 pounds, while the

2004 PORSCHE 911 TURBO

DRIVETRAIN

Longitudinal rear engine, all-wheel drive

ENGINE

3.6-liter flat six, dohc, four valves per cylinder, turbocharged and inter-cooled

PES 640GT turbo system (custom-built Garrett GT turbochargers installed in KKK housing w/custom wastegate actuator) ported and polished cylinder heads Fabspeed exhaust w/ PES equal-length headers, PES billet bypass valves, GIAC software Sachs clutch w/ solid billet flywheel

SUSPENSION

KW Variant 3 coilovers, Eibach anti-roll bars

BRAKES

Brembo GT assemblies

WHEELS AND TIRES

PES GP7, 8x19 (f) 11x19 (r)

Pirelli P Zero Rosso, 235/35-19 (f) 305/30-19(r)

EXTERIOR

FVD front spoiler, TechArt side skirts, intake splitters, rear decklid

INTERIOR

Tequipment rollbar, GT3 seats, Sparco five-point harness, B&M short shifter w/ EVO quick shift linkage, hot lap timer

PERFORMANCE

Peak Power: 640 bhp
Peak Torque: 620 lb-ft



12x19-inch rears tip the scales at only 18 pounds.

Fanelli, on the other hand, had big plans for his new Turbo despite its awesome performance right off the Jack Daniels showroom floor. Shortly after he took delivery, the Guards Red Turbo was fitted with a PES stage four kit (similar to GT2 mods and upgrading to K24 turbos), boosting power to 605 bhp. Next up was an adjustable KW Variant 3 remote reservoir coilover suspension augmented with Eibach sway bars and a set of lightweight 19-inch PES GP7 forged wheels. Brembo Gran Turismo brakes with four-piston calipers and 15-inch front rotors are clearly visible behind the 8-inch-wide, 17-pound fronts and 11-inch, 22-pound rears. “I use the car mostly at the track and all the modifications were geared for the higher horsepower and speeds,” said Fanelli.

But there always seems to be room for more and the Turbo soon returned to PES to be fitted with

their 640GT turbo system. The heads were pulled, ported and polished by Headgames Motorsport for optimal flow, but the heart of the system is PES’ hybrid (and to some no doubt heretical) turbo. The KKK K24 housing bolts up to the Turbo’s special sumps and requires no special fittings, piping or flanges—and has plenty of extra material for a properly trained and imaginative machinist to play with. Machining that can make plenty of room available for the custom Garrett dual-ball-bearing insert that not only flows better but spools up more quickly than a stock K24. A GIAC Flash Loader Software Switcher allows Fanelli to quickly switch from the 640-bhp (620 lb-ft) pump gas programming to the 740-bhp (700 lb-ft) race gas setting. PES also installed a Sachs GT-1 clutch along with a lightweight billet flywheel to handle the extra power.

The Turbo’s black interior is brightened considerably by the red-and-black GT3 seats Fanelli installed (along with matching U2 Edition



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iPod) while the Sparco five-point belts and Tequipment rollbar leave no doubt as to the purposeful nature of the car. If the B&M short-shifter with EVO quick shift linkage shaves a few hundredths off a lap, the hot lap timer mounted on the rollbar will tell the tale. Outside, more Guards Red covers the aggressive FVD front spoiler and TechArt side skirts, intake splitters and rear diffusers. "There's no place I go that this car doesn't attract attention," Fanelli said.

Plunking his money down on a rare, lightweight special more race than street (even he admits it's a hard-riding "stripper"), Romano never expected the GT2 to see much use, let alone any track time. But the joys of an advantageous power-to-weight ratio have overcome any collector reluctance and he speaks in glowing terms about

2002 PORSCHE GT2

DRIVETRAIN

Longitudinal rear engine, rear-wheel drive

ENGINE

3.6-liter flat six, dohc, four valves per cylinder, turbocharged and inter-cooled
 PES stage four upgrade, Fabspeed exhaust w/ PES equal-length headers, PES billet bypass valves, GIAC software, BMC Air filter

SUSPENSION

H&R coilovers

BRAKES

Porsche Ceramic Composite Brakes

WHEELS AND TIRES

Brandywine Type 1 forged alloy
 8x19 (f), 12x19 (r)
 Pirelli P Zero Rosso, 235/35-19 (f)
 305/30-19 (r)

EXTERIOR

Porsche carbon-fiber wing, carbon-fiber mirrors

INTERIOR

Tequipment Rollbar, B&M short shifter, full carbon-fiber interior trim

PERFORMANCE

Peak Power: 603 bhp
 Peak Torque: 603 lb-ft

the car's personality and performance at the track. "It's rear-wheel-drive, there's no traction control, no stability control, no nothing. The GT2 is a little more challenging to drive fast than the awd car, or the new 997 with its stability control. This is more pure sports car."

On the other hand, Fanelli tried to get the best of all worlds. "The Turbo is a little more comfortable on the street than the GT2 and I like the feel of the all-wheel drive. To me, it is more stable as an all-around car. The GT2 is loose in the back with all that power, there is a little more traction with the all-wheel-drive. I have a track-worthy car with license plates. I put in the Sparco race belts and other things to feel safer at speeds of 150 mph. But even when I just get out in the car on a Sunday afternoon, it's a great stress reliever."

Six or seven hundred horsepower puts these cars in a league most of us can only dream about. Their looks alone threaten to ruin your appreciation for more pedestrian transport and their stunning acceleration will finish the

job. A quick trip in both cars did reveal different personalities despite their similarities. A couple hundred pounds lighter and rear-wheel-drive, the GT2 feels marginally livelier and more responsive than the Turbo. But there is always that little voice in the back of your head reminding you there are no modern electronic miracles ready to step in and help if your inputs are lacking. Keeping it out of the guardrail is entirely your own responsibility.

The Turbo's KW suspension is surprisingly compliant, even set up for the track and with greater creature comforts and more horsepower, is PES' Jeremy D'Avella's choice. He grew quite attached to it while planning and installing the numerous upgrades. Given a choice, D'Avella said, "I'd take the red car without a doubt. With the front wheels helping, the rear end will step out in a very controlled way. I like the all-wheel drive." ❧

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"SIX OR SEVEN HUNDRED HORSEPOWER PUTS THESE CARS IN A LEAGUE MOST OF US CAN ONLY DREAM ABOUT. THEIR LOOKS ALONE THREATEN TO RUIN YOUR APPRECIATION FOR MORE PEDESTRIAN TRANSPORT"