

1988 Audi 200 Quattro Turbo Trans-Am

THE FLYING

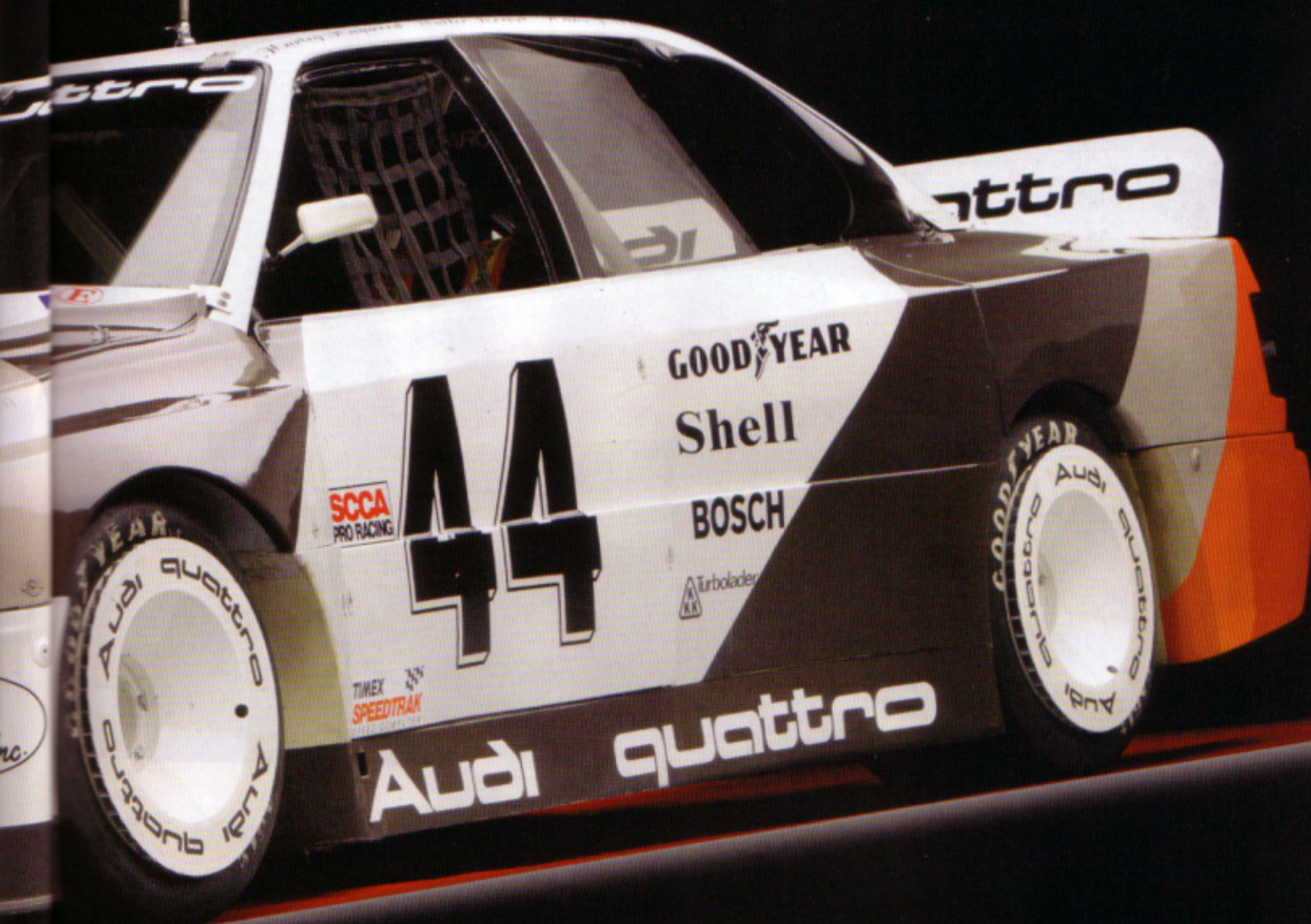
**A CASE OF FURIOUSLY
INTENDED ACCELERATION.**



› BY TED WEST

› PHOTOGRAPHY BY RON KIMBALL

FRIGIDAIRE



It was 1987 and Jo Hoppen, manager of Audi Sport North America, had a mission. The Audi "unintended acceleration" controversy was in full flower, lawsuits being flung to and fro like paper gliders. "60 Minutes" aired a segment in November, 1986, using a secretly doctored Audi 5000 to demonstrate "unintended acceleration"—and was caught red-handed. The true culprit was placing the 5000's brake pedal in almost the same plane and too close to the accelerator. But public

hysteria devoutly believed in some demonic mysterious engineering glitch nobody could find. Audi sales went from 74,061 in 1985 to 12,283 in 1991 ... and Jo Hoppen had had enough.

It was Hoppen who persuaded Porsche to enter its all-conquering Porsche 917s in the Can-Am under the Porsche-Audi banner. Now he believed that in the current unintended acceleration madness, racing could reestablish Audi engineering's good name. Towards the end of the 1987

season, he asked multiple-Le Mans-winner Hurley Haywood if he would drive a brand-new Audi 200 quattro turbo race car in the last 1987 SCCA Trans-Am at Road Atlanta. The car was an experiment in numerous ways, not least that it had all-wheel drive. Atlanta was drenched with heavy rain, Haywood remembers. "We clobbered everybody with a near-stock Audi and won easily."

So Hoppen sought Haywood's advice on a full Trans-Am campaign for 1988. Having

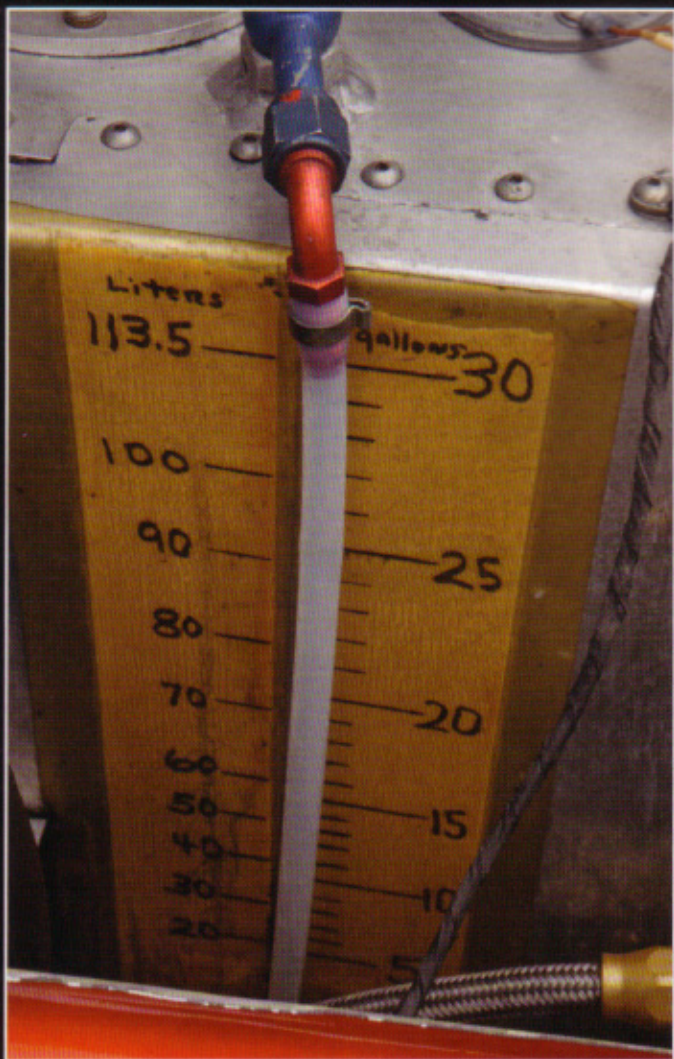
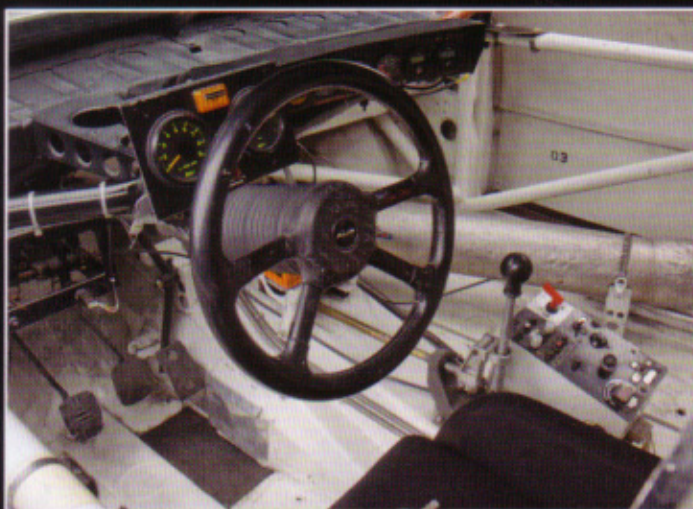


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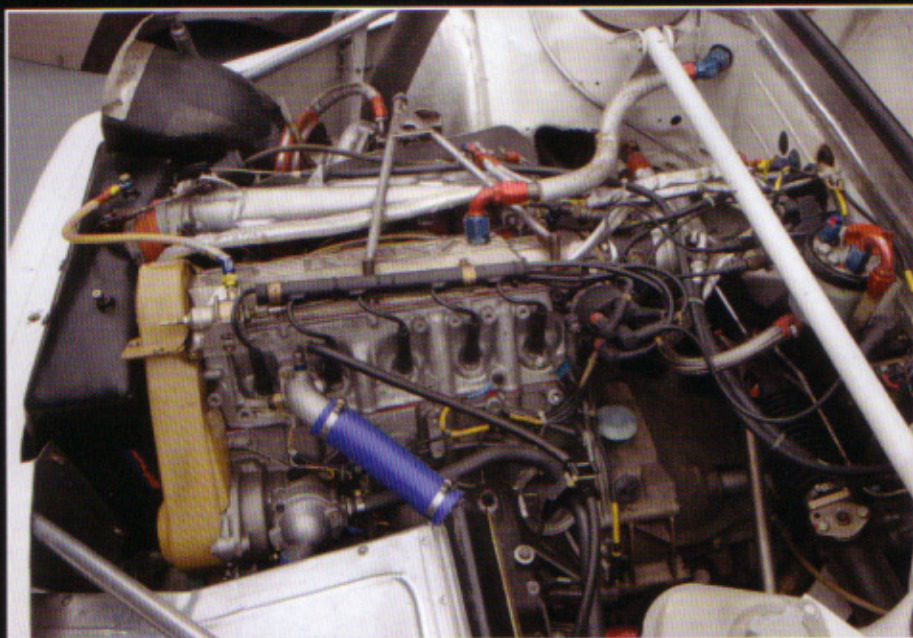


just raced a gorgeous Group 44 Jaguar XJR-7 in the 1987 IMSA GTP season for Bob Tullius, Haywood recommended Tullius to manage. Done. Leaving nothing to the imagination, Hoppen said of the Audi unintended-acceleration bloodbath, "We have something to prove, and we intend to prove it."

The Fearful Fridge

By luck, I was invited to an early Trans-Am test session of the Audi 200 quattro turbo at Road Atlanta—and at first glance, the car looked out of its depth. Surrounded by space-frame, fully race-developed Trans-Am Corvettes, Camaros, Firebirds and Mustangs, the Audi had a clunky uni-body Audi 200 four-door sedan chassis straight off the production line. It looked heavy and huge—a gynormous white object like a refrigerator laid on its side, with four overmatched drive wheels struggling against its cumbersome girth.

But at speed on the track, all trace of its unwieldiness vanished. Driven through a 6-speed transmission, its 2.1-liter turbo (dwarfed by the American V8s around it) spit out 510hp at 7500rpm (increased to 550hp during the season) and 530 lb/ft of torque at 6000 rpm, more than enough to



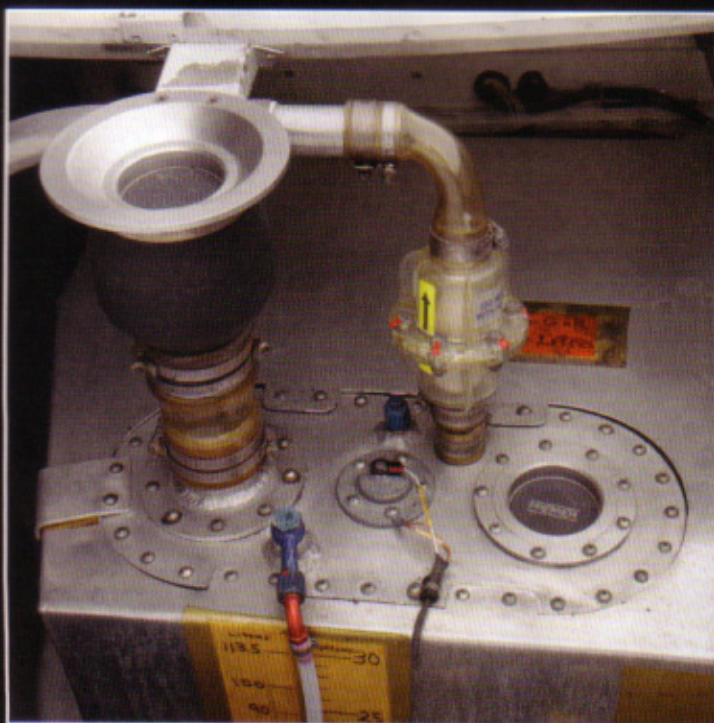
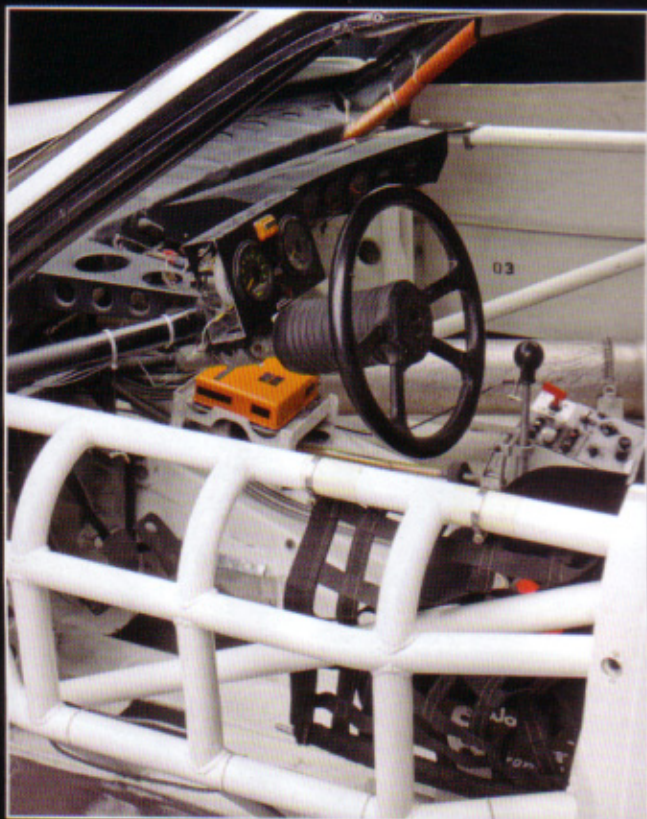
be hotly competitive. Its suspension was very close to stock—MacPherson struts in front, double wishbones at the rear. But endowed with Audi's magical Torsen permanent all-wheel drive center differential, coupled with additional front and rear differentials, the Audi had scary amounts of grip. It could race on any part

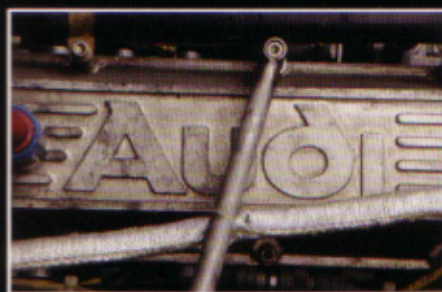
of the track and pass on the outside in turns ... rain or shine!

"When I first saw the car," Haywood says, "I was skeptical. But the minute I got into it for testing, it was wayyy cool! And we got excellent cooperation from Audi. We could be dominant dry or wet."

In fact, everyone in the effort was happy







except one—Bob Tullius. A famously “in charge” guy, he had strong notions about how things should be done. But now he found his Group 44 crew virtually shut out of the garage—Audi-Ingolstadt would handle everything. To this day, the experience rankles Tullius. But Haywood was not surprised. “There was friction, but it wasn’t personal. It’s just the German way of doing things.”

The 200 quattro’s permanent all-wheel-drive proved a revelation. “At the Dallas Trans-Am,” says Haywood, “we could go around the outside even on a street course, no problem at all.”

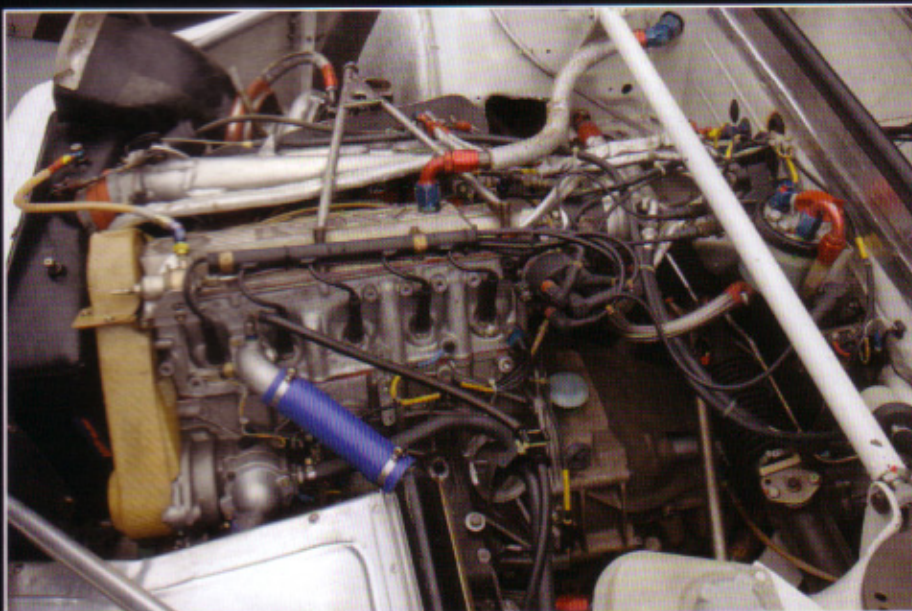
But it wasn’t simply that the car could go anywhere on the track and still have excellent grip—it had another enormous advantage. For television, 1988 Trans-Ams were hour-long sprints with no refueling stops. Everyone would rush off the grid, the Audis usually very near the front. The whole field drove at 10-tenths, fighting hard ... but after roughly halfway, as if on cue, the rear-wheel drive cars gradually slowed. Their overheated rear tires began to “go off,” overwhelmed from trying to manage half of the engine’s approximately 500hp—about 250hp per tire.





By contrast, even driving 10-tenths, the Audis' four drive wheels were asked to manage only about 125hp per tire. (The actual Audi front-to-rear drive ratio changed from millisecond to millisecond, of course, as the Torsen differential distributed thrust.) "Even with these big, heavy sedans," Haywood says, "we could manage our tires better and not overheat them. We went flat out start to finish, and bit by bit, all the rest began to fade." The Audis' advantage was so enormous, in fact, that at mid-season, SCCA began giving them 200-lb weight penalties. It made no difference at all. At the end of the 1988 season, SCCA simply outlawed all-wheel drive ... so Audi went to IMSA in 1989 with the new Audi 90 and thoroughly dominated there, too!

The fun-loving, brilliant German driver Hans Stuck was nominally the team's number one, but when Haywood finished



second at Long Beach and won at Dallas and Detroit, he became Audi's candidate for the driver's championship. "Thanks to testing, I got a jump on Hans learning to use all-wheel-drive. When I won the first couple of races, it drove him crazy—he was supposed to be the champion."

To leave nothing to chance, Audi added a third driver from time to time—the stupendous rally champion Walter Röhrl.

Audi won eight of 13 Trans-Ams and the manufacturer's championship. Winning two races and finishing high in most of the other races, Haywood drove our beautiful featured No. 44 Audi quattro turbo to the driver's championship. Today, No. 44 is owned by California's famed Blackhawk Museum—but if you really want to make news on the block, Blackhawk's precious No. 44 is for sale. They're in the book. 

