



2020 Toyota GR Supra

PART ONE: NAIAS & ARIZONA REVEALS

Modern Toyota sports coupes start with the two-seat, inline-6-cylinder 2000GT in the late '60s. A void from 1970 to 1978 was then filled by the 117-hp 1978 Celica Supra fastback; a 145-hp gen-two Supra (sans Celica) in 1982 (photo top left); then gens three and four, 1986 to 1998 in the US and a limited run just in Japan until 2002. All had an inline-6, and power pushed through the 200s, then past 300 hp, adding turbocharging along the way. A drought since then has now ended. Revealed at NAIAS in Detroit on January 14 and 80 minutes later at Barrett-Jackson (Scottsdale Police guard it, above left), the 2020 Toyota GR Supra has supercar styling and a 335-hp 3.0L turbocharged, yes, inline-6. We caught the local reveal, then stopped by again a few days later to meet with Bob Carter, executive VP of sales for Toyota Motors North America (top right), surrounded by examples of all four prior Toyota Supra generations. Later that evening, the very special car revealed here (above right) would be auctioned.

"For those of us who love cars," says Carter, "these just get your blood pumping. But the market has moved to SUVs. Well, now we're starting to see interest coming back." Toyota president Akio Toyoda (third photo at top), grandson of the company's founder, was a big factor. "This guy has more gas in his veins than I do! We have our own design studios, engineering and 15 manufacturing plants in North America, so we can take a car from a piece of paper to a showroom, completely ourselves. You don't sell lots of sports cars, and it takes as much energy to produce one as it does an SUV. But in 2012, we had our studio in Newport Beach mock up what a future Supra would look like. Akio was the first one we showed it to. He fell in love with it and said, 'let's build this car.' We took that to the auto shows as the FT-1 Concept (second image at top), and here we are. Akio approved all the engineering thresholds, then did all the testing and final tuning personally, driving the car at Nürburgring every time and signing off on development. What the engineers do is really good, but professional drivers can just push things a little more.

"The car goes into production in very late March. The very first car built glo-

bally will be serial number 20201, 2020 model year, number one. (You'll hear me call it VIN #1.) It's a one-of-one car—matte gray with red interior, matte wheels, and we'll throw some other stuff in for the auction. Akio Toyoda signed the motor. There will never be another combination like this.

"We introduced a base price of \$49,990, with Alcantara seats, performance is the same, standard audio, no nav. Premium has full leather, upgraded audio, nav, some bells and whistles. Above that, Launch Edition is top of the line."

The first 1500 US cars will be numbered Launch Editions at \$55,250, in white, black or red, with red mirror caps and 19-inch forged matte black alloys. The one-of-one #1 car is even more special and would sticker at about \$56,000.

"It fits in the territory of Porsche Cayman, BMW M2, Audi TT, or when you say Nissan, not 370Z but 370Z NISMO, at about \$47-48G. Asian sports cars up to \$50G, Europeans starting at 59. That's the class of vehicles we think people will compare with." Supra is aimed at three groups: baby boomers; typical Euro performance buyers; and younger buyers for whom the earlier Supra was their hero car. "The average buyer age is going to be 35 to 75 and everything in between. It's a halo car, a hell of a driver's car, and the handling is amazing: zero-to-60 in 4.1 seconds and laps at Nürburgring in 7:40. That's not in the P1 \$2 million car class, but a car you can buy off the showroom for \$50G.

"The core of the Supra has always been an inline-6 turbo. So very early back in 2012, when we did the first concept, we said we're not putting a V8, not putting a 4-cylinder, not putting a V6 in it. We're going to stay true to our heritage, which is an inline-6. At the time (ages ago in powertrains), we didn't have an inline-6, but BMW had one," Carter says, describing some proprietary technologies the companies traded at the time. "Akio and I love high-performance sports cars," he concludes, and with Supra "you're talking the core sports car market, \$50G. I think we're right in the heart of the market here."

PART TWO: BARRETT-JACKSON AUCTION

On Saturday, the #1 2020 Toyota GR Supra was auctioned for charity at Barrett-Jackson, raising \$2.1 million for the American Heart Association and The Bob Woodruff Foundation. Winning bidders were Jeanette and John Staluppi. ■