

TAPG's Manager Is a True Road Warrior

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As a kid growing up in Canada, Richard Woodroffe played with toy cars and dreamed of one day designing cars for an auto company. “But I didn’t know how to get there,” he says.

Woodroffe took an Automotive service-related job out of college, then got into racing, and finally landed at Toyota as a vehicle dynamics engineer. For the past 25 years, he has worked at the Toyota Arizona Proving Grounds, putting prototypes and competitor cars through their paces and developing the site for all sorts of endurance and testing. He cut his teeth on late-gen Supras – still a “halo vehicle” for the company today, he says – and then worked his way up to evaluating high-performance vehicles like the Toyota FT86 and Lexus RCF.

“I’ve seen a lot of different vehicles come through this facility, from Celicas to RCFs and LFAs, and I’ve had the opportunity to provide my feedback to the Japanese engineers on how well those cars performed in the US market at high speeds.”

As the Manager at TAPG, overseeing operations at the entire facility, Woodroffe ensures the site meets the needs of drivers testing vehicles in all conditions. Currently, the proving ground encompasses nearly 12,000 acres of land, with 60 lane miles of paved track, a 10-mile oval, a ride and handling course, and numerous high- and low-speed dirt tracks.

“When we first built the proving ground in 1993,” he recalls, “we had everything we needed. So there wasn’t a lot of expansion. Every few years, we’d find we were missing one surface or one type of road and we’d add it. In 2016 we built an 80,000-square-meter vehicle dynamics area and that was a huge contribution to the facility and a big improvement in our capabilities.”

A driver at heart who realized his childhood dream of developing autos for a living, Woodroffe spends the weekends in the most relaxing way he can – racing cars and karts.

“Kart Racing is a really good place to learn how to drive in traffic, which is a weakness of mine. So it’s great training for driving race cars.”

To watch video, click [here](#).