

# Celebrating Toyota's Sports Car Legacy

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When it comes to driving in the fast lane, Toyota knows a thing or two. In addition to its top-selling sedans, crossovers and SUVs, Toyota also boasts a mighty roster of iconic sports cars that keep customers coming back.

The company has a solid reputation for producing everyday vehicles that complement the consumer's daily lifestyle, and motorsports is embedded in its roots, too.

Throughout Toyota's more-than-60-year history, the company has had an impressive track record for manufacturing sports cars that are revved up and ready to hit the pavement.

While some may consider the 1990s as the heyday for Toyota sports cars, today they're experiencing a major boom and resurgence in popularity.

Some sports car lovers appreciate Toyota's commitment to giving them the best of both worlds: performance and accessibility.

"I think there's a lot of excitement from enthusiasts that there is a car brand out there that's making attainable sports cars that are made by enthusiasts with motorsports in their DNA," says Andrew Dodson, a GR vehicle planner at Toyota Motor North America (TMNA).

Steve Marston, a senior strategist, safety & tech at TMNA, agrees that some of the key features of Toyota's sports cars are what sets it apart.

"The manual transmission was really my thing," he says. "I love that we're still doing that."



### **An Illustrious History**

Often regarded as Japan's first true sports car, the 2000GT, which debuted in 1967, set the company on a path of innovation in the performance area.

"I believe the 2000GT helped change the perception of Japanese cars internationally," says Dodson. "With its beautiful design and high performance, it demonstrated that Japan could produce sports cars that were on par with other models."

The Toyota Supra has been another notable standout in Toyota's sports car lineup over the years.

"The Supra, particularly the fourth generation [A80] model from the 1990s, is celebrated for its iconic design, powerful 2JZ-GTE engine and incredible tuning potential," says Dodson.

He adds, "It has maintained a strong following among enthusiasts and remains a benchmark for Toyota's engineering prowess."

The 2000GT, as well as other sports cars, like those currently under the TOYOTA GAZOO Racing (GR) series, helped solidify Toyota as a formidable company within the sports car space. While these vehicles have been at the forefront of the category, Toyota is making way for new and innovative performance vehicles to continue the legacy.

### **Celebrating the Ride**

Some of the GR sports cars are showcased at the company's annual OctoberBeast, which is an employee-only annual event that's taken place for more than 32 years. Around 85 car enthusiasts within the company gather and display their own beloved vehicles of all kinds, including the GR Supra and GR86, for their peers to marvel at and celebrate.

"One of the things that's interesting about OctoberBeast is letting people truly share their passion for vehicles," says Carlos Treviño, GR Series Vehicle Marketing and Communications Manager at TMNA. "A lot of people here have these hobbies on the weekends that are automotive related, and there's an opportunity for them to showcase that. Hearing the stories of some of these vehicles is always interesting as well."



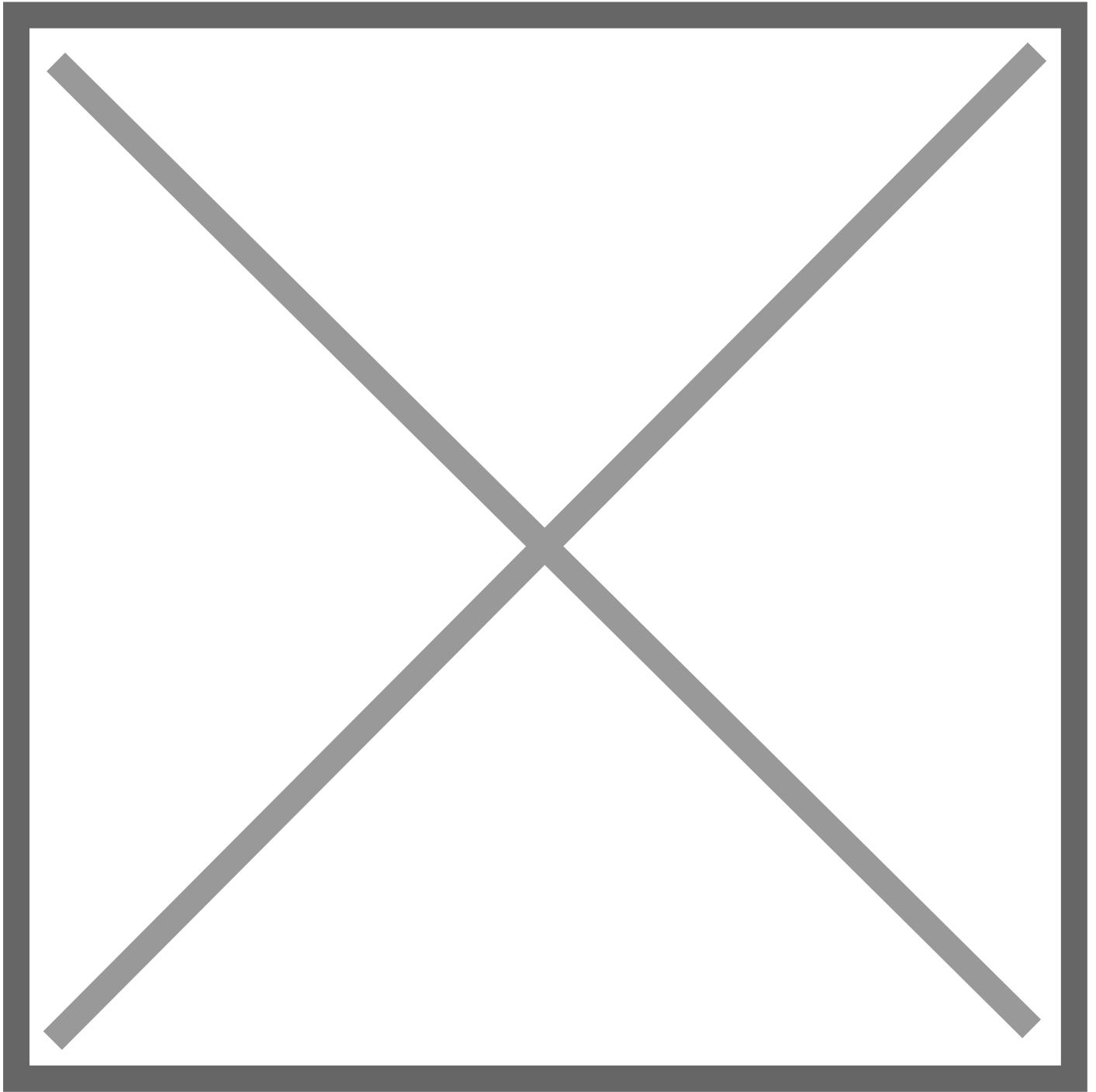
### **Shifting Gears Over the Years**

Over the years, the Toyota sports car consumer has grown to include a wider tech-savvy and lifestyle-oriented group today.

“This change reflects broader trends in the automotive industry, where technology, sustainability and experience-based ownership play more prominent roles in consumer decision-making,” says Dodson. “While we are seeing shifts in consumer habits, one thing has always remained the same: A Toyota sports car must be fun to drive.”

Marston feels that even though trends have shifted over the years, the Supra, which has been around for more than 40 years, stands the test of time.

“The Supra still holds up as an icon in sports cars,” he says. “You don’t have to go to an exotic brand to get a sports car.”



### **Making Waves in Motorsports**

Arguably, Toyota’s ability to combine reliability with performance and consistently innovate across different

eras of automotive history is a significant achievement in the world of sports cars.

“We are a global brand selling ever better sports cars made by enthusiasts for enthusiasts,” says Dodson. “And I like to think that we haven’t stopped achieving greatness, as it’s our goal to continuously inspire new generations to be sports car enthusiasts.”

Another achievement that Toyota has accomplished is its rapid positioning as a motorsports contender.

Dodson adds, “We’ve got successes in World Endurance Championship [WEC] and the World Rally Championship [WRC], Dakar Rally, GT4 racing and Formula Drift. Throughout all of those successes, TOYOTA GAZOO Racing has pretty much solidified its position as a leader in motorsports entities worldwide. I think the greatest part of that is that our road car buyers will be able to enjoy the performance and technical learnings leveraged from all our motorsports activities.”

Treviño agrees and believes that motorsports influenced how Toyota’s sports cars operate today.

“I think the motorsports DNA really rings true with these vehicles,” he says. “They not only look great, but the important thing is that they drive great and they’re exciting.”

### **Comfortability is a Priority**

Whether it’s a sedan or SUV, comfortability is a priority for Toyota — and sports cars are no exception.

“I believe back in the day you had to compromise a lot more to drive a sports car than you do today,” says Marston. “The level of performance that you can get on something that you can still drive to work every day if you prefer is unbelievable.”



### **High Performance and Sustainability**

Toyota's current sports car lineup is a testament to its commitment to the enthusiast market, blending heritage with modern performance, technology and sustainability, said Dodson.

"Consumers can expect further innovations and a continued investment in making fun, engaging cars that appeal to both traditional enthusiasts and a new generation of drivers," says Dodson. "The focus on TOYOTA GAZOO Racing as a core pillar of this strategy suggests a bright future for Toyota's sports cars."