

MOTORSPORTS

ALL-ROUND TALENT

Marc Lieb not only drives Porsche race cars into the victory circle—he also contributes to the brand's success as an engineer. But how does he combine these two pursuits? This all-round talent, who also worked on the new 911 GT3 RS 4.0, explains how he does it.

By Charlotte Tiersen
Photos by Christoph Bauer

Marc Lieb bears a certain resemblance to the cartoon character he used to love as a child—Inspector Gadget, the police inspector who could extend his arms and legs like telescopes and whose shoes could turn into roller skates. Although the Porsche racing star cannot prolongate his arms, he can switch within seconds between the different roles of engineer, racing driver, and father. There is only one person who does not consider him quite as perfect as Inspector Gadget, and that person is Marc Lieb himself.

The 30-year-old Lieb is a self-critical individual. When he wins a race, he wants to do even better in the next one. In his job as engineer, he also considers it his task to make good things even better. That suggests a lot of ambition and self-discipline, but without these characteristics Lieb would never have achieved so much.

Lieb is a Porsche factory driver. Though it's a dream job in some ways, at the same time it is a non-stop challenge which, in addition to approximately fifteen racing weekends per year throughout the world, demands fitness training, test-drives, and other obligations. In 2010, Lieb took the class victory in Le Mans and won the GT2 class championship at the Le Mans Series endurance contest. Yet that is not enough for him. He also works approximately 25 hours per week as an engineer in the Porsche Motorsport Performance department, which is responsible for racing activities. In addition, he was professionally involved in developing the new 911 GT3 RS 4.0.

Lieb, who is also a father, knew since childhood that he wanted to have two professions. The proof lies in a poetry album from elementary school which he produces following a brief search. A photo of a grinning blond boy is glued to a piece of pink paper on which

Sights on success:
Marc Lieb as a racing driver for Porsche Motorsport with the new 911 GT3 RS 4.0





Eyes on technology:
Lieb's racing practice
contributes to his
engineering results

he wrote that he wants a faster go-kart, he likes the *Knight Rider* television series, and he wants to become a racing driver and a mechanic. That turned out to be a factory driver and an engineer. Yet it is rather unusual for a factory driver to seek this type of additional occupation. "I'm a rational person," says Lieb, who grew up in Zuffenhausen. He did not want to place all his hopes in the dream of becoming a racing driver, because sometimes such hopes can be dashed faster than one might expect. As a professional racing driver, Lieb knows this from his own experience. He and his father, who joined Porsche as an apprentice mechanic, used to enter go-kart contests throughout the region. "Our financing was catastrophic," recalls Lieb. When he graduated to the Formula Renault junior series, he was classified as an underdog due to his seven-year-old car. "When it started to rattle big-time, that was it. But in the process I learned how to drive fast and at the same time to pay attention to the material."

Porsche took notice. Lieb had written off his career after the 1999 season, but he was spotted at a training event and signed as a Porsche junior driver. At the same time he completed two semesters of automotive and motor engineering at the University of Stutt-

"After an unsatisfying season, I told myself that if it didn't work out as a racing driver, I'd be left with nothing. That's why I returned to my studies in automotive engineering."

Marc Lieb at Porsche Motorsport's workshop in Weissach

gart. But the ambitious schedule meant he could not concentrate fully on either the one or the other. So Lieb took the advice of Helmut Greiner, the manager of the Carrera Cup, who told him to focus on just one thing. Lieb did so, knowing he could resume his studies at any time.

Some three years later, he returned to engineering. "After the 2004 season I was not very satisfied with my performance," he recalls. "I thought that if things didn't work out, I'd be left with nothing." At his request, Porsche reduced his factory driving schedule, and Lieb began studies at the University of Applied Sciences in Esslingen. "If my fellow students hadn't



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Marc Lieb on the test grounds of the Porsche Development Center in Weissach with a GT3 RS road version and a 911 racing car

taken notes for me, there’s no way I would have managed,” he says and grins. Night shifts are a matter of course when one has two jobs. He approached his exams like races, for he had learned how to handle pressure in motorsports. After seven semesters, Lieb finally had his bachelor’s degree, and dropping out was no longer an option.

Either/or—this dichotomy is especially pronounced in his job constellation as engineer and racing driver. “I try to keep my roles strictly separated,” he says. “On the track I’m a racing driver, and in Weissach I’m an engineer.” When he races, he always has a technical specialist at his side. On these tightly scheduled weekends, there is no time to assume the responsibilities of an engineer himself. “I don’t want to be a know-it-all,” says Lieb. “The role of engineer is sometimes underestimated in racing. They have to deal with the setup, the strategy, and the pit stops. It doesn’t help when other people try to add their two cents.”

If a Porsche customer team is having problems and there are not enough specialists to go around, however, Lieb feels responsible and does his best to help. This is sometimes a little unexpected for his racing colleagues, such as those at the preparations for the 1,000-mile race in Atlanta, when Lieb suddenly found himself working as an engineer for the 911 GT3 R Hybrid at the side of his former factory driving teammate Mike Rockenfeller. The two of them had to laugh. “There are a lot of places where the two jobs intersect,” he notes. “Right now I’m just enjoying the chance to race and to spend my time as a factory driver. It’s great to know that I’ve got another job on the back burner.” Although “job” may not be the right word. For Lieb, racing is more than a normal occupa-

tion—it is pure passion for him in all of its facets, on or off the track. He simply enjoys the atmosphere, especially when he can head off to watch long-distance events on the Nürburgring. He prefers evening barbecues to VIP lounges. He is not one to put on airs.

At the start of his second course of studies, Lieb became a father, at 25, for the first time. “My wife and my son Benedict had to put up with a lot back then,” he recalls. But since the birth of his second son, Jonathan, he has balanced racing with his family. “My family life is very important to me,” he says in describing his parallel world. “It grounds me, and it’s not important then if I come in second or third.” It hardly deserves comment that the game Porsche Memory is found in the children’s room.

Two professions and a family with two children—once again that recalls the talented Inspector Gadget. But as Lieb notes, “Sometimes I wonder how I’m going to manage it all. It wouldn’t be right to say that all of this is easy.” His son Benedict is already taking after his father. He wants to be a racing driver or a policeman. “A policeman would be great,” says Lieb. ●

911 GT3 RS 4.0

Engine: Six-cylinder boxer
 Displacement: 3,996 cc
 Power: 500 hp (368 kW)
 Maximum torque: 460 Nm at 5,750 rpm
 0–100 km/h: 3.9 sec.
 Top track speed: 310 km/h (193 mph)
 CO₂ emissions: 326 g/km
 Fuel consumption
 – City: 20.4 l/100 km
 – Highway: 9.9 l/100 km
 – Combined: 13.8 l/100 km