

THE
944 S2 SPYDER 
IFC RACING



CAR: 1990 PORSCHE 944 S2 SPYDER

OWNER: GREG FITZPATRICK

LOCATION: COMMERCE TWP., MI

CONVERSION WORK BY: IFC RACING, RACINE OHIO

STORY BY: GREG FITZPATRICK



The Beginning of a Love Affair

It all started in 1993 when I walked into a specialty auto dealer called Huntington Motors located in Royal Oak, Michigan. Huntington Motors was known for carrying high end, high quality used European automobiles. That day, there were several Porsches, Mercedes, BMWs and a couple of Jaguars being displayed on the showroom floor. While looking at their vast inventory, there was one particular car that caught my eye. It was a car that I had never seen before and for some reason it really blew me away. The car was white with navy interior, convertible and sharpest sports car I had ever seen. I said to the Owner, "what in the heck is that..... I absolutely love it! Is that a Porsche"? He smiled then told me that it was a 1990 944 S2 Cabriolet! At the time, the only convertible Porsches that I had ever really seen were the 356 and different versions of the 911 family. As I looked at every angle and every line of this beautiful car, I fell deeper in love. I loved the low profile, aggressive lines and wide stance. The styling had the strength of an American muscle car and the sleek, quiet sexiness of a European sports car. At the time, the car was priced somewhere in the mid to high \$20k range. I was newly married at the time and I knew that my wife would not go for a new sports car. My thought was to slowly purchase the car (5 year note) and keep it forever. The Owner at Huntington Motors asked me if I wanted to leave a small deposit to hold the car until I spoke with my wife, but I was pretty sure that she would say no, so I decided not to leave a deposit and quietly walked away. That evening, my wife and I drove up to the dealership to look at the car through the showroom window and she too fell in love and told me to buy the car. I went back to Huntington Motors the next day as soon as they opened and the car had been sold the evening before. I was absolutely heart broken! Although I knew that the car wasn't what Porsche considered their "top of the line" sports car, the 944 S2 Cabriolet immediately became my "*dream sports car*" and I vowed that as soon as I was ready to start my sports car collection (for recreational purposes only), that I would start with the 1990 944 S2 Cabriolet.

After years of seeing 1 or 2 examples of the 944 S2 Cabriolet on the road every couple of years (typically red or black), I was finally ready to buy one. While searching the internet, I ran across an EBay link in one of the search engines. I had never purchased anything from EBay nor had I ever been on the EBay site. When I pulled up the site, a ton of 944's popped up and one car immediately caught my eye. This particular car happened to be the featured car for that category and it looked absolutely amazing. It was a blue 1990 944 S2 Cabriolet with linen interior. The color combination was beautiful..... I had never seen a 944 S2 Cab in that color. There was one problem..... The car was located in Naples Florida. I wondered how I was going to see the car and test drive it, if it's in Naples. I had to ask myself if I was willing to buy a plane ticket to Florida just to test drive a car. No sooner than I began to look at flights, I remembered that a good friend of mine, Chuck Uzelac had a condo in Naples. When I called Chuck to tell him about my quest, he told me that he was leaving for Naples in a few days and that he would test drive the car if he could hook up with the Owner. As I commenced to coordinate the test drive with the Owner, we soon discovered that the Owner lived exactly 1 mile down the road from Chuck's condo! At that point, I knew that the stars were aligning and it was meant for me to have that car. Chuck test drove the car the next day and left me a voice message stating that if I didn't want the car, he and his wife would take it. Chuck is a really classy guy and a lifestyle connoisseur, so as soon as I heard his message, I knew that I had to have this car. If nothing else, I knew that Chuck had great taste the car would turn heads!

After strategically outbidding a field of about 6 serious bidders down to the last second, the blue 1990 944 S2 Cabriolet was finally headed to my garage in Michigan! That night I sat outside under the stars smoking a cigar day dreaming about all of the summer nights that I would whip around town in my unique, but affordable sports car. The 944 S2 Cab is unique in itself, but a blue 944 S2 Cab would surely spark curiosity and keep the average person guessing. The 944 S2 Cab is one those cars that doesn't have anything that really dates the car's exterior outside of the wheels, mirrors and door handles (all of which I eventually changed), so in my book I consider the 944 S2 Cab's styling as being absolutely timeless.

When my baby finally arrived, I was a little disappointed with the condition of the interior, but overall I was very satisfied. After I paid the trucking company for delivering my prized possession safely and she was slowly removed from the truck, I jumped in and let down the top and stared for a minute. Now the big test..... After I wiped the smile from my face and got over the fact that I was a proud Porsche Owner (even if I'm starting at a point that some people consider the bottom), I jumped in, started the engine and took off through my subdivision. Oh my God..... I had never really driven a true sports car before, so this was a different experience. I had a few BMW's and a SAAB Turbo once, but nothing like this. This car literally handled like a "Go Cart" and had plenty of power for what I wanted to do with it! I was like a kid on Christmas morning.

Over the next couple years I drove the car approximately 2k miles per year and did a few cosmetic updates along with giving special attention to some major maintenance/mechanical items. Some of the updates included: new interior carpet, re-upholstered front and rear seats, re-upholstered emergency brake handle, re-upholstered door panels, all interior trim re-conditioned and dyed, new carpet in trunk, mesh wind deflector, 930 "club sport" steering wheel, chrome door sill plates, new stereo w/twin 8" subs, euro style clear front indicator lenses, euro style front & rear marker lenses, 968 door handles and mirrors, 18" Turbo 3 piece wheels, cross drilled rotors, all 4 calipers were re-built and powder-coated red w/Porsche logos, stainless steel brake lines, new clutch and master cylinder, new windshield washer solvent reservoir, Vredestein Tires (265 rear/225 front) and new convertible top boot cover. All of these items were completed by spring 2008. I finally had her running like a champ and looking pristine. I was 100% satisfied..... Or so I thought.

SUMMER 2008



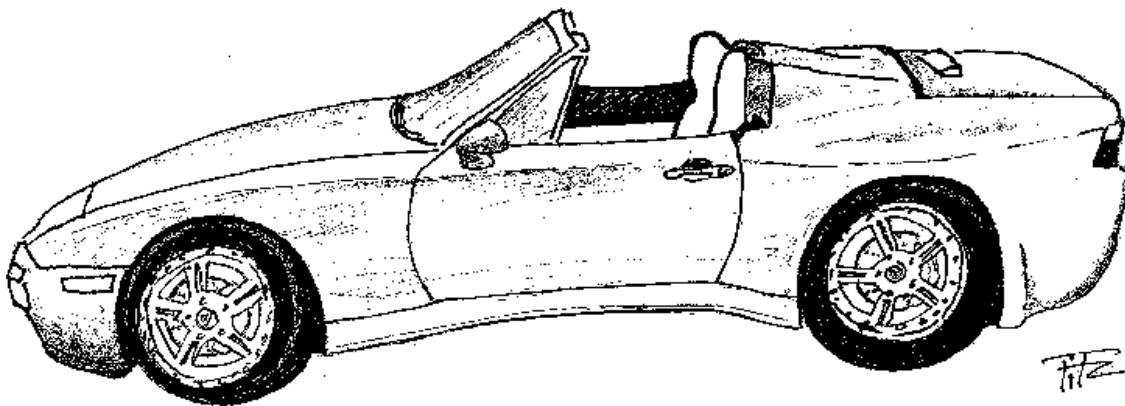
No matter where I went, people would pull up and ask me "what type of car is that"? When I told them that it was a Porsche, they would immediately say "I have never seen one of those". The 944 S2 Cab is usually a rare sighting these days. If you happened to see one it was white, red or black. Seeing a blue 944 S2 Cab, for most people, was like seeing something from a car magazine. The more I drove the car, the more I fell in love with it. I'm the type of guy that loves anything unique and will take unique over the status quo any day! With that being said, my love for Porsches grew.

I began to buy books, surf websites, subscribe to "*Excellence Magazine*", join the Porsche Club of America (PCA) and familiarize myself with Porsche and its tradition (at least as much as I could with 3 kids and a business to run). During my research, I began to think that my car was special.... Don't ask me why, but I did. So much so, that I decided that my prized 944 S2 Cab, the car that I patiently waited 10 years to buy deserved something special. I asked myself, what could I do that would possibly help my 944 S2 Cab receive the attention and respect that it deserved, enhance that timeless styling, and re-introduce to the public the car that I loved so dearly? I am a mechanical engineer by profession, but also an accomplished artist and I am always looking for ways to be creative. I hadn't picked up a paint brush in a couple of years, so why not use my car as my source of creativity. Sounded good to me!

I always loved the nostalgic look of the old race cars with the famed “*speedster hump(s)*” and I really appreciated how several manufacturers integrated that look into some of the later model cars. The look of an open air “true roadster” also appealed to me. Since my car was strictly a weekend driver and never saw the rain, I thought that it would be a “grand idea” if I permanently removed the convertible top, added a tasteful wide body kit, side rockers and a hard tonneau cover with “speedster humps” to occupy the area where the convertible top once resided and create what I like to call the first “944 S2 Widebody Spyder”.

Over the next couple of weeks, I commenced to do a few sketches so that I could visualize this conversion and convince myself that I could actually pull this off in a very tasteful manner. I knew that this conversion would have to be done in a way that did not compromise the overall look of the 944. I wanted to create a car that would have the appearance of a “944 S2 Spyder Concept Car” that never happened. It had to look like something that was once on a Porsche drawing board and created a buzz at the European auto shows, but was later scrapped to the dismay of some cool Porsche designer. I didn’t want to do anything to the car that would banish me from the Porsche community or to give the car the appearance of a tacky kit car. After all, my next purchase will be a 911. I just wanted to give the car a more aggressive and updated look with a wider stance and the feel of a true roadster. Now all I needed was a shop willing to take my idea seriously.

944 S2 Widebody Spyder Sketch- Late Summer 2008



PORSCHE 944 S2 WIDEBODY "SPYDER" SPRING 2009

After several months of research and phone calls across the country, I finally ran across a company in Racine Ohio called Infinite Fiberworks Company (IFC Racing). IFC specializes in custom body parts for Porsches, but 944s in particular. I exchanged several emails with the Owner Mike Warner and with each email my confidence in this project grew. After a few weeks of emailing, I placed a call to IFC and spoke with Mike. After speaking with Mike for about 30 minutes, I knew that this guy knew everything there is to know about the design and construction of the 944 and that if I was going to proceed with this madness, he would be the guy that could make it happen. He sounded extremely excited about the opportunity to be involved in the project and the sincerity that rang from his voice gave me a huge sense of comfort. He also sent me a copy of an article that was published in Kit Car Magazine in the mid 90s that featured one of their widebody conversions. I was truly impressed.

In October of 2008 Mike and I agreed on all of the particulars (scope, price, logistics, etc.) and I put my baby on a rented trailer and drove 6 hours to drop her off in Southern Ohio. I had a really good feeling about IFC before my journey, but when I arrived in Racine and actually met Mike and witnessed his undying passion for his work and his knowledge of the way that Porsche constructed their cars, I was convinced that I wasn't crazy after all and with a little patience, research and some trial and error, we could actually pull this off!

The first couple months IFC began dismantling the car and prepping the car for the widebody installation. They started with the widebody conversion. IFC had already done this type of conversion in the past, but just not with a cabriolet. The cabriolet had a few minor differences from the coupe that created a few challenges, but overall the widebody conversion proceeded without a hitch. The widebody conversion included rear quarters with an integrated bumper cover and side rockers.

Removal of Top and Pre-fitting of Widebody Conversion Parts



Going into this we all knew that the challenging part would be the tonneau cover. There were several items that needed to be addressed during the design phase. Careful consideration was given to the overall height, depth and shape of the speedster humps on the tonneau cover. We needed to make sure that the transition from the rear of the car to the back of the seats followed the lines of the car in a logical manner and didn't compromise the original profile of the car. Integrating the tonneau cover into the rear seating area in a way that created a seamless transition was also challenging. We also needed to make sure that while viewing the car from the front, the portion of the tonneau cover that transitioned into the rear seating area complimented the overall look of the car. We also decided to leave the rear seats in place for storage (light luggage, etc.), plus the leather looks nice beneath the tonneau cover.

After several months of research and development, IFC emailed photos of the plug for the tonneau cover sitting on the car. The concept and shape looked great, but while looking at the car, you couldn't help but think that there was a soft top beneath the tonneau cover. I did a few adjustments to the pictures in Photoshop and eliminated the visible seam where the top met the rear quarters to give the appearance of the tonneau cover being molded into the quarters. Since we decided early on that this would be a "true roadster", Mike and I immediately agreed that the tonneau cover would look great molded into the widebody quarter panels. We did not want the car to look as if a bunch of aftermarket parts were just added then painted. Instead, we wanted the appearance of a high quality custom modification with the fit and finish that the Porsche community could appreciate. We needed to make sure that the handcrafting that went into making these parts was apparent in the finished product.

Tonneau Cover-Design Phase

Preliminary Plug Design



Final Plug Design



The above photos show the evolution of the design for the tonneau cover. Notice that the preliminary design is much larger in the rear seating area and looks a bit overwhelming. The final design is much sleeker and occupies less of the back seat area. Also note the recessed area at the center reserved for an additional "Porsche Badge" (to compliment the badge on the hood). A very nice, but subtle addition to the overall design. Careful consideration was also given as to which edges would be sharp and which edges would have a smooth curvature. The tonneau cover had to have a look that made it obvious that "human hands" had taken part in its creation and could not give the appearance of a part removed from a mold and merely attached to the car. Several hours of hand-sanding went into the final product.

The photos below show the difference in appearance when the tonneau cover has been molded into the widebody quarters. This arrangement makes it obvious to onlookers that this car is a "roadster" and does not have a top underneath the cover. It also gives the car a very custom look and the appearance of a "concept car" of the early 90s.

Roadster Top- Preliminary Fitting On the Car

Tonneau Cover



Tonneau Cover Molded Into Quarters



With the car being 2.5" wider on each side, special Hub Centric CNC Machined 6061 Billet Aluminum rear wheel spacers had to be made. All four brake backing plates were removed and sent out for powder coating.



We also decided to remove the existing engine pan protector that attaches to the front spoiler and had it redone in authentic "Black Carbon Fiber". The part barely shows from the front of the car, but we thought that this would be another one of those subtle changes that would speak volumes. This was a 3 week process that included the carbon fiber wrap, 5 coats of resin and several clear coats.

Engine Pan Protector Redone In Authentic Carbon Fiber



Rear Section Installed and Preliminary Fitting of Roadster Top





In late-May 2009, the bodywork was complete and the car was ready for paint. The car was moved up the road to Pomeroy, Ohio and painted. Changing the paint color was never an option for me. I love the color and the original paint was in very good condition

Bodywork Complete and the Car is Ready for Paint- Late May 2009



Notice that the side molding was removed. The side molding was an option offered in the US and since we are going for a European concept car look, we decided that the side molding had to be removed. You will see that removing the side molding gives the car a much cleaner look.

The Painting Process Begins



Prep work complete and primer applied



6 coats of paint and 3 coats of clear have been applied and the car is ready to be buffed



Top side painting has been completed and the trunk lid, side rockers and door skins will now be reinstalled. Wheel wells will be prepped and painted along with the rotors. The Porsche badges are ready to be installed on the hood and tonneau cover.

**Introducing the “944 S2 Widebody Spyder”
by IFC Racing**









The Team

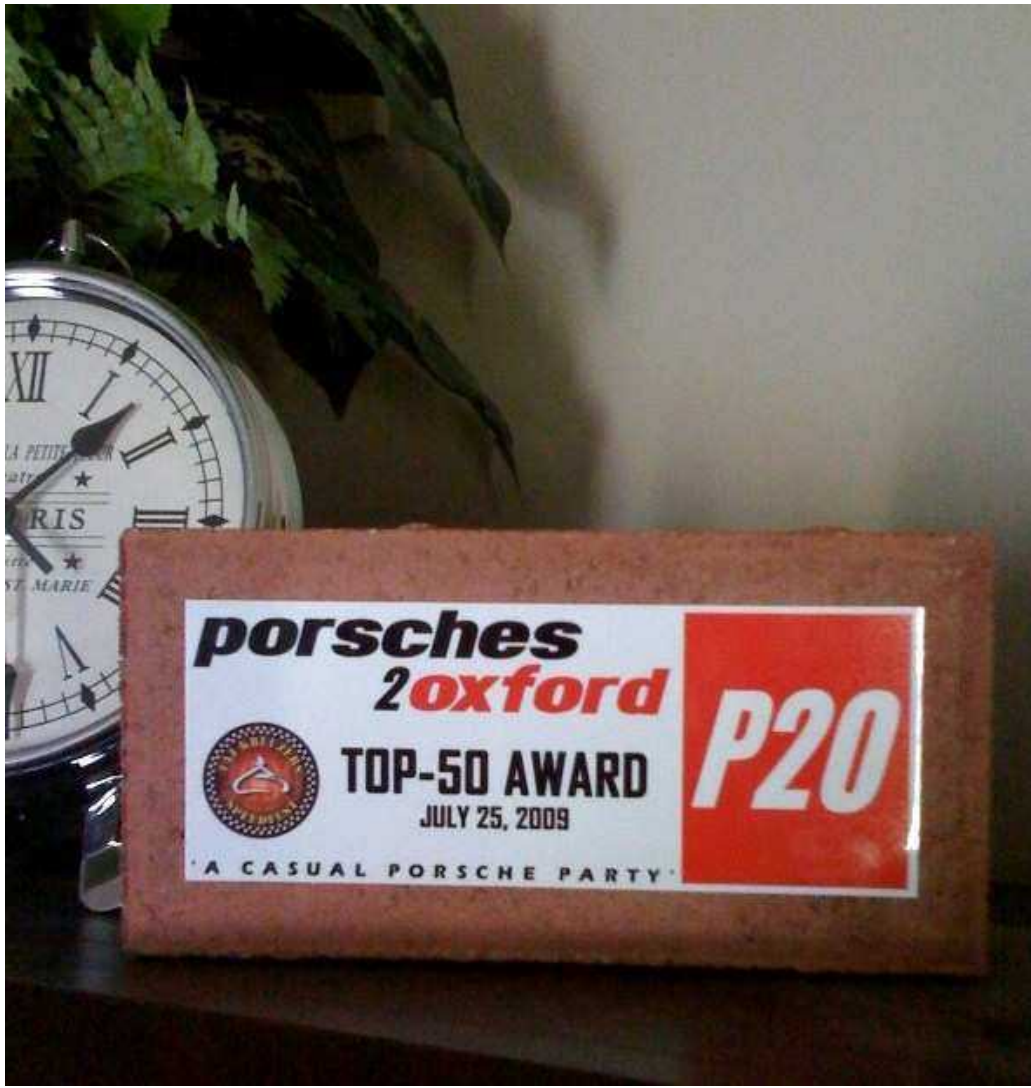


Left to right: Jason Warner (IFC Racing), Greg Fitzpatrick (Car Owner), Arthur Warner (IFC Racing), Mike Warner (IFC Racing)

The end result of this project is a true reflection of IFC Racing's total commitment to excellence and their passion for Porsches. Mike's attention to detail was incredible and his knowledge is unsurpassed. I knew that I was taking a huge gamble with this project and that any number of things could have gone wrong. The success of most projects are greatly impacted by the people involved, and I could not have found better "people" to work with than Mike Warner and IFC Racing. I was extremely fortunate to find IFC Racing and catch Mike at a time when his creative juices were ready to flow!

Most people would think that I was insane for investing so much time and money into a 944 S2. I happen to feel extremely fortunate to have been involved in what we believe is a fine example of the 944 S2 and I hope that when people see this car, they see and feel the passion that was put into its development.

The car was taken to a PCA sponsored event called "Porsches 2 Oxford" in Oxford Ohio on July 25th 2009. There were well over 400 Porsche enthusiasts at the event. I knew that after attending the event, we would have a good idea of what the Porsche community thought of our project. The event featured a "People's Choice" car show and our 944 S2 Widebody Spyder received one a top-50 award given to the top 50 cars out of 400 plus cars on display. The reaction from the public was incredible and we heard people continuously refer to the car as beautiful. Our car really appeared to be one of the favorites.



Car Details

Project Car: 1990 944 S2 Cabriolet
Vin#: WP0CB294XLN481648
Owner: Greg Fitzpatrick- PCA Member
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Conversion Details

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