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Porsche Carrera GT involved in fatal Paul Walker crash known for driving difficulty



The 2005 Porsche Carrera GT that Roger Rodas and Paul Walker were in when they died on Nov. 30, 2013, in Valencia is seen in an image from Graham Rahal's Facebook page.

By [Kelly Goff](#), *Los Angeles Daily News*

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The fiery crash that killed Paul Walker and Roger Rodas in Valencia Saturday afternoon is not the first horrific and fatal crash involving the elite Porsche Carrera GT.

Questions about the safety of the supercar have been around since the vehicle was put into production, and the company has settled outside of court in at least one civil lawsuit that alleged the car had a design defect that caused poor handling and was too difficult to handle at high speeds for the average driver.

The low-to-the ground mid-engine Carrera GT has a 5.7 litre V-10 engine and can accelerate from zero to 60 mph in under four seconds. The car originally retailed for almost half a million dollars.

“There are no laws that prohibit a car from having 1000 horsepower and going zero to 60 in two seconds. But this car could break every speed law in the country in under five seconds,” said Craig McClellan, a San Diego attorney who negotiated a settlement involving the automaker.

In 2005, car enthusiasts Ben Keaton and Corey Rudl were killed in a crash at the California Speedway in a Carrera GT when Keaton swerved to avoid another car, lost control and the Porsche slammed into a retaining wall at an estimated 130 mph.

Rudl's widow filed a lawsuit against the facility, event organizers, Keaton's estate and the car company.

Porsche paid 8 percent of a \$4.5 million settlement. Although the company admitted no fault, McClellan maintains that the car's design makes it dangerous on the road.

"Most cars have a computerized system that manages the steering output, accelerator output and brake output," McClellan said. "Any sudden interruption — swerving to avoid an animal, anything like that — and the computer kicks in and helps stabilize the car. It helps keep the rear end stable. That's without you doing anything. The Carrera GT doesn't have that."

Because of this lack of an electronic stability control system, many Carrera GT drivers have reported that the back end can sway and destabilize the car with any sudden movement.

The Carrera GT, GT2 and GT3 Porsche models lack the system, called Porsche Stability Management, in their other vehicles, even though the company had the technology as early as 1999.

The federal government began requiring all vehicles to have electronic stability control beginning in 2012, but older models are exempt. The vehicle Walker was in was a 2005 model. After the lawsuit, McClellan noted, all Porsche models sold in the U.S. were equipped with the system, although it is not known if it was as a result of the legal action.

Calls and emails to representatives of Porsche North America were not returned.

While the California Speedway incident is the most dramatic instance of the car's handling difficulty, there are dozens of other reports.

Former world rally champion and Porsche test driver Walter Rohrl told Drive magazine in 2003 that the car's production was being delayed because the car was too much for even him, saying the car is "the first car in my life that I drive and I feel scared."

When the 604 cars headed for the U.S. began to roll into dealerships in 2004, an executive with the company sent a fax to dealers, advising technical training for anyone driving the car, according to a memo published by TMZ. In it, the executive says "The Carrera GT is as close to a racecar as we will ever get. The car has all the disadvantages of a racecar. You will need help negotiating small inclines ... you will need to be aware of what type of road surface you are on (dips, pot holes, seam heights, etc.)"

In 2005, noted car aficionado Jay Leno lost control of a Carrera GT on the track at Talladega, spinning out five times before drifting into the center grass.

On the BBC car show “Top Gear,” co-host Jeremy Clarkson called the Carrera GT one of his favorite cars ever, but said “You need to be awake to drive this fast. It really isn’t an easy car to control,” and he struggled with the tail control in a lap around the track. “The clutch is brutal, the power is savage, and the handling... you really are on a knife edge.”

Clarkson compared the car to the Mercedes SLR McLaren, another so-called supercar, and said the McLaren, while reaching almost the same speeds, was “easy to drive.”

Rodas, who was behind the wheel of the Porsche, when it crashed, killing both men instantly, had extensive driving experience, and had previously competed in a Porsche racing series, but not in the GT model.

There were reports earlier this week that the car may have been experiencing a steering fluid leak prior to the crash, but investigators have ruled that out, according to the Sheriff’s Department.

Detectives have also ruled out drag racing as a potential element of the crash, but said speed did play a factor. The cause remains under investigation.