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【発行日】2023年2月28日

【発行】株式会社デアゴスティーニ・ジャパン

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【編集協力】株式会社ファミリーマガジン

【デザイン】山下真理子(株式会社ファミリーマガジン)

【デザイン協力】株式会社ハボクリエイティブ

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【印 刷】株式会社大丸グラフィックス

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日本の名車



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TOYOTA
SPORTS 800
1965-1969

TOYOTA SPORTS 800

Model	UP15
Engine Name	2U
Displacement	790cc
Maximum Output	45ps/5400rpm
Maximum Torque	6.8kg-m/3800rpm
Overall Length	3580mm
Overall Width	1465mm
Overall Height	1175mm
Wheelbase	2000mm
Vehicle Weight	580kg



Developed through repeated wind tunnel tests, the body features smooth, flowing curves from the front to the tail end.



The car was affectionately known as "Yota-Hachi", with oversized headlamps giving it a charming appearance. To reduce weight the rear window was made of acrylic and a backup lamp was added in 1968.





Pursuing sports car performance while utilizing parts from the Publica

After World War II, Japan achieved remarkable recovery in a brief period. In 1956 the Economic Planning Agency (now the Cabinet Office) published an economic white paper stating, "We are no longer in the postwar era", which became a catchphrase of the time.

The development of the automobile industry was no exception. In 1955 Toyota produced its first mass-produced passenger car, the "Crown", using its own domestic technology and paving the way for many domestically produced cars to be launched. In 1962 Japan's first fully paved racing course with spectator seating, the "Suzuka Circuit," was completed, and the first Japanese Grand Prix was held the following year. At last, automobiles in Japan began to thrive not only for commercial and passenger use but also in the realm of motorsports. However, there were almost no Japanese racing cars at that time, and during the first Japanese Grand Prix, most participants were ordinary passenger cars, apart from foreign sports cars.

Nissan (Datsun) had continuously launched sports cars, starting with

the Datsun Sports in 1952, followed by the Fairlady in 1960 (although it was not yet called "Fairlady" at the time), and the Fairlady in 1962. Honda also made a significant impact by exhibiting the Sports 360 and 500 at the All-Japan Automobile Show (now the Tokyo Motor Show) in 1962.

Toyota could not simply stand by and watch this sports car boom. Furthermore, as since the 1961 Publica, Toyota's first mass-market car, was struggling to generate sales, it was deemed essential to have a model that could serve as an image leader to boost sales. As part of this strategy, it was decided to develop a model that was entirely different from the sedan-like Publica, instead resembling a specialty or sports model while utilizing components from the Publica's chassis.

At the 9th All-Japan Automobile Show in 1962, Toyota showcased a small two-seater car named "Publica Sports". In modern terms it could be described as a concept car or prototype.

Aerodynamic design from aircraft development experience

The development and design were led by Kanto Auto Works (now Toyota Motor East Japan), which was already under Toyota's umbrella

at the time. The chief engineer was Tatsuo Hasegawa, who was responsible for the base vehicle, the Publica, and later worked on the first-generation Corolla, earning the nickname "the father of the Corolla".

Among the development staff were individuals with experience in aircraft manufacturing during World War II, and the Publica Sports they developed emphasized aerodynamic characteristics in its styling. As a result, it did not even have front and rear bumpers.

One unique feature was a slide canopy reminiscent of a World War II fighter jet. This design integrated the roof with the side and rear windows, allowing it to slide backward for entry and exit.

Development of the Publica Sports continued even after the exhibition, leading to the presentation of the "Publica Sports" at the 11th Tokyo Motor Show in 1964, aimed at commercialization. The most significant difference from the earlier model was the replacement of the slide canopy with conventional swing doors. The slide canopy was costly, heavy, and difficult for women and passengers to use in rainy weather.

Instead, a detachable top was introduced, allowing the roof section behind the B-pillar (including the rear window) to be removed. When the



The roof panel was secured with six bolts, allowing for easy removal and a quick transition to open-top driving.



Both the driver and passenger seats could only slide forward and backward. A thick side member ran between the seats to maintain the body's rigidity.

roof was removed, it transformed into a semi-open, Targa-style car. It is worth noting that the Targa concept had not yet been introduced with the Porsche 911, so it was not referred to as a Targa top at the time.

In April 1965, the Publica Sports was released under the name "Toyota Sports 800". This name was chosen through a public contest held during the 11th Tokyo Motor Show. At that time, the selling price in the Tokyo area was 595,000 yen, while the Honda S600, released the previous year, was priced at 509,000 yen.

High performance through lightweight, aerodynamic design

The styling of the Sports 800 closely followed that of the original Publica Sports, with sleek, aerodynamic curves unlike any domestic car at the time.

Its exterior dimensions were compact: 3,580mm in length, 1,465mm width, and 1,175mm in height, with a 2,000mm wheelbase. Even compared to modern kei car standards, the Sports 800 remains remarkably small.

The front grille was simple, with the round, dual covered headlights giving the car a charming appearance. Although the bumpers were omitted,

overrides were fitted to protect the body from minor impacts. The car's lightweight design included an aluminum hood and an FRP detachable top, bringing the vehicle weight down to 580kg.

Curved glass was used for the side windows, uncommon at the time, helping to reduce the frontal projection area. Dubbed "a lightweight aircraft without wings", the Sports 800's body, optimized through wind tunnel testing, achieved a frontal projection area of 1.33 square meters, comparable to the Porsche 904's 1.32 square meters. Its drag coefficient (Cd) slightly exceeded 0.30, an impressive figure for its era. Powering the Sports 800 was a forced-air-cooled, horizontally opposed, 2-cylinder OHV engine derived from the Publica. However, the engine was modified to boost displacement from 697cc to 790cc and featured twin SU carburetors with an increased venturi diameter.

This engine, known as the 2U-B, delivered 45ps at 5,400rpm and 6.8kg-m of torque at 3,800rpm. Despite being less powerful than the Honda S600's 57ps, the Sports 800's lightweight build gave it solid performance, with a 0-400m acceleration time of 18.4 seconds and a top speed of 155km/h. Its fuel economy was exceptional, achieving

31km/L under optimal conditions, comparable to modern hybrid cars, with practical figures of 18km/L in urban areas and 28km/L on highways. The suspension system of the Sports 800 was like that of the Publica, with a double wishbone front using torsion bars, and a rigid rear axle with semi-elliptical leaf springs. The brakes were also carried over from the Publica, featuring two-leading-shoe drums at the front and leading-trailing drums at the rear. At the time, disc brakes were still reserved for high-performance sports cars.

The steering mechanism was the same as the Publica's, using a now-obsolete worm-and-sector roller system. As for the tires, since radial tires were not yet widespread, the Sports 800 used 6.00-12-4PR bias-ply tires.

Achieving greatness in motorsports by maximizing fuel efficiency

The Sports 800 also participated in motorsports, serving as the image leader for the Publica. Though it lacked the absolute speed and acceleration of its rivals, the car had one significant advantage—exceptional fuel efficiency.

In the 1966 Suzuka 500km race, while larger displacement



The instrument panel mirrors the same curves as the hood. In later models, the aluminum panel around the gauges was changed to black.



You can unzip the section behind the seat to store the roof. The roof, hood, and trunk lid are made of lightweight aluminum.

cars had to make at least one pit stop for refueling, the Sports 800, equipped with a custom 69-liter fuel tank, managed to run the entire race without a pit stop. Using tactics like slipstreaming to reduce fuel consumption, it achieved an impressive 1-2 finish.

Nicknamed "Yota-Hachi" and "Toyo-Hachi" for its charming design, the Sports 800 remained largely unchanged in appearance until production ended in October 1969, with 3,057 units produced and 455 exported, including 290 left-hand-drive models. Remarkably, about 900 of these cars still exist in Japan, a testament to the enduring love for this ultra-light sports car known as the "wingless light aircraft".



The image shows the 1962 (Showa 37) debut of the Publica Sports. Its sliding canopy doors, reminiscent of an aircraft, became a popular talking point at the time.



The newly designed 2U engine installed in the Sports 800 featured twin carburetors, unlike the single carburetor in the Publica. The blue section is the heater, which was available as an optional feature.



The ventilator installed on the pillar allows for ventilation of the interior when the cover is opened.



The 12-inch tires were equipped with mirror-finished full wheel covers.



The emblem of the Sports 800 underwent some changes in later models. The top edge became slightly narrower, and the background behind the "TOYOTA" lettering changed from white to black.

The epic Sports 800 vs. S600 showdown lives on

On July 1, 1965, the "Funabashi Circuit" was inaugurated in Funabashi City, Chiba Prefecture, becoming Japan's second fully paved racing course. On July 18, as an opening race, the "All Japan Automobile Club Championship Race" was held in place of the Japan Grand Prix, which was not scheduled that year.

The event featured four races, but the main attraction was the 400-1300cc Grand Touring Car (GT-I) class, in which four Toyota Sports 800s participated, entered by TMSC (Toyota Motor Sports Club). Among them was a car driven by 23-year-old rising star Tojiro Ukiya, who drove a silver-colored machine with white and checkered stripes, numbered 20. Starting from fourth place in the qualifying round, Ukiya took on the challenge of the rainy final race. At the start of the final, it was Tetsu Ikuzawa, Ukiya's close friend,

who shot to the front, driving his Honda S600. However, on the fifth lap, Ikuzawa lost control on the wet track, and his car collided with Ukiya's. Ukiya returned to the pit to repair his dented fender, but when he rejoined the race, he had dropped to 16th place, more than a minute behind the leader.

From that point, Ukiya and the Sports 800 made an incredible comeback. By the 9th lap, Ukiya had risen to 10th place, and by the 20th lap, he had climbed to 2nd. The lightweight body and superior handling of the Sports 800 were well-suited to the technical Funabashi Circuit, and under Ukiya's almost supernatural driving skill, he overtook Ikuzawa for the lead and crossed the finish line on the 30th lap with a 19-second gap.

This race remains remembered as one of the greatest comeback victories in

Japanese motorsports history.



The photo shows the 1967 All-Japan Automobile Club Competition Race. Funabashi Circuit was closed in 1967, converted into the Funabashi Auto Racetrack, and is now a coordination hub.