

# CATCHING UP WITH...

THOMAS TETZLAFF, OUR MANAGER, PUBLIC RELATIONS, ON A CHILDHOOD SHAPED BY VOLKSWAGENS, BEING A VOICE FOR THE BRAND AND HONING HIS HOCKEY COACHING SKILLS



## HOW DID YOU GET YOUR START AT VOLKSWAGEN?

My dad was a Volkswagen mechanic. He started in 1958 and turned wrenches for 30 years, so I learned about Volkswagens from an early age. When I went to school, he always said, "You're going to use your head, not your hands." After graduating I worked with the government, but ended up going back to school to get a pilot's license. To make ends meet, I wound up in the new car business. Then my sister called and said, "your dream job just showed up." It was as a product trainer for Volkswagen. It all happened really fast...

## YOU'VE BEEN WITH VOLKSWAGEN FOR SEVERAL YEARS NOW. WHAT IS IT THAT KEEPS YOU HERE?

To be precise, I started on April 22, 1998 and at the risk of sounding cliché, being here just feels right. I'm a car fanatic and have been fortunate enough to drive just about everything on the planet. I've always come back to Volkswagen. I still have an '82 Rabbit convertible that I take out for Sunday drives. There's just a feeling I get behind the wheel of our cars, like it's where I'm supposed to be.

## YOU DEAL WITH THE MEDIA ON A DAILY BASIS. IS THERE A LOT OF PRESSURE BEING A VOICE FOR VOLKSWAGEN CANADA?

I wouldn't call it pressure. It's a responsibility to get the right message out there. We're growing by leaps and bounds in Canada and we're now subject to more scrutiny than ever. In a lot of cases, I'm dealing with journalists who are also automotive enthusiasts. It can be tough because they know as much about our cars as I do and there's no margin for error. I like it that way. I have to be sharp all the time.

## IS IT DIFFICULT KEEPING VOLKSWAGEN'S MESSAGE CONSISTENT IN ALL CORNERS OF THE GLOBE?

No, because we're all about being honest and building fun cars. We can tell that story in English, Chinese or Portuguese just as easily as in German.

## WE UNDERSTAND YOU COACH HOCKEY. HOW DID THAT START?

My wife and I have two sons that play, so it was already non-stop hockey in our house. I sort of got conscripted into coaching a few years ago when I brought my son to the rink and found out there was no coach for the team. A convener came up to me, put his arm on my shoulder and said, "I guess we found our new coach." I picked up the whistle that day and have not put it down since.

## SO ARE THERE ANY LESSONS YOU TAKE FROM THE RINK TO OFFICE?

Believe it or not, they overlap. The underlying message with both is to do the best you can everyday and you'll always be happy with the outcome.

## AND YOU PLAY GOLF?

Yes, mainly because it's named after one of our cars. I'm kidding! I golf for the same reason that I coach, because they both force you to strive to do better. At the office, until we're number one, I have work to do.

## SO WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO FOR 2011 AND BEYOND?

We have plenty of great new vehicles in the pipeline: Passat, Tiguan, The Beetle, Jetta GLI, and more. We're broadening our products and tailoring them to Canadians to be more spacious, more affordable and packed with more equipment. We're giving the people what they want. Oh, and I do have a Golf GTI on order, which I'm really looking forward to...

# OWNERS ONLY

A MOTORCYCLE MAGAZINE EDITOR, WHO DRIVES A GOLF GTI FOR FOUR-WHEELED FUN, HEADLINES THIS ISSUE'S PASSIONATE VOLKSWAGEN OWNERS



Want to share your story? Email us at [magazine@volkswagenplus.ca](mailto:magazine@volkswagenplus.ca)

## NEIL GRAHAM

### OCCUPATION:

EDITOR, CYCLE CANADA

**VEHICLES:** 2009 GOLF GTI, 1977 WESTFALIA

### What does a guy who pilots

300 km/h-plus motorbikes for a living choose as his daily driver? It's not an easy question to answer.

"I used to always have crap cars," Neil Graham, editor of *Cycle Canada* magazine, said without a hint of nostalgia. Before that it was cars inherited from family members.

With motorbikes, though, it was a different story. At 26, he decided he could live without food and bought a vintage 1974 Norton Commando. More recently, he bought a used Ducati 916, a beautiful Italian superbike.

A couple years ago though, Graham decided it was finally time for a good car for him and his six-year-old daughter. Clearly, the editor of a motorcycle mag needed something fun to drive, something that would complement his small collection of bikes. It couldn't be another project car. He already has a chrome yellow 1977 VW Westfalia camper van for summer days. At the moment it's in the middle of a serious restoration. "Yeah, I drove it to the gas station like this, without any windows," he admitted. So, whatever his new car would be, he knew it would have to be a practical, reliable daily driver that wouldn't take up as much of his time as the bikes and the camper.

A 2009 Golf GTI was the only

option, he says. "It's got four doors, cargo space: all these practical things and it's a sports car, too." He said the stealthy, understated looks of the GTI were a big selling point. It's subtle, he said, flying under the radar, especially in his chosen shade of grey paintwork.

He bought the GTI new. "It was the first time that I hadn't bought the cheapest car made by a domestic manufacturer," he wrote in one *Cycle Canada* editorial. "I like [the GTI] more than a person should like something."

"You know when you own something for a long time, you begin to wonder why the designers did something a certain way? Little things that seem stupid. But you know, after all this

time, nothing about the GTI is aggravating. That's incredible."

The Golf gave him a new appreciation for cars, too. Most drivers may not realize, but "bike guys" traditionally look down on their four-wheel-loving counterparts. Anybody can drive a car, they say, but not many people can skim their knee across the ground riding a sport bike.

Graham took his GTI to one of his favourite stretches of road outside Toronto just to go for a drive. Something he'd often done on a bike, but never in a car before. "Most interesting is how rewarding it is mechanically," he said. "The Golf felt taught and tactile." High praise from a biker.

"I'll keep it til it's toast," Graham said. "And then I'd buy another GTI."