

# Classic tyres tests in all conditions



Classic profiles combined with modern tyre technology are very popular at the moment. They pass on looks but with our tests on wet and dry tracks, we experienced some scary set-backs

**F**riends of historical vehicles usually choose equipment very carefully and go by one simple rule: whoever is gentle with his classic car avoids inevitably high costs.

Naturally the same goes for tyres. Anyone who constantly burns rubber and can't help sliding or doing racing starts is left at the end of the day with worn tire shoulders and torn profile blocks. A modest use of the throttle and avoidance of full braking will guarantee a longer tyre life.

However, as with all things rubber, tyres are subject to ageing. Also through regular use their ability to perform will not remain constant forever. Despite the addition of specialist oils and chemicals to slow aging the materials harden over the years and this negatively affects the technical properties of the tyres

In wet conditions particularly, a fresher, more elastic rubber grips much more surely than one which has been hardened by the sun and elements in general.



Tests on wet surfaces separate the wheat from the chaff. With speeds in the 70s the Porsche soon starts to swim and lose road contact



## GUIDE TO TYRE CODES

on the tyre sidewall you will find, aside from the manufacturers' name and dimensions, a great deal of interesting information. When making a new purchase you should, above all, look for the production date.

- 1: Tyre width in millimetres
- 2: 55% of tyre width (205) = sidewall height
- 3: 'R' stands for radial tyre.
- 4: Rim diameter in inches.
- 5: Load index specifying maximum load of tyre. V = 150mph speed rating.
- 7: production week and year (2205) Up to 1999 three digits next to a triangle were common
- 8: E or e plus country code number gives the EC test mark.





## Dry test

Braking	
aus 100 km/h in Metern	
Pirelli	35,37
Michelin	39,29
Vredestein neu	40,03
Blockley	42,49

For this test and for a better comparison of results, all braking distances are measured using a modern Golf with ABS. Braking distances under 36 meters, for the Pirelli CN36 are fairly respectable for the relatively small tyres. Blockley's radial needed another 7 meters braking distance to stop.

Handling	
Durchschnittliche Geschwindigkeit in km/h	
Pirelli	120,73
Vredestein	117,24
Michelin	116,90
Blockley	114,59

Of course it's not usual to take a classic car to full speed on the road at the weekend; Nevertheless, lap time is a good reference for the dynamic qualities and safety limits of the vehicle. The Blockleys surprise with sudden kicking out of the rear axle while Vredesteins lack crisp turning. Pirelli and Michelin are much more harmonious through the bends

Roll resistance	
in Kilogramm pro Tonne	
Vredestein	10,58
Blockley	10,90
Michelin	10,97
Pirelli	11,84

Classic and vintage tyres are exempt from labeling regulations, they need not therefore comply with the strict limits of noise and rolling resistance guidelines. In spite of this we measure quite high values on the roll resistance test for all four types of tyre. Pirelli is once again 10% above the values of its competitors, but with use this is hardly significant



You can only really test wet grip on a circular route going round the bends. The faster the circuit the better the grip

## Die wichtigsten Spezialisten und Lieferanten für Oldtimer-Reifen

- **Münchner Oldtimer Reifen GmbH (MOR)**  
83607 Holzkirchen;  
www.oldtimer-reifen.com  
Bietet einige Formate von Firestone, BF Goodrich und Dunlop exklusiv an, produziert Weißwandreifen
- **Oldtimer- und Weißwandreifen Harald Möller GmbH**  
25 451 Quickborn-Halenberg;  
www.oldtimerreifen-moeller.de  
Produziert Weißwandreifen
- **Vintage Wheels**  
21357 Barum;  
www.vintagewheels.de
- **HKT Hannes Kuhn**  
87435 Kempten;  
www.reifen-technik.eu  
Bietet einige Blockley-Reifen exklusiv an
- **Moser Oldtimerreifen**  
A-4650 Lambach;  
www.oldtimerreifen.at
- **Cool American Imports**  
CH-5242 Birr;  
www.classcreifen.ch
- **Bjooli, klassische Fahrzeugteile**  
10 178 Berlin;  
www.bjooli.com

## Tests on wet ground

Some knowledge is required when looking for a production date. Information about the production date is in code in the last 4 digits of the so-called DOT number (see box on previous page). After about 6 years it is recommended you make a regular inspection for cracks due to ageing on the side walls and also the tread grooves. After 10 years (12 at most) the tyre will have reached the end of its life. Whatever the residual tread depth may be it is definitely safer to replace the tyres.

Modern tyre technology combined with classic profile design is very much in fashion. Alongside Michelin and Vredestein the marketing strategists of Pirelli have embraced the classic scene and now offer a re-edition of the CN36 in accordance with Porsche specifications. The British brand Blockley, better known for the historical racing circuit has claimed a part of the lucrative old-time tyre market too. But how good are these modern classics? We wanted to know exactly what would happen when we tested four models with dimensions 185/70 R15

As the test vehicle we chose a Porsche 911E 2.4 as its sophistication and tough handling would mercilessly uncover any fault in the tyre construction. On the almost 3km long Tazio Nuvolari circuit south of Milan, the test driver had ample opportunity to test this, especially when the tyres from Blockley were straining for a connection between the car and the road; with a lack of lateral guidance and a swerving back axle the driver experienced a roller-coaster ride. The Vredestein Sprint classics also made it difficult to keep the rear axle in the lane. On the other hand the Porsche is well balanced on the road with Michelin and Pirelli



16 meters of stopping distance lie between the best and worst tyres

Aquaplaning	
Speed of 20% slip in km/h	
Vredestein	78,2
Pirelli	76,6
Blockley	75,2
Michelin	68,9

In recent years because of ESP and ABS, aquaplaning is not such a danger as it used to be. With older cars no electronic systems are in place to help with water on the road; take your foot off the throttle! With a tread depth of 8mm, our test 911 the speed of 70 already loses contact with the surface. Vredestein gives the best wet safety

Handling	
Durchschnittliche Geschwindigkeit in km/h	
Pirelli	85,19
Vredestein	82,83
Michelin	81,06
Blockley	75,73

Due to lack of grip, the ride over the wet course with the Blockley led to some nerve-racking slides. Also with Michelin, lateral guidance was only sufficient for a satisfactory performance. Vredestein is much more dynamic on the course. Only the CN36 from Pirelli gives the secure necessary grip and is definitely more fun.

Cornering	
Average time in seconds	
Pirelli	15,4
Vredestein	15,9
Michelin	16,5
Blockley	17,8

Good grip is the basic prerequisite for safe handling on water. Time on the hosed down circuit provides an objective measure for this. The new CN36 from Pirelli gives the secure necessary grip and is definitely more fun

Bremsen	
aus 100 km/h in Metern	
Pirelli	49,15
Vredestein alt	52,03
Vredestein neu	52,48
Michelin	54,20
Blockley	65,17





In braking every centimeter counts. With an additional braking distance of 16 meters (almost 4 car lengths) the Blockleys are definitely out of the running. Modern standards are clearly missing here - our verdict: steer clear! But the remaining candidates prove that classic profiles can also be effective - especially the Pirelli CN36 which is unequaled on water.



On the Tazio Nuvolari race track the modern classics have to show what they are made of and the Porsche 911 ruthlessly shows up their weaknesses.



# TABLE

	WET					DRY				OUR VERDICT		
	Aquaplaning	Handling	Turning	Braking	Average	Handling	Braking	Ride comfort	Roll resistance		Average	High speed performance
 <b>Pirelli</b> CN 36 N4 89 W	2-	2+	1-	1-	2+	2	1	2-	3+	2+	✓	<b>How to read the table:</b> The values read like school marks from 1=very good, to 6=unsatisfactory. Percentages in individual categories correspond to the score weighting. All candidates appear in alphabetical order. Evaluations for wet and dry are added to the overall rating of 50%  <b>Strengths:</b> perfect steering response, harmonic handling. The CN36 has been specifically designed for driving with the Porsche brand and even has Porsche N-identification. Even when wet it is sure to have the best grip <b>Weaknesses:</b> High roll resistance; expensive
exemplary												
 <b>Vredestein</b> Sprint Classic 89 H	2	2-	2	2	2	3	2-	2-	2-	3+	✓	<b>Strengths:</b> With the sprint classic you are safe on wet roads. On the road during our braking tests it gave very good values. Comparatively low price. <b>Weaknesses:</b> On the dry course the rear axle needs more stability and steering was less precise
good												
 <b>Michelin</b> Collection XWX 89 V	3-	3+	3+	3+	3	3+	2	2	2-	2-	✓	<b>Strengths:</b> The XWX range is very impressive during braking on the dry course and for rolling comfort. <b>Weaknesses:</b> In wet conditions they fail on grip and sportiness. Quickly loses surface contact in the aquaplaning test and shows a clear slowdown after speedy cornering
satisfactory												
 <b>Blockley</b> Radial TL 89 V	2-	4-	4-	5	4	3-	3	3+	2-	3	✓	<b>Strengths:</b> Decent safety during aquaplaning; sporty, direct handling on the dry course <b>Weaknesses:</b> Weak grip and much too long a braking distance on the wet course. Behaviour not harmonic and prolonged braking distance on the dry course. Expensive
not recommended												

Key: 1 2 3 4 5 6

In the end the wheat is separated from the chaff on a wet circuit. Michelin XWX are particularly vulnerable to aquaplaning. In wet conditions, they quickly lose contact with the surface and the English Blockleys also encounter problems, sliding an additional 4 car lengths when making stops on the braking track. Ultimately, compared to modern technology, these tyres are miles behind

## CONCLUSION

So, they really exist; tyres with designs from the '60s and '70s well within the safety limits of today. The new Pirelli CN36 is a convincing example with excellent performance. The Vredestein gives a good performance for a good price



Dierk Möller

FOTOS: T. BAUER (6), K. WEICHERD