

CLASSIC DRIVER

Gran Premio Nuvolari 2008



On September 19th, 300 classic engines fired up in honour of the racing legend Tazio Nuvolari, as sportscars, GTs and saloons headed off on the three-day, 1000km Audi-backed Gran Premio Nuvolari. This annual challenge for man and machine is traditionally an event full of excitement and emotion.

With the run open to cars built between 1919 and 1969, the marketplace at Mantua was temporary home to some of automotive history's finest.





Participants from **Italy, Switzerland, Austria, France, Germany**, Britain, the Netherlands and other European countries were joined by participants from **Japan** and teams from **Argentina, Brazil** and the **United States**. The 600 drivers and co-drivers included **Dindo Capello** in an **NSU 1200 TT**, ex-Formula 1 driver **Gianni Morbidelli** in an **NSU Wankel Spider**, rally ace **Luciano Viaro** in an **Alfa Romeo 6C 1750 Gran Sport** and the automobile designer **Harm Lakaay** in a light blue **Porsche 550 Spider 1500RS**.





At 13.30, the **1923 Bentley 3-litre Red Label Open Tourer** of the Swiss team of **Zink/Zink** headed off from the Piazza.

Day 1 - Mantua-Imola-Rimini

Day 1 took us 290km away from the autostrada, across the country to the Adriatic coast of **Rimini**, debating the merits of the grey **Lamborghini 400 GT** and following a speedy **Porsche 356**. Distributed through the field were no fewer than 55 examples of the **356**, in various guises.





The route passed the **Lamborghini** factory in **Sant'Agata** and through the city of **San Giovanni**, before leaving the public streets for two laps of the Formula 1 circuit at **Imola**. Slowly, the sun rose and the fog lifted and we headed for **San Marino**, up into the mountains. I was wondering how the drivers of the heavy pre-War cars coped with the narrow, curved slopes, when suddenly the road was full of wild boar. My co-driver, **Nanette**, just had time to snatch a photo before the 15 hairy pigs trotted back into the woods...



Day 2 - Rimini-Siena-Rimini

Rimini, 7am. Even before the sun rose above the horizon, the first vehicles departed on the almost exclusively mountain road route, through **Tuscany** to **Siena** and back to **Rimini**. We travelled close behind the white **1500 Porsche 550 Spyder** of **Westerman/Utberg**, who later withdrew from the event after a minor accident.





Further on we discovered the **Lagonda LG 45 TT** of the British **Dutton-Forshaw/Hewitt** team, the huge machine moving easily through the hairpins and looming up on an ambitious three-wheeler, the **Lagonda's** exhaust pipe blowing directly into our open cockpit.





We also spotted the **Lamborghini 350 GT** piloted by the young racing and **Lamborghini** factory driver Max Venturi, along with an Italian journalist named **E. Violi**.

Day 3 - The Finale: Rimini-Ferrara, Mantua







Sunday, 21 September. While an entire city slept, parc fermé was full of lively bustle. Route instructions were studied and spark plugs changed by torchlight and, at 7am, team **Zink/Zink** set off in the Bentley once more. The streets were empty and, for a moment, it seemed that we'd travelled back in time by some decades. We fell back and allowed a mob of outstanding historic racing Bugattis to gather together: from **Type 23 Brescia** to **Type 37**, the latter driven by team **Ferrari/Ferrari**.

Slowly the sun rose, shining on **Delage DHS** and **DMS Touring**, on various **Lagondas**, **Rileys**, **Aston Martins**, a **Mercedes-Benz 710 SSK**, **Jaguar SS 100** and a beautiful **Alfa Romeo 6C 2500**. We continued to fall behind. A solitary **Osca 2000 S (Reiss/Hanenberger)** sped past.



Ferrara, mid-afternoon. The field gathered once more in the famous **Oval Ferraras** and then, just a short time later, we were in Mantua, heading towards **Piazza Sordello** against the backdrop of the mediaeval town bridge and the end of a highly exciting 1000km.



Results

- 1st # 61 PASSANANTE / MESSINA (Italy) - 1938 Fiat 508 C
- 2nd # 87 GAMBERINI / NOBILI (Italy) - 1951 HEALEY NASH-S1 Roadster
- 3rd # 11 FERRARI / FERRARI - 1927 BUGATTI 37

Full results can be found www.gpnuvolari.com.















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