

# Modena Cento Ore

Italian cars dominated this year's legendary rally marathon

Story & Images by Matteo Grazia

**T**he 21st edition of the Modena Cento Ore, held in June this year, saw a strong field of about 80 cars, many of them with superb competition win histories behind them.

Italian marques, once again, were among the most numerous. The sight of so many cars in the Federico Fellini square in front of Rimini's Grand Hotel was simply stunning for the classic car enthusiast.

Never has this race welcomed so many Alfa Romeo Giulia Sprint GTAs. Perhaps that's not surprising since this car is regarded as the perfect choice for the over 1000km route that the Modena Cento Ore race comprises. Just one example was the Dutch crew of Alessandro and Chantal Van Hellenberg Hubar competing in chassis number 613013, the car with which the Italian driver Nanni Galli famously finished second in the 1966 FISA Cup at the Monza circuit.

Ferraris were another strong presence, including two 250 GT SWB competition models. Chassis number 2845GT of Martin and Susanne Halusa was originally delivered to Count Volpi of Scuderia Serenissima in 1961. It debuted that same year in the Tour de France race, driven by Maurice Trintignant and Paul Cavrois, and finished in third place overall. The following month, driven by Graham Hill and Joakim Bonnier, it finished in 12th place at the 1000km at Montlhéry.

The second 250 GT SWB Competizione, chassis number 2129GT, was brought to the event by the British crew of Adrian and Nicholas Beecroft. Originally belonging to the Garage Francorchamps, it won the 1960 Tour de France with Willy Mairesse and Georges Berger. The following month it finished second overall





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at the 1000km at Montlhery circuit, again with Willy Mairesse now joined by Wolfgang Graf Berghé von Trips.

The racing Ferraris continued with two 308 GTB competition cars. A white example from 1983 was campaigned by the Dutch crew of Oscar Brocades Zaalberg and Evan Kersbergen. One of four cars built by Michelotto to compete in rallies to Group B specification, it was originally driven by Federico Ormezzano alongside navigator Claudio Berro at the 1983 Sanremo Rally, and it won the Villa d'Este Trophy with the Gigi Martinelli and Emilio Radaelli as well as racing in the San Marino Rally with Harry Toivonen.

Continuing with the Prancing Horses, the 365 GTB4 Daytona of Paolo and Cristiana Cavalieri had been reconverted to Group 4 specification, a perfect transformation that took over 10 years. Two other road-going 365 GTB4s, a Coupe and a converted Spider, participated in the regularity section, as did a yellow 1966 Ferrari 365 GTC with French crew Jacques and Brigitte Piccioloni. Also from France came a grey 275 GTB, chassis 08465, with Laurent and Marion Desplaces driving.

We loved the 1956 Maserati 200 S, chassis number 2405, modified by the coachbuilder Fantuzzi, which was the only car from the Trident brand at this year's Modena Cento Ore and undoubtedly one of its stars. This ex-works car competed in the regularity section with the Italian crew of Enzo and Federico Moroni. Originally painted red, it now has a livery reminiscent of the Barchettas that raced in the United States in the 1950s. Its list of races is very long, including second place in the 1956 Supercortemaggiore GP at Monza, driven by Cesare Perdisa and Stirling Moss, plus second place in the 2.0-litre class at the Bari Grand Prix of the same year. More recently it has taken part in Mille Miglia reruns.

The Lancia brand was represented by the 1968 Fulvia HF 1.3 of the Swiss crew Peter and Ursula Görke and by the 1975 Stratos Gr4 of the French-Italian crew Pierre Mellinger and Tommaso Gelmini. With Ferdinando Montaldo at the wheel in period, this Jolly Club Stratos did 15 rallies before ending its racing career in 1981 with fourth place overall at Monza.

We also have to mention the 1975 De Tomaso Pantera Gr4 in its beautiful 'hippy' livery belonging to the Swiss-French crew of Christophe Germain and Antoine Darley. British drivers Alistair Oxley and Matt Edwards also made it over at the wheel of a 1981 Fiat 131 Abarth Gr4 in Alitalia livery.

The official departure took place on Wednesday morning from the city of Rimini, crossing to the historic centre of San Marino. Three special stages, including the Spino Pass, the Ponte Della Piera near Arezzo and the Bocca Seriola pass, saw the cars traverse the Umbrian-Marche Apennines. The descent towards Urbino and the return to the Romagna coast led the competitors to evening races at the Misano Adriatico circuit. After an intense first day, it was clear to everyone that the 2021 Modena Cento Ore would be no walk in the park.

The second day opened with two competition category races and a regularity time trial at the Imola Circuit. Demanding passes at Monte Faggiola, Sambuca and Colla brought the cars back across the Apennines again. The Romagna-Tuscan section led downhill towards Scarperia, the day concluding with arrival at the Mugello Circuit.

Some cars had already been forced to leave the competition prematurely due to mechanical failures, but for those still in the running, the heart of Florence and the Santa Maria Novella convent's frescoed cloisters welcomed the crews for dinner with a

magical atmosphere.

On Friday morning, the Tuscan Mugello circuit hosted some intense racing. The transfer to Pistoia and Montecatini Terme gathered the necessary energy to face the Renajo and Careggine special stages near Lucca. Tortuous roads immersed in the west side of the Apuane Alps led to Castelnuovo di Garfagnana. The descent towards Forte dei Marmi, overlooking the Ligurian Sea, brought the day to an end.

Saturday began with two demanding special stages: San Rocco and the Radici pass. Finally came the descent towards Modena, crossing Vignola and taking in the Marzaglia racetrack for one last race. Piazza Grande in Modena was the perfect backdrop to conclude this demanding marathon. Organiser Luigi Orlandini waved the chequered flag and welcomed in each crew. A celebratory air saw smiles on the tired participants' faces.

The numerous Alfa Romeo Giulia Sprint GTAs performed well, especially in the 'Index of Performance' ranking, dominating the entire podium. Mathias Körber-Roberto Restelli won first place, followed by Ivan Vercoutere-Brigitte Vercoutere and Andrew Lawley-Brij Kotecha. Other Italian cars scored successes, including the Alistair Oxley-Matt Edwards Fiat 131 Abarth Rally which won the Period I category. Meanwhile Timm Peter Meinrenken and Lara Charlotte Schwiering won the Period G category in their 1971 Alfa Romeo Giulia 1750 GTAm, and the Halusas' Ferrari 250 GT SWB Competizione won the Period E class.

The countdown to the next edition of the Modena Cento Ore has already begun. The Canossa Events staff have once again demonstrated how much esteem and appreciation the Italian race arouses internationally. See you in 2022!

