

CLASSIC DRIVER



1956 Fiat Bartoletti Tipo 642

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|----------------|--|------------|---|
| Lot sold | USD 750 233 - 978 565 GBP 575 000 - 750 000 (listed) | Lenkung | Links |
| Baujahr | 1956 | Zustand | Gebraucht |
| Chassisnummer | to be advised | Standort |  |
| Zahl der Sitze | 2 | Kraftstoff | Benzin |
| Antrieb | Zweirad | Außenfarbe | Sonstige |
| Losnummer | 333 | | |

Beschreibung

The Ex-Maserati works team, Reventlow Automobiles Inc Scarab works team, Shelby American Cobra works team, Alan Mann Racing, David Piper Racing, Steve McQueen movie 'Le Mans', JCB Historic racing team

1956 Fiat-Bartoletti Tipo 642 Diesel-Engined Racing Car Transporter
Chassis no. to be advised

Today widely recognized as some of the most iconic and nostalgic of all motor race-related vehicles, former great factory-team racing car transporters are today held in great awe and respect.

In very few cases is that more true than of the stupendous background history and provenance of the fully-restored and truly imposing Fiat-Bartoletti now offered here. For this is not only (according to contemporary notes of the great motoring correspondent Denis Jenkinson) the Maserati factory team's great No. 1 transporter of its World Championship-winning 'Fangio 250F' season of 1957 and which would also have taken Fangio's Piccolo 250F (chassis '2533') to the last race of his glittering career at Reims in 1958 it was subsequently acquired by Lance Reventlow for his 'Team America' Scarab assault upon the European Grand Prix road racing establishment in 1960-61.

This Fiat-Bartoletti transporter's next all-American owners then made the most massive impact of the postwar period upon the European road racing establishment as Carroll Shelby's Cobra operation used this enduring team transporter during its ultimately Ferrari-toppling FIA Grand Touring Car

World Championship-winning assault of 1964-65...

This transporter's amazing pure-blood, thoroughbred, motor racing pedigree at World-class International level was then perpetuated as the leading British Ford GT-programme team of Alan Mann Racing, based in Byfleet, England, hauled its cars and associated men and materiel around the World Championship battle zones of Europe.

Ultimately this Fiat-Bartoletti 642 was taken-on by leading Ferrari privateer David Piper and liveried in his bright tone of 'BP green' to carry his Ferrari 275 LM and 'P-car' sports-prototypes through the later 1960s until, in 1969-70, it was acquired by Steve McQueen's Solar Productions team to feature prominently under ever-changing team liveries in what has now become perhaps the ultimate motor race enthusiast cult movie 'Le Mans'.

This great transporter absolutely dripping with 1950s/60s motor racing history was based, just like its Ferrari factory team sisters, upon a Fiat Tipo 642 RN2 'Alpine' bus chassis. It was powered originally by a 92-horsepower 6,650cc six-cylinder diesel in-line Tipo 364A engine, and was completed with custom-made bodywork and vehicle ramps and hoist by Bartoletti of Forli, Italy. Overall dimensions were 9,085mm overall length, 2,492mm overall width, and 2,924mm overall height. Top speed in original Fiat-engined form was only 85km/h, sufficient for European rural and Alpine roads in period. The transporter could carry three race cars, a considerable stock of spares and tools, and at least seven crew members/mechanics.

Once it had completed its 'Le Mans' filming duties, in Italian-red factory Ferrari look-alike livery, the transporter was acquired and run for a while by Anthony Bamford's renowned JCB Historic racing team in the UK, before passing in later years to Cobra enthusiast and noted 'Cobra-Ferrari Wars' historian and author Michael Shoen for his own marque collection.

However, the vehicle unrestored and in severely dilapidated (though, as it subsequently proved, still runnable) condition later became neglected victim of a complex family situation which saw it lying effectively abandoned in the open fortunately in near-perfectly dry desert-air preservation conditions at Mesa, Arizona for many years.

It eventually fell to Cobra and Scarab owner, collector and enthusiast Don Orosco who, by coincidence had also once owned and restored Fangio's swansong 1958 French GP Piccolo 250F '2533' to become curious about the fate of the once-famous old Maserati/Scarab/Cobra transporter. It had been such a distinctive feature of European World Championship race paddocks in the late '50s and early '60s its lure proved magnetic. He recalls how "I asked Carroll Shelby what had happened to it and he just laughed and said 'Everybody and his brother has tried to get that sumbitch, and they've all got absolutely nowhere. Don't waste your time tryin'...".

To the intensely competitive Mr Orosco that was like a red rag to a bull. Carroll Shelby eventually provided Michael Shoen's telephone number that led to contact with his brother Joe Shoen, President of the AMERCO group which owned the U-Haul truck rental company. A remark by Michael Shoen then led Mr Orosco to a strategy which might perhaps unlock brother Joe's deeply entrenched disinclination to sell the transporter to anyone within the Cobra world.

Approaches long went unanswered until out of the blue Mr Orosco received a telephone call from one Harry Duchene (spl?) U-Haul Vice-President responsible for maintenance and manufacturing, in Scottsdale, Arizona - who simply asked "I hear you made a call about wanting one of our trailers?".

Don Orosco then explained that he had two Scarab Grand Prix cars and a Scarab sports car and was indeed interested in the former all-American team's 1960-61 period European-based transporter. Mr Duchene proved to be extremely friendly and cooperative and Mr Orosco flew down to meet him in Scottsdale, from where they drove to Mesa.

It was there, in an otherwise yawningly empty U-Haul used-equipment disposal yard, that Harry showed Don the dilapidated, faded, rusting Fiat-Bartoletti...just lying there in the baking sun, all alone and evidently in desperate need of finding a friend. Full photographic coverage of this transporter in the Mesa yard as acquired can be viewed on the internet at:

<http://www.montereyspeedandsport.com/album/fiat-bartoletti-transporter/>

Its windshields had fallen out, its doors were hanging open and it was plain that acquiring the vehicle would be merely the start of perhaps the most complicated and demanding restoration ever envisaged by a classic-car collector/racer. Eventually a sale was agreed, and Harry Duchene himself proved a wonderful ally, having the transporter checked through in his U-Haul workshop, its probably JCB-installed turbocharged Bedford engine found to be in runnable order, and the old, long-stored engine oil itself looking as fresh as if it had just been added.

Mr Orosco's pessimistic estimate of just how extensive and expensive restoration of this Fiat-Bartoletti would need to be, proved to be well wide of the mark. The process proved infinitely more costly and demanding than that.

He recalls: "For a start we had to make new windshields I have a spare pair which is now included with this Lot while extrusions had to be made to match the Bartoletti originals. For just 40 feet of the correct-section extrusion I had to have a thousand feet made. The dashboard instruments had to be replaced and I managed to make contact with an Italian bus restoration group on the internet, and found a guy who could supply as-original brand-new old-stock gauges. That was a major success. We had to go through the whole thing, and after its long years in Europe the rust had got into it and we ended-up with extensive new framing and body panelling. I have still got the original rusted-out Ferrari-liveried nose panelwork as a wall-hanger in my workshop." A visit to the then long-replaced Bartoletti factory in Forli yielded news that "everything at all relevant had finally been scrapped in a clear-out just a few years before" apart from a set of four rear-wheel grease caps which Mr Orosco was able to acquire from a sympathetic Bartoletti employee.

Mr Orosco and his restoration team had the Bartoletti-lettered pressed-steel stampings which featured in various locations around the vehicle painstaking re-sourced with new dies made, while 0.090-inch thick steel panelling was hand-crafted and fashioned to re-skin the vehicle overall. The finish quality achieved was so fine that the surface required absolutely no filling before it was resprayed in-house at Mr Orosco's workshop by Jesse Cruz in contemporary RAI team livery, as now offered here the blue also corresponding closely to subsequent Shelby Cobra team colours.

All the complex vehicle ramp equipment was serviced, renovated and replaced where necessary. All the manual elevation lines were renewed, and the transporter cab with a four-man bench seat in the rear, driver's bucket seat plus a two-seat passenger section up front, was remade and re-upholstered. The original fold-down metal and canvas bunk bed was also renewed, this vital feature permitting en route driver changes without losing any vital travel time between race weekends and venues across Europe.

The wooden decking was replaced in locking tongue-and-groove South African hardwood, each plank cut to differing widths as original, while storage area planking was renewed with vertical-grain fir.

Fabrication on the project was handled by master craftsmen Olle Eriksson, Brad Hand and Willy Stryker, with two hired-in fabricators "Brian and Mike". The restoration involved labouring five days per week for some eighteen frenetically busy months to complete the task in time for the 2008 Monterey Historics race meeting at Laguna Seca, and the associated Pebble Beach Concours.

Eventually this Fiat-Bartoletti was revived in all its original Reventlow Automobiles Inc team condition apart from retention of the intensely practical and wise Bedford bus turbocharged diesel engine in place of the in truth rather feeble original 92-horsepower Fiat power unit. The replacement engine has since proved capable of powering this Fiat-Bartoletti at an effortless 65mph cruise "...all day long, and it just doesn't notice hills".

With the two Scarab single-seaters and Mr Orosco's magnificent Scarab sports-racing car all loaded on board, this Italian-born American motor racing icon was then driven into Laguna Seca's Monterey Historics' paddock to a tumultuous reception from the throng of patriotic enthusiasts. Its appearance that day was described by one observer as being "Like Moses parting the sea, with every onlooker clapping, waving, sharing high-fives with the truck crew". Mr Orosco: "We certainly got a fantastic reception, and it was one of those real lump-in-the-throat moments after such an immense project and such an intense period of really painstaking work. For the Californian fans in particular, this was the Scarab team of our youth revived and alive again at Laguna".

In a later eBay search Mr Orosco found someone selling a bed cover and curtains fashioned from fabric featuring three Scarab Grand Prix cars, one red, one yellow and one blue, amongst other period Formula 1 models. He then discovered that the vendor's mother had bought them in period from her local Woolworth's store. Scarab-founder Lance Reventlow's mother Barbara Hutton had been primary heiress to the Woolworth fortune and it seems that she had had the design woven in-period into bedspreads for car-mad kids. Mr Orosco bought the fabric for \$100 as crew accommodation linings for the correctly blue-exterior cab curtains that now furnish this remarkable machine.

And there is a remarkable postscript to the story of this Fiat-Bartoletti transporter. During its frenetically-busy active life it has seen truly great cars the works Maserati 250Fs, the works Scarabs, the works Shelby Cobra roadsters and Cobra Daytona Coupes, the quasi-works Ford GTs and so many private Ferraris - driven at World Championship-winning level by such toweringly iconic motor racing figures as Juan Manuel Fangio, Jean Behra, Harry Schell, Dan Gurney, Phil Hill, Ken Miles, Graham Hill and so very many more.

But in 1960 Denis Jenkinson revered Continental Correspondent of the British magazine 'Motor Sport' wrote of this transporter as follows:

"It was a Wednesday in Modena, we had recovered from the excitement of the race the previous weekend, and the build-up for the race the following weekend had not started. A leisurely lunch had been taken in the Albergo Reale and we were sitting around in the restaurant when one of the group said: 'Why don't we go to the opera this evening?' It seemed like a good idea and we soon mapped out a plan. It was a Verdi evening at the Arena di Verona, which the Mille Miglia competitors used to roar past flat-out on their way through the great city of Verona.

"It was a mere 70 miles from Modena, there were four of us, so our two Porsches were adequate but then Henry" the RAI transporter driver left behind in Modena by his American team "...said 'Gee, I'd like to join you'.

"His big transporter lived in a side street, it being his only means of getting about. Having decided he'd like to come to the opera with us, the rest was easy. We'd all go in the Maserati transporter...!

"But over dinner Henry mentioned that one or two 'other guys' would like to join us, and there was plenty of room in the transporter. Before we all clambered in, the count was about 11, the driver and two beside him, three in the living compartment on a sofa and three on the fold-down bed and two more squeezing in somewhere. There may have been a few more, but they were all motor racing people, so it was a happy and jolly bunch.

"From Modena to Verona was flat and across-country before the Autostrada was built and we made good time... Henry was heading for a car park outside the open-air arena. 'No!' screamed the attendant. 'Motor coaches are around the other side'. Henry explained it wasn't a motor coach, it was a private vehicle containing 11 people. If it had been a motor coach there would have been 63 people on board. The attendant was adamant...so we went to the coach park. 'No!' Another car park attendant : 'You don't have a commercial licence, you can't come in here'. Henry explained again it was really just a big private car with 11 people on board but the coach park attendant didn't want to know, so it was back to the Arena again.

"This time we waited until the attendant was a bit preoccupied and then drove straight in without stopping and kept going to the end of the car park. By the time the man caught up with us we had all scrambled out and formed quite a large crowd around Henry as he locked the cab door. At eleven to one the poor chap did not have much chance...."

The attendant then tried to charge them for the twenty Fiat 500 cars he claimed could park in the space taken by the transporter, but the group argued that there were only 11 of them so how could they have driven twenty Fiat 500s into his car park? Two girls with them could not drive at all, so that left only nine, and then one person in each car was uneconomical so they would surely have brought in even fewer 500s? Two of the lads produced a steel tape to prove conclusively that the truck did not take the space of twenty cars, adding that it was specially made to carry only three. They finally

bought only eight tickets and got to see the opera!

Jenks concluded his story with this: "Leaving the car park was no problem, once we had all packed in again, as no car driver was going to argue with the big Bartoletti transporter, and Henry drove us back to Modena with everyone singing or humming their favourite aria and with a full chorus at times. A couple of night caps in the bar of the Reale when we got back and everyone agreed that our Night at the Opera had been a huge success...".

Fostered not least by the magnificent motor vehicle now offered here. Ladies and gentlemen, we most earnestly commend this magnificent and wonderfully historic Fiat-Bartoletti transporter to the market.

Please note this Lot is subject to 5% import tax if remaining in the EU.

Bonhams 1793

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AUCTIONEERS SINCE 1793

Titel Herr

Vorname Jamie

Nachname Knight

101 New Bond Street

London

W1S 1SR

Vereinigtes Königreich

Telefonnummer +44-2074685801

Fax +44-2074477401

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