
Tazio Nuvolari – the legendary racing driver from Mantua

25 March 2003 | Classic Driver



With its Gran Turismo concept study unveiled at the Geneva Motor Show, Audi pays tribute to one of the greatest racing drivers of his day, and at the same time establishes a link between the advanced technology of the Audi Nuvolari quattro and the history of the marque with the four-ring emblem, which was always dedicated to sporting character and style both on the road and on the racing circuit.

61 Grand Prix victories and other international successes confirmed Tazio Nuvolari as one of the greatest racing drivers in the period before the Second World War. He raced actively for almost thirty years, and it is to his artistry at the wheel that Auto Union owed many of its Grand Prix triumphs.

Nuvolari, who was born in Mantua, Italy, in 1892, died in 1953, and therefore the 50th anniversary of his death will be commemorated on August 11, 2003. His contribution to motor racing history may well be greater than that of any other driver in the first half of the twentieth century. Nuvolari's daring approach and his spectacular driving style were as much part of his image as the yellow pullover that he always wore during races.

This slim-built Italian actually began his racing career on two wheels, and remained loyal to the motorcycle until 1930, though his first outings at the wheel of a racing car date from 1927. From that

date on, he was victorious in an innumerable number of events, notably for Alfa Romeo.



In 1938 Tazio Nuvolari joined Auto Union and drove its 12-cylinder Type D racing cars in Grand Prix events and hillclimbs. Acquiring his services enabled the Auto Union racing department to avoid the difficult situation into which it was plunged as a result of Bernd Rosemeyer's tragic death at the end of January 1938, during a speed record attempt. Tazio Nuvolari, incidentally, was one of the few drivers who proved capable of mastering the mid-engined Auto Union racing car immediately.

His first victory was gained in 1938 in the country of his birth. On September 11, 1938 he crossed the line ahead of the field in the Italian Grand Prix, held in Monza. Only a few weeks later, he repeated this success on the Donington circuit in England. This series of successes ended on September 3, 1939 in Belgrade, when Nuvolari won the last Grand Prix to be held before war broke out.

Power and torque are delivered to the wheels according to traction needs via a six-speed automatic transmission using shift-by-wire technology. The driver can also select the gears manually at paddles on the steering wheel.

For the past twelve years, an event has been held every September that pay tribute to this great driver: the Gran Premio Nuvolari. This is a consistency run for historic cars over a route some 850 kilometres long, starting and finishing in Mantua, Nuvolari's birthplace. AUDI AG and its Italian importer Autogerma are the main sponsors of this event, for which many magnificent historic racing cars are entered each year.

Text/Photos: AUDI Presse.

<https://www.classicdriver.com/en/article/tazio-nuvolari-%E2%80%93-legendary-racing-driver-mantua>

© Classic Driver. All rights reserved.