

CLASSIC DRIVER

Viva Vaccarella - Sicilian legend re-united with Ferrari 312PB at Goodwood 2003

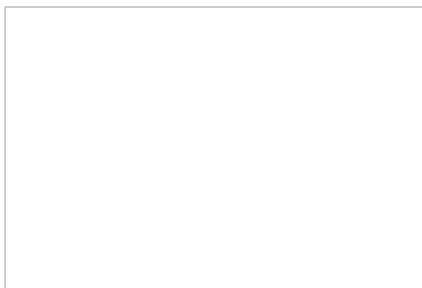
The Goodwood Festival of Speed saw one of Italy's greatest road-racing drivers not only re-united with the type of car he drove in the 1973 Targa Florio, the F1 engined, 'boxer' 3 litre Ferrari 312PB, but also with his co-driver in that greatest of races, Arturo Merzario. Nino Vaccarella, winner of the Targa for Ferrari in 1965 and Alfa in 1971, is the legendary Sicilian lawyer from Collesano who, in the 60s and 70s, made this race his own due to unique local knowledge of the 45 mile course - and world class driving ability.



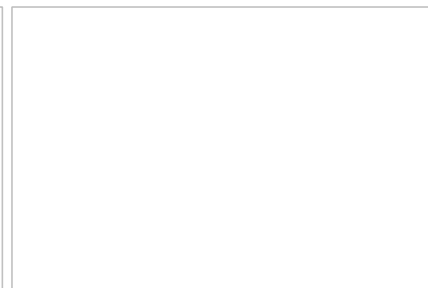
(c) Roger Dixon 2003

Meeting Vaccarella on the Sunday of the event (celebrating its tenth anniversary), the great man looked as spry and dapper as ever. "Yes, I like Goodwood and it is a pleasure to meet so many old friends, and see some of my old cars. This was the type of car I shared with Arturo in 1973, who had won the 1972 race with Sandro Munari, I was racing for Alfa Romeo then." He shrugs and makes a little Italian hand gesture; the car had retired early in the race. "In 1973, Cesare Fiorio [Lancia's Sporting Director] was in charge of the Scuderia at the Targa and invited me back. Arturo and I were the local 'experts', Jackie Ickx and Brian Redman drove the other 312PB. We were fastest in practice but in the race Arturo had a flat tyre on the first lap. The transmission was damaged - we retired. The last proper Targa too."

With a look that says 'What can you do?' he shakes hands having been beckoned to his waiting car, standing next to various Alfa 33TTs, one of which driven by the tiny Merzario. The mechanics quickly strap him in and start explaining the starting procedure. As if to say 'Basta!' Vaccarella quickly pushes the starter, engages gear and with a scream from the 450bhp flat 12 propels the car down to the starting line for its 'demonstration' run.



Arturo Merzario with the 1972 Ferrari 312PB



Targa Florio legend, Nino Vaccarella

Interviewed on the public address system later, Vaccarella is asked whether Goodwood reminds him of the Targa "Stone walls and no barriers yes for 1 mile, but you must remember in Sicily it was 11 laps and 800kms. It was difficult to learn the course..."

No further comment is needed.

Editor's Notes -

Nino Vaccarella first won the Targa Florio in 1965 driving a works Ferrari 330 P2. An official Ferrari factory sportscar driver since 1963 he had cut his racing teeth prior to that driving for Count Volpi's SSR team in a 250 GT SWB and GTO. Sharing a 275P with John Surtees in 1964, he scored the first of many successes at the Nurburgring finishing first overall. During the sixties he mixed a successful legal career in Palermo with

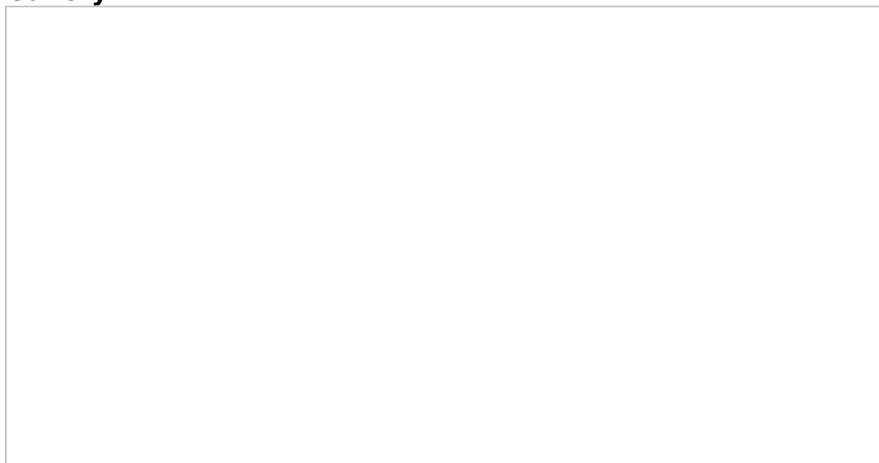
works drives for Ferrari, Alfa Romeo and Porsche at the classic events such as Le Mans, Monza, the Nurburgring, Spa, Daytona, Sebring and of course the Targa. Ferraris he has driven include the 250, 275 and 330P series, the immortal 250LM and P3/4, Dino 166 and 206P, works 512S and private 512M, while for the Milanese Team he was a key member of the squad in 1968, 1969, 1971 and 1972 seeing the T33 from 2 litre power through to the successful 3 litre model in 1971 when he scored his last Targa victory. A lone outing in a Porsche 906 at the 'Ring in 1966 breaks up this almost exclusively Italian driving career. To many people he is known as the embodiment of the 'local expert', able to beat F1 drivers on his home ground but his skills were greater than that, as his successes at all the other great circuits show.

At Goodwood Nino Vaccarella was driving a 1972 Ferrari 312PB sports prototype. Based around the contemporary F1 flat 12 engine the car had made its debut the previous year against the might of the Porsche 917s. Devastatingly fast in the hands of F1 drivers Ickx and Regazzoni, the car was too fragile, or just plain unlucky, to be successful. With a change in the regulations for 1972 (outlawing the 5 litre cars) the Scuderia steamrolled the opposition with a three car entry for most rounds, having built eight cars in total. Ickx, (who also drove the car at Goodwood this year), winning six races. This particular car is shown in the livery of Merzario/Redman, a pairing that won the 1972 Monza 1000kms. In 1973 Ferrari were faced with stiffer opposition from Matra, Alfa Romeo and Mirage but fielded an improved, but very similar team of cars. Merzario was on the driving roster but Vaccarella was only entered for 'his' race - the Targa, and as we have seen above, the car was retired before he even took the wheel. Narrowly losing the Championship to Matra, Ferrari then abandoned works-entered sports car racing - and has not returned since.

The Ferrari 312PB Nino Vaccarella was driving at Goodwood has, for many years, been prepared for modern historic racing by a leading Ferrari specialist in Hamburg. For more information about their services please click [HERE](#).

Story/photos - Steve Wakefield. Main photo [Roger Dixon](#) - Copyright

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