

CLASSIC DRIVER



Grand Prix de Pau Historique 2005

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- **How many motor racing circuits in the world are overlooked by snow capped mountains? Not many, but Pau in the foothills of the Pyrenees is one of them. It is a classic road circuit and has been in use since 1935 with some of the past winners there being Nuvolari, Fangio, Clark, Rindt and Montoya, and in addition are those two great French drivers Behra and Trintignant.**

Each year, the weekend after the F3 meeting, Pau hosts a historic race weekend, with the roads being closed to local traffic on Saturday and Sunday. Perhaps the track can be best described as Monaco with trees and has an atmosphere very similar to the old Monjuich Park circuit in Barcelona.

Also as Monjuich, the Pau circuit is set in parkland, and twists and turns its way around the grounds of the town's beautiful park. It sweeps up from the river to the grounds of the Palais Beaumont Casino via a series of full lock hairpins and steep uphill sections. There are great free viewing points to be found some 20 metres above the track by looking down from the town's railings. At the statue of Marshal Foch the track starts its journey back down towards the river again using a series of hairpin bends and a chicane. On this down hill section the cars blast past villa doorways and garden walls, some of which provide the run off areas, usually with their owners sitting on top to keep an eye on the whitewash.

In the centre of it all was a tree filled paddock packed with historic cars, it could easily be 1955. Shell's Ferrari Maserati Challenge cars were arranged two by two in little domed tents with a very

smart hospitality area in the centre of it all. There was even an ex-works Ferrari transporter present,



circa 1960, to complete the scene.

Grand Prix and Sports Car Masters had on display an ex-Rindt Lotus 49 which they hope will run in their F1 race soon. It, like most of the cars at Pau, was immaculate; I look forward to seeing it back on a racing circuit soon.

The racing was every bit as good as the setting; we were treated to a weekend full of first class events. With a 90 min race for "Gentlemen Drivers" in their Sports and GT cars which proved very exciting, and provided us the sight of a 1965 Porsche 904 being driven at unbelievable speeds.

Two of the events for historic F1 cars really showed the cars of the '50s and '60s were designed for this type of track. With the 1970s 3-litre models looking much more of a handful, but none the less great to watch

Shell's Ferrari and Maserati Challenge cars provided the crowd with a wonderful array of mouth-watering machinery and the sound of those exhausts echoing around the streets of Pau made the whole weekend worthwhile.

In addition to all this there were events for historic F2, Formula Ford and saloons, all providing some heart stopping moments during their races.

Next year sees the biannual running of Historic Monaco and Pau Grand Prix Historic usually follows on the next weekend, so why not do some "Classic Driving" and tour between the two events?

*Story and photos by Roger Dixon - all **strictly copyright**.*





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