

CLASSIC DRIVER

2006 Giro di Sicilia-Targa Florio



As many of you probably know the oldest road race in the world, the Targa Florio, celebrates its centenary this year and several events have been organised in Sicily to celebrate this great race.

The **Veteran Car Club Panormus** have been running their event, the combined **Giro di Sicilia** and **Targa Florio**, for a number of years and this year scored over the opposition with their experience by not only attracting a wonderful entry of cars and drivers from all over the world, but during the week had five famous drivers from the Targa Florio in attendance.



Race winner **Vic Elford** was there to see the cars off on Wednesday's Targa section, saying "The whole event brought memories flooding back". Targa Florio hero **Nino Vaccarella** was in Palermo's Piazza Verdi for the start of the night section, chatting with entrant **Jim Glickenhaus** and admiring his famous P3/4 Ferrari *[above]*. At Sunday's prize giving the trophies were presented by 1973 Targa winner **Gijs Van Lennep**, **Gijs** enjoyed it so much that he stayed on and had lunch with the remaining contestants on Monday. Throughout the week **Gerard Larrousse** and **Nanni Galli** were in attendance mixing with the drivers and admiring their cars, they both even managed some laps of the Syracuse Autodrome with the contestants on Friday.





So how did the week run? The first day saw VCCP pay homage to the Targa Florio with two laps of the Piccolo Madonie circuit starting from the old pit area. Now bear in mind each lap is 44 miles long and reputed to have 900 bends, so with an entry list of cars that dated from 1906 through to 1973 it was obvious that next five days would be a test of both drivers and cars. After lunch the event moved on to the Piazza Verdi in central Palermo for the start of the Giro di Sicilia section, this was a night stage some 140 km long taking the cars from Palermo down the island to it's the south coast. The start brings the city traffic to a halt so it is accompanied by a cacophony of car horns as the local police try to control the reluctant Palermo drivers, it's a wonderful spectacle. As the cars passed through the villages on their way south they were greeted by local inhabitants and handed gifts of flowers and sweets, before arriving at Sciacca after midnight.

Day two takes the cars along the south coast of the island and as this is a regularity event contestants are required to keep to a schedule and undertake some auto tests on route. This leg of the journey is 175 km and the highlight of the day was lunch at the fabulous Villa Fegotto, which is usually reserved for use as a film set but the VCCP had arrange for a stop in this stunning setting, then the cars moved on to the overnight stay at Kamarina.



Morning on day three saw cars and drivers travelling through hills surrounding the medieval town of Ragusa to arrive at the historic Syracuse Autodrome in time for lunch. After another gastronomic delight provided by the VCCP it was time for some laps of this old Grand Prix circuit to follow in the tracks of **Moss** and **Collins**, as I mentioned earlier even messrs **Galli** and **Larrousse** couldn't resist the temptation. Again the early evening was spent at the wheel to reach the overnight stop at Catania.

Day four's motoring was a real test with a 170 km run in the morning to the summit of mount Etna, just below the snow-line at this time of the year, then on to the northern Sicilian coast for lunch. This torturous run alone, through the rugged and beautiful Sicilian countryside, would be enough for most drivers but there was still another 150 snaking km along the northern coast for the afternoon, back towards Palermo to finish the Giro section.



Sunday, the last day, was relatively gentle with a drive into Palermo and a hill climb section up Monte Pellegrino, this is a wonderful hill a hill-climbers dream. So all that was left was an evening of prize giving, mixing with famous racing drivers, and yet more food.

After all those miles the winners did not turn out to have exotic machinery, and there were plenty of marvellous cars on the entry list, it was **Marcello De Simone** and **Dario Attinasi** in their little **1952 Lancia Ardea** that took the honours. With crews from twelve different countries, a total forty seven historic cars it's a truly international event, and every team I spoke to had had a great time, as well as an Australian group who had come over to spectate and follow the event.











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