

CLASSIC DRIVER

The 2006 Ferrari World Finals



Over 40,000 people attended the annual end of year Ferrari party, this time held at Monza. We were invited to join a select number of Ferrari GB clients and find out exactly what makes this event so special.

Having the keys to a Ferrari in your pocket is just the start of it; you've now become a member of one of the most exclusive 'clubs' in the world and the doors are open to participate in events as 'one of the family'. These can range from joining [Ferrari GB's Fiorano Ferrari](#) programme of driving experiences and access to prestigious events, to signing up for a season of racing for the **Shell Cup** for Gentleman Drivers in the **Ferrari F430 Challenge** or participating with your classic Ferrari or Maserati in the **Shell Ferrari Historic Challenge**.

There's also **Corse Clienti**, where your ex-Scuderia F1 or sports car is run for you by the people who built prepared and raced it originally, and the **FXX Programme**, the ongoing development project whereby Ferrari obtains feedback on its most powerful non-racing car yet built from non-professional drivers.



As the company's Chief Executive, **Jean Todt**, said on the Saturday of the three day event "The FXX Programme is not only for our clients - they are our test drivers...[this weekend] we will show the rich vintage of our company with our classic car and Corse Clienti activities".



This was a first-time visit to Monza, the glorious ‘Temple of Speed’ and for long the scene of so many Ferrari victories. It’s set in glorious parkland just a few kilometres north east of Milan with easy access via three airports (although *attenzione*, the traffic can be difficult...) and is one of **the** circuits in the world to see.

Trackside viewing is good and with a ‘paddock’ pass you can get pretty well anywhere you want. Needless to say **Ferrari GB** had booked a sizeable hospitality suite overlooking the start-finish line for its 250 clients, and this was the perfect base to see events unfold on-track, have drinks and lunch, meeting friends new and old. They’d also booked a magnificent palazzo for a multi-course dinner on the Saturday evening, candle-lit outside in the foggy Milanese night.



Travelling with them, you'd also be able to

hear **Ross Brawn**, Ferrari's Technical Director, say a few words and conduct a short question and answer session just before the Scuderia with **Michael Schumacher** took to the track for the very last time. A tremendous coup for Ferrari GB's hard-working team headed by MD **Massimo Fedeli**.

On the track, the weekend is a mixture of old and new (very Classic Driver), and each day an impressive 18 of the 29+1 (for Schumacher) FXXs were on the circuit. This is the first time I'd seen the customer cars in action and I can assure you these cars are very quick and noisy - everything you'd want from the 1.5m EURO cost of ownership. Michael participated himself on the Sunday in his dull black car with numbered '30'.

The various **Ferrari F430 Challenge** races were certainly 'challenging' for the nerves of the teams participating as on every lap such was the level of competition that cars would come round clearly showing evidence of close contact. And for older readers tut-tutting in their Lambrusco, have a look at photos from the **Tour de France** in the early '60s, they were all hard at it then, and in 250GTos too...





These races make fantastic entertainment and a 15 minute walk from the paddock to one of the (free) grandstands by the track allows you to savour hard driving at its finest. Never a dull moment in all of the rounds and from a British perspective it was a shame Ferrari GB's **Ross Kaiser**, in the team's newly-liveried **Vertu** car, couldn't convert his pole position on Sunday into a win. We'll be looking at greater depth into how you can go Gentleman Racing in one of these cars later on this year.

The **Shell Ferrari Historic Challenge** races you can read about [elsewhere on Classic Driver](#), suffice it to say both the turn-out and quality of entries was excellent, matched by some close racing too.

For someone who's never really appreciated owning a modern ex-F1 car the **Maranello F1 Clienti** department's activities at Monza was a revelation. You get the same guys who either tend the current team's cars, or who may have run yours in the past, dressed immaculately in Scuderia clothing with all the computers, overhead gantries, timing equipment and telemetry looking after little old **you**. These cars are fantastically fast in experienced amateur's hands and the sight is an impressive one on its own.



With all this (and let's not forget the **Scuderia Ferrari Club** members taking part in the final round of the **2006 Soap Box** race) done and dusted it was time for Michael to take centre stage and give the *Tifosi* a treat. In front of an adoring crowd, and joined on the grid by **Luca di Montezemolo**, **Piero Ferrari** and **Felipe Massa**, the multiple world champion bade farewell to his fans in a cloud of tyre smoke and some blisteringly fast lappery.

Di Montezemolo summed it up in the Sunday morning press conference "This is Michael's day...it is his party and we are here to thank him".

I think we have to thank **everyone** for a wonderful weekend, going all the way back to the pre-war days of Alfa Romeo grand prix cars run by Enzo Ferrari with the yellow shield with its black prancing horse on their sides.

Monza 2006 had it all; excitement, emotion, glamour and above all the intangible sense of style that is Ferrari.

Text: Steve Wakefield

Photos: Ferrari

Gallery

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