CLASSIC DRIVER

6th Grand Prix de Monaco Historique

This month's staging of the 6th Grand Prix *Historique* at Monaco coincided with a personal anniversary. I promise not to bore you with too many details, but it marked 40 years since I first visited the Principality to attend a Grand Prix. Unusually for a Grand Prix venue, the circuit has changed little over that time. Admittedly, there has been the addition of the Rascasse and Swimming Pool complexes but the majority of the lap remains as it was in 1968, when I watched Graham Hill take victory in his Gold Leaf Lotus 49.

In fact, with those two exceptions, the circuit has changed little in its 79-year history and that's what makes it such a special and unique place to stage a historic motorsport meeting. Watch a Bugatti rush through **Casino Square** and you're transported back to the very first **Monaco Grand Prix** in 1929, when **William Grover (Williams)** won in a similar car; or look at a **Maserati 250F** blasting through **Tabac** corner just as **Fangio** did on his way to win in 1957. Your nostalgia doesn't have to stop at the cars as, again this year, two-times Monaco Grand Prix winner **Sir Stirling Moss** was in attendance, driving a **1950 Frazer Nash Le Mans Replica** in the sports car race.

This year's entry and racing complemented the classic venue, with full grids of historic cars, many with a rich history – and names such as **Nuvolari**, **Chiron**, **Gurney**, **Beltoise** and **Regazzoni** came tripping off the commentator's tongue. Yet today's competitors were in no way overawed by their historic machinery and provided some great racing: the dice for first place between **Julian Bronson**, **ERA D Type**, and **Matt Grist**, **Alfa Romeo Tipo B**, in the pre-1947 race for Grand Prix cars was a sight to behold. Eventually, Julian hung onto the lead to take victory in a car that he had only driven for a few practice laps before the meeting. In the pre-1953 Sports Car race, the two C-type Jaguars of **Nigel Webb** and **David Wenman** ran in tyre-smoking, nose-to-tail formation throughout the whole 10 laps, with David just squeezing past on the last lap to secure second spot by two seconds over Nigel. American **Duncan Dayton** proved that he has recovered from his swimming pool accident by winning in both the Pre-1961 Front-Engined GP race in a **Lotus 16**, and again in the Pre-1975 Formula 1 race in his **Brabham BT33**.

Other winners were: **Formula Junior** – **John Monson BMC MK1**; **Formula 1 1975/78** – **Paul Edwards Penske PC3**; **Pre-1966 Rear-Engined GP cars** – Simon Hadfield Lotus 21; and **John Ure's Fraser Nash Le Mans Replica** in the **pre-1953 Sports Car event**.

The organisers, the **Automobile Club de Monaco**, filled the lunch break void with three 'demo' runs, the first of which was to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the **GP Moto de Monaco**, thus providing spectators with the unusual sight of 15 assorted 1930/40s motorcycles tackling the circuit's hills and hairpins. This was followed by a half-hour, ear-splitting **F1 Ferrari** parade, with cars ranging from **Ascari's 1952 F500** to **Schumacher's F2004**. Perhaps the most mouthwatering display was put on by **Audi**, who engaged **Jacky Ickx** to pilot a pre-War **Auto Union** for an all-too-brief three laps, the sight and sound of this silver torpedo circulating through Monaco's streets and leaving us all wanting more.

Word has gone round that the **Grand Prix de Monaco *Historique*** is a great event and now the grandstands are selling out, the cafés and hotels are full, and the historic motorsport scene sees Monaco in May as the place to be. I can't understand why it's taken so long. I could have told them 40 years ago. Mind you, half the cars racing over the weekend weren't historic then. In fact, many of them weren't even a twinkle in the designer's eye. Oh dear, now I do feel old…

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