

CLASSIC DRIVER

1957 Maserati 150 GT Spider: A race-bred prototype

Lead

Some cars are born of a meticulous and methodical design process. Others simply develop in the heat of competition, and 'just happen' as fast road cars. This singular Maserati is one of the latter.

In the form you see here, the pale ivory roadster is the coachbuilt prototype of a planned series of Maserati road cars. Just as suitable, one would imagine, for occasional hillclimbs and road races as for touring the Côte d'Azur.

The fact that the production run never happened (the Modenese company chose instead to develop the less competition-focused 3500 GT) makes the story more fascinating, and this very car – to be offered at auction by Gooding & Co. at Scottsdale next January – all the more valuable.

So how did it come about?







In that mid-50s period, Maserati was best known for its 250F Formula 1 car (everyone's idea of a 1950 GP single-seater) and a variety of fast, reliable, small-capacity sports cars for gentlemen drivers to enjoy the Targa Florio, the Mille Miglia, Le Mans and the other great road races of the period.

This car started life as an A6GCS sports-racing car. It enjoyed an active time on the circuits in 1954, before being modified by the factory to serve as the prototype for the three-litre 300S, Maserati's contender for the World Sports Car Championship, a model subsequently to be driven by Jean Behra and Stirling Moss.



The next stage in its life was to be reconfigured mechanically and rebodied by the company's traditional coachbuilder of racing cars, Medardo Fantuzzi, into the car you see here: a pre-production prototype for a high-performance road car. Sadly, the competition-bred car was just too expensive to build.

Having been the subject of a painstaking restoration by marque specialist Steve Hart, the car is now in sparkling condition with its original, matching-numbers engine, A6G/2000 gearbox, 250F Grand Prix-type brakes and striking coachwork by Fantuzzi.

With the tuned motor producing a snappy 195bhp and the small car weighing just 860kg (1900lb), this is likely to be one brisk performer.

One can only think of what might have been, had Maserati decided to build a series of 150 GTs. Then again, it makes this car all the rarer - \$3,000,000 - 4,000,000 rare, to be precise.

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