

CLASSIC DRIVER

Timeless Classics: Ferrari 250 GT 'Tour de France'

Lead

The Ferrari 250 GT 'Tour de France' – originally named the 250 GT Berlinetta – sired a dynasty of road and race Ferraris that were hugely successful in the 1950s and '60s, and today command the car world's top prices. Without the 250 'TdF', there would be no 250 GTO, no SWB, no California Spider...

What's in a name?



The TdF acquired its nickname retrospectively, as a result of winning the 1956 Tour de France Automobile in the hands of the flamboyant and daring Spanish marquis, Alfonso de Portago. He too had a nickname – 'Fon' – which is a mercy, given that Fon's full official title was a mite harder to remember: Alfonso Cabeza de Vaca y Leighton, Carvajal y Are, 13th Conde de la Mejorada, 12th Marquis de Portago.

Scaglietti's swoops





When, in 1956, Ferrari turned its attention back to sports-racing cars after a full-on Grand Prix focus the previous year, the Italian marque thought its 250 GT chassis would make a good basis for a new road-going competition sports car. Ferrari therefore commissioned Scaglietti to build the coachwork for nine cars initially, the body featuring a truncated fastback tail that incorporated a large glass section, a long, curvaceous bonnet and an 'egg-crate' grille (Zagato, meanwhile, designed the bodies of another five first-series cars).

The new Berlinetta achieved creditable results in hillclimbs and sprints that year, but nothing to touch Alfonso de Portago's outright win on the Tour de France.

The actual Tour de France winner



The car in the pictures is that actual car – chassis 0557GT (with an engine number to match) – that de Portago drove to victory in the great French event. It was the fifth of only seven Scaglietti-bodied competition cars built in that first run of 250 GT Berlinettas, but certainly the most historically significant of all the Tour de France cars – subsequently named, as they were, after this one example. Indeed, it's one of the most important of all Ferraris.

A dash of Pebble provenance



De Portago took his car, with its Italian road registration of BO 69211, to many other victories before his untimely death in a Ferrari 335 S in the 1957 Mille Miglia. Passing through the hands of several top collectors, the TdF was given a sensitive but thorough ground-up restoration in the early 1990s, and subsequently won many of the world's top concours events, including a First in Class at Pebble Beach.

[This outstanding piece of Ferrari history will be offered for sale](#) at the [RM Sotheby's Monterey auction](#), on Saturday 15 August 2015.

Gallery

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