

Modena Cento Ore 2019

What a comeback! At the end of the first day of this year's Modena 100 Ore, no one would have put money on Belgian crew Glen Janssens and Tom De Geetere taking the trophy, but that is exactly what they did! After making a great start in their 1981 Porsche 911 SC, winning the first special stage, the rest of Day 1 was something of a disaster for them, as they accumulated penalties and suffered a collision (not their fault) with another competitor during the night race on the Misano race track. As a result, they closed Day 1 in 20th position with 1 minute and 48 seconds to recover, not to mention a missing rear right wheel arch, which their technical



team quickly had to find a way of rebuilding. But over the following days, their fortunes changed and, helped by some unlucky drivers in front of them, they did very well. Several cars, in turn, led the field, but in the end, it was Janssens and De Geetere who finished first in the Competition GTS Class at Modena Cento Ore 2019.



The 2019 Modena Cento Ore

The 19th Modena Cento Ore left no one in any doubt that this is one of the classic car world's most amazing events. The formula is wonderful: around 100 racing cars spend five days covering about 1000 kilometers on Italian roads. In the course of the event they compete on four different race tracks (this year, Misano, Imola, Mugello and Modena) and, each day, in four different special stages (closed road hillclimbs). The evenings are given over to elegant black-tie dinners, beach parties and a selection of the very best of Italian cuisine prepared by decorated chefs. The heat of the

competition is intense and over the five days around 25% or 30% of the cars are forced to drop out, while many others manage to keep going only thanks to the passion and remarkable expertise of the teams of mechanics. Nevertheless, by the end, many of the cars bear the battle scars of the race on their bodies.

Although, as we have said, the competition was pretty intense, it was wonderful to see how, once the checkered flag had come down, there immediately emerged a real sense of friendship and camaraderie among the participants — a gentlemanly spirit that even saw some drivers exchanging parts to help out direct competitors. As always at the Modena Cento Ore, as at other meetings organized by Canossa Events, the organization was faultless, and this left the entrants with just one “duty”: to have fun! The most memorable social occasions this year were the lunch at Imola Castle, just minutes away from the race track, the dinner (on stage) at the Teatro della Pergola in Florence — this is the world’s oldest theatre still in use —, and the beach party at Forte dei Marmi Bambaissa. The latter has become a sort of trademark of the Modena 100 Ore, and it is one of the classic car world’s best loved traditions.

Regularity

The Modena Cento Ore is not only about racing. There is also a dedicated Regularity competition for those participants who prefer to take part in a slightly more sedate way. Unlike normal regularity trials, where competitors are told the average speed they must respect, in the Modena Cento Ore it is the crew itself that sets the average speed it intends to record on the tracks. Each team sets a standard time on the first lap, and then has to stick to this, to within a hundredth of a second, on the following three laps. Actually, the pace chosen by some entrants was comparable to the lap times recorded by the Competition class entrants...

The cars

It would be great to be able to devote a chapter to each single car entered in this year's Modena 100 Ore, as the level of the participants was amazingly high. In-period Le Mans or Mille Miglia entrants, as well as Tour de France winners, ex-works, prototypes and so on, are all common sights at the Modena Cento Ore. Among this year's line-up, we particularly loved the 1957 Ferrari 250 GT Tour de France (chassis #0703 GT), the car that took 9th place overall in the 1957 Mille Miglia, driven by Italian Albino Buticchi. Another highlight was the 1979 BMW M1 Procar that raced in the 1980 24 Hours of Le Mans in Zol-Auto livery, driven by Frenchmen François Servanin, Laurent Ferrier and Pierre-François Rousselot. Then there was the 1960 Ferrari 250 GT SWB (chassis #2129 GT) that won the 1960 Tour de France, driven by Willy Mairesse and Georges Berger for Ecurie Francorchamps; this same car also finished 2nd in the 1960 Paris 1000 Kilometers and went on to compete at Le Mans the following year. A further gem was the ex-works 1972 Alpine A110 1.6 S used in the 1972 rally season by JP Nicolas, co-driven by Jean Todt.

The pre-war

Somewhat surprisingly the Competition class entrants included a pre-war car, namely, a 1939 BMW 328 Roadster owned and driven by Albert Otten. The co-driver was Otten's son Julius, who was making his classic car rally debut. "We admit that we are not at all competitive," Albert said, "but we still get enormous pleasure from driving the 328. I know that I can't beat the others and in fact my main priority is to try not to bother them too much on the tracks, but this approach allows me to relax and really enjoy the view, the food and the fantastic organization put in place by Luigi, Francesca and Manuela of Canossa Events. The best bit for me was arriving in Piazza Grande in Modena, where we were greeted by excited

crowds, and had the fantastic cathedral as a backdrop. If I could pick my top car from the other entrants, I'd definitely take the 1956 Maserati 250 S."



The long-term entrant

Englishman Mark Freeman was this year taking part in his sixteenth Modena Cento Ore. In 2019, he competed, together with his son Nicholas, in a 1964 AC Shelby Cobra 289. "We were rather unlucky and made a mistake on the very last corner of the very last special stage, damaging the front right end of the car" he told us. "My mechanics did a great job, and thanks to a plentiful supply of duct tape, we were able to finish. I love the driving in Italy, and even though my Cobra's horsepower gives me a track racing advantage I actually get more fun from competing in the special stages. If I could "steal" a car from another entrant, I'd definitely pick the 1965 Ford GT 40 Prototype."



The Ferrari guy

It's not every day you see a 1960 250 SWB on the race track, but English drivers Adrian and Nicholas Beecroft seemed quite happy at the prospect. "I come here to race" Adrian says, "and I enjoy the special stages and the amazing scenery and roads. The organization, food and hospitality are all perfect, too, with the result that all we have to do is make the most of every single moment, and, for this, I can't imagine anything better than a 250 SWB. If asked to pick another competitor's car, I'd take the 1965 Ford GT 40 Prototype, and I'd probably opt for Imola, maybe my favorite race track, to enjoy it on. I also liked the Ferrari 212 Vignale Barchetta, while the Jaguar E-Type 2+2 brought back many memories for me, because I had one in the 1960s.



The most admired car

Talking with the entrants, it really did seem that the 1965 Ford GT 40 Prototype was the most admired car at this year's Modena Cento Ore. It was driven by two Brits, Richard Meins and Tim Huxley, and seemed unbeatable on the race tracks. "Everybody loves our car because they remember it from when they were teenagers," Tim explained, "but of course that doesn't stop them from trying to give us a hard time on the race track We loved the Mugello track the most, and the driving in Florence was perhaps our highlight. It is amazing how the racing GT 40 can cope with open road traffic, while remaining a very fast car on the track. It is just a little too hot to be called comfortable... Richard and I would love to take home the 1979 BMW M1 Procar, or at least have a chance to drive it. It looks and sounds gorgeous!



The spaceship

In 1979, the BMW M1 Procar was considered one of the most advanced and beautiful supercars to race in. Today, 40 years on, little has changed, and its presence at this year's Modena Cento Ore added a lot of magic to the event. Its Swiss crew, Christophe Caveng and Marco Donatelli, spent five days inside the M1's cramped and noisy cockpit, yet they still seemed to be the happiest guys on earth! "This car is a dream," said Marco, "and every single moment in it is a pleasure. We have had to raise the car few inches in order to get a smoother drive on the bumpy mountain roads, and this will cost us some speed on the race tracks. The car, after all, was developed for tracks, particularly ones with long straights like Le Mans, and it suffers during twisty mountain stages." The M1 had to retire on the last day because of a broken driveshaft. But we are sure it will be back again next year...



The ladies' team

Sharlie Goddard and Suzy Harvey's faces were wreathed in smiles throughout the five days they spent in their 1969 Morgan Plus 8. "We know we are not the fastest," Sharlie told us as she finally enjoyed a well-earned gin & tonic, "and the same goes for our car, but I'll never forget feeling I got when driving it at Mugello — the way the chassis moved in just the right way on the corners. You have to remember that we have a disc-drum brake system and the front discs each have one caliper, which is a far cry from the racing configuration of many of the other cars. This was our first time at the Modena Cento Ore, and we loved it because of the locations and the organization. It was great being escorted through Florence by a police bike: a magical experience indeed."



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