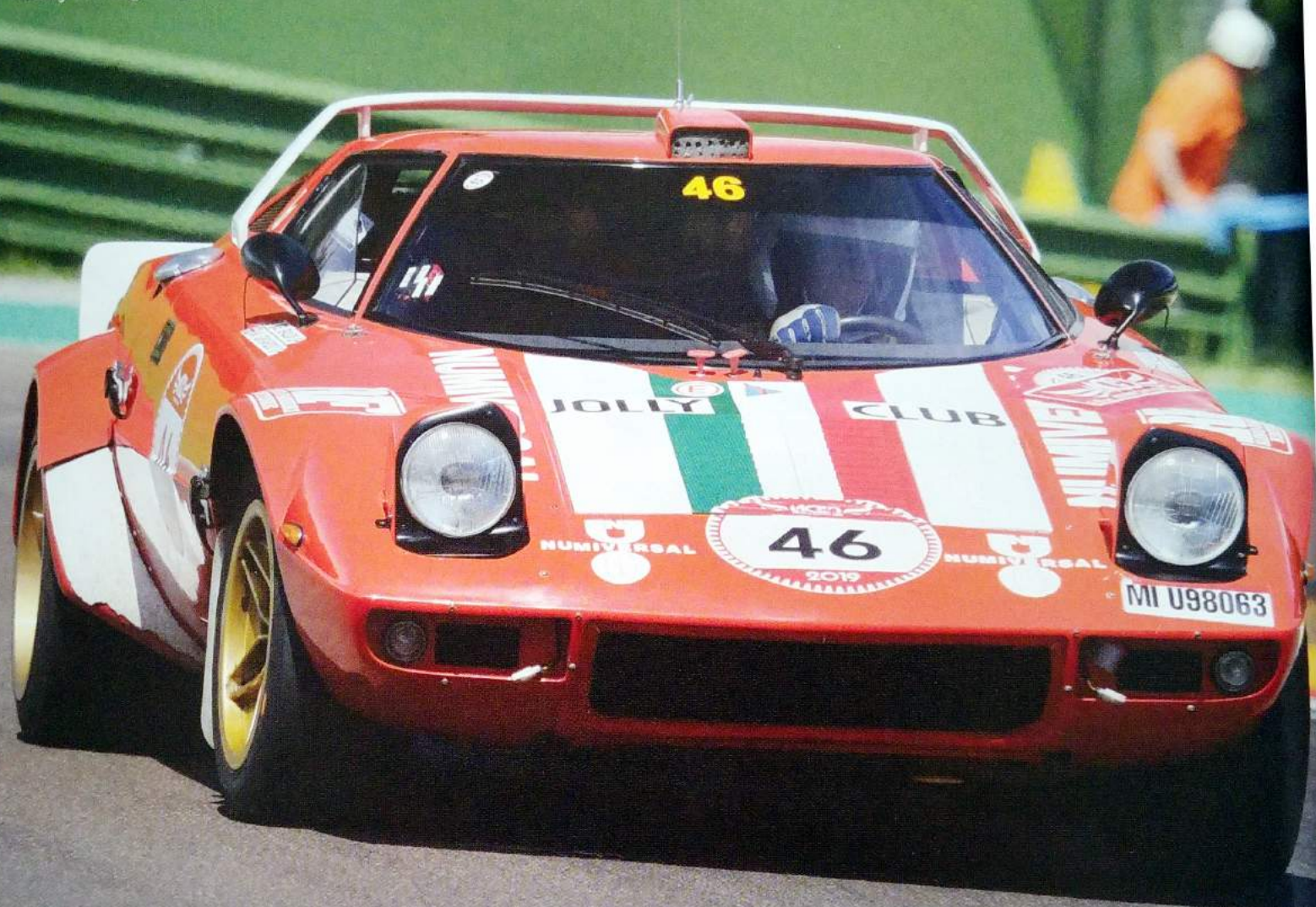


Modena Cento Ore Classic

Road trials and hard-fought action on Italian race tracks marked this year's superb five-day classic

Story & images by Matteo Grazia



It's Tuesday 4 June. Walking through Rimini, the renowned seaside town overlooking the Adriatic Sea, I reach the Federico Fellini Park. In front of the Grand Hotel, it's clear that the Modena Cento Ore Classic is about to begin. Technical checks are underway, and hundreds of enthusiasts and curious tourists are surrounding some amazing cars.

Near the Four Sea Horses fountain, behind which looms the city's famous 101-metre high skyscraper, my eyes immediately fall on the 1973 Ferrari 365 GTB/4 of the Anglo-French crew Alexis Maskell and Gregory Lai. This is the first car I photograph; what an excellent

start! Already I know that 2019 is going to be another great year.

The day passes calmly. Participants are arriving from 14 different nations, mainly European ones but also the United States, Canada and New Zealand. By the evening, 104 classic jewels have arrived to compete, representing 23 different car manufacturers. Almost one third of the total are Italian brands. Notably rich representations consist of Alfa Romeo Giulia Sprint GTA and 1750 GTAm, and high-value Ferraris such as a pair of 250 GT SWBs, three 308 GTB Michelotto Group 4s, and four 365 GTB/4 Daytonas (two of which are Group 4 racing spec, the other

two elegant road-legal models registered in the regularity category).

The list of cars built in Maranello continues with a much-admired 1957 Ferrari 250 GT TDF Berlinetta (Robert Kauffman/Rachel Holt), a 1951 212 Export Vignale (Rerek Whitworth/Miwako Ito) and three prestigious 1960s classics: 275 GTB/4, 275 GTS and 330 GTC from England, Belgium and Switzerland respectively.

The Lancia brand is represented by two Stratos HF Group 4 cars, a 1974 example driven by the Philip Lawrence Kadoorie/Daniels Wells and a 1975 model brought to the event by Max Girardo/Elio



Baldi. There are also two Maseratis: a rare 1956 250S (Stephen Bond/Terry Hopley) and a stunning black 1971 Ghibli from Switzerland. Also this year, the Richard Evans/John Faux crew came with the strikingly rare and very loud 1965 Iso Rivolta IR 340, while a pair of Fiat Dino Spiders entered to compete in the regularity section.

More than 1000km were covered during the five-day event, which was characterised

by moments of intense competition. Starting from Rimini, the Republic of San Marino was crossed, heading for the Tuscany hills with several stops there, in the cities of Arezzo, Florence, Montecatini Terme and Forte dei Marmi (the latter a seaside holiday city, overlooking the Ligurian Sea). Then to the Emilia-Romagna region and the town of Imola with its Rocca Sforzesca, whose first construction works

date back to 1332; Pavullo Nel Frignano located on the Apennines; and finally Modena, with its cathedral, Ghirlandina tower and Piazza Grande, a Unesco World Heritage Site since 1997, and where it all started over 20 years ago.

The cars – both those entered in the competition and the regularity races – faced 11 special road stages closed to traffic, plus action at four of the biggest race tracks in





Italy: Misano, Imola, Mugello and Modena. On the circuits, timed trials and extremely tight sprint races were held. Drivers were clearly not holding back here, with genuine physical contact, sheet metal against sheet metal, a frequent occurrence. The mechanics following the teams were often called upon to intervene, restore and fix any damage and worn parts, as well as patching up the bodywork in makeshift ways. Such was the attrition that some 22 participants were unable to finish all five days.

It was not just about the circuits, but also the special road stages. These required enormous concentration, too. This year's Modena Cento Ore Classic retraced some famous local hillclimb routes. The Spino Pass that separates Emilia-Romagna from Tuscany, and the Giogo Pass in the Mugello hills, were two of the most exciting. In this competition,

consistent performance is fundamental, and achieving excellent results both on track and in the special road stages is the only way to achieve prestigious positions in the final rankings. And anyone can potentially win, the points formula being designed to level performance between cars that are very different to each other.

This year, first podium position was the prerogative of Porsches in both categories. Winner in the 'Competition' section was the 1981 911 SC of Glenn Janssens/Tom Geetere; in the 'Regularity' section, it was the 1961 356 B of Ute Otten/Birgit Saget from Germany. Best results for Italian cars were a victory in the Super Special Stage at the Autodromo di Modena, obtained by Philip Lawrance Kadoorie/Daniels Wells aboard the 1974 Lancia Stratos, while one of the seven 1965 Alfa Romeo Giulia Sprint

GTAs (that of Mathias Koerber/Roberto Restelli) came second overall in the 'Index of Performance' classification.

It must be said, however, that the rankings tell only part of the story. Beyond the final result, it's the atmosphere of friendship and fair play that's most striking, and explains in the best possible way why the success of the Modena Cento Ore Classic continues to grow. This is a well-designed competition where racing moments are perfectly matched by time to relax for the participants. Let's not forget, also, the beauty of travelling through some lovely landscapes, staying in welcoming local facilities and thoroughly enjoying great food.

Thanks should be extended to the hard work of organiser Luigi Orlandini and his staff. We now have to wait and count the months until the next Classic in 2020.

