



September 2003

Sotto Veloce

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Surtees Remembers Ferrari

by Mark Brewer

John Surtees is the only person to capture world championships on motorcycles and automobiles. Surtees switched full-time to racing cars in 1960 with prodigious results. He won the Formula 500 race at Goodwood for the Cooper-BMC factory team. He switched to the Lotus team for his Formula 1 debut in Monte Carlo. He then won the next race, the British Grand Prix at Silverstone. He followed with the pole position in Portugal. Surtees won the World Championship for Ferrari with his win at the Mexican Grand Prix in 1964, but parted ways with Ferrari during the 1966 season due to overabundant political intrigue and team mismanagement.

Reflecting on his split with Ferrari, Surtees says, "If I had the experience and knowledge I have today, I could have dealt with the situation perhaps differently. At the same time, I was a very ambitious and very dedicated person who was willing to make certain that the team won. For instance, at the beginning of the 1966 season, the frustration was that we had a car that was two seconds faster than the so-called new Grand Prix car. But they wouldn't allow me to use it. It started to create a situation that I found impossible."

I Left My Heart in Maranello

He says, "I think part of me is still back in Maranello. I liked being involved in the Italian scene," although, he says, "It was terribly frustrating at times." Surtees respected Enzo Ferrari's background, especially his involvement with Nuvolari in motorcycle racing, and his involvement with Alfa Romeo. He says, "He picked himself up from fairly lowly beginnings and he created Ferrari, which was like a little kingdom for himself. When I went there, he was very much the puppeteer, and we were all just purely puppets. And he loved pulling those strings."

But Ferrari was personable away from Modena, especially on his weekend getaways. "I would sit in back of the Mini Cooper with his chauffeur driving, and him sitting alongside, and we'd go off to his little villa on the Adriatic, and



John Surtees, (left) Grand Marshall for the 2003 Brian Redman International Challenge at Road America, and Brian Redman relate their experiences with Ferrari.

that was a different Ferrari. But get back to Modena and Maranello, and one moment we'd all be enthusiastic about the racing program, and something would happen and he would try to create some intrigue. In fact, Ferrari employed a journalist, Francolini, who was paid to write derogatory remarks about the team. 'John Surtees said this about Forghieri [the chief engineer], that he didn't know what he was doing', or 'John Surtees said

this about Bandini,' or 'Bandini said this about Surtees,' and this was all to motivate the team, but of course we didn't need motivating, we were motivated in our own right."

Management by Insanity

An example of the Ferrari team's management by insanity involved preparations for Sebring in 1963 which turned out to be his first Ferrari win. Surtees invested two weeks testing the final form of the new 250P cars before they were shipped to Sebring. Due to time constraints, one car didn't test. At the race, Ferrari management distributed the tested cars to other teams, including the one set up for Surtees. Surtees ended up with the untested car. He says, "There we are sorting out in practice to try and get the car right. We never got it quite right because half way through the race we started being as sick as dogs because at speed, the rear bonnet would lift a bit and let the fumes into the cockpit." He

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John Surtees at the 1964 French Grand Prix, the year he won the world championship for Ferrari.

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says the problem was fixed with the tested cars. The first thing he and co-driver Ludovico Scarfiotti would do after driver swaps was "go 'round back and be sick as dogs." They went on to win, but the trophy ceremony was delayed while the drivers emptied more of their gastric reservoirs.

But Ferrari management intrigue was not idle. "I was the new boy on the team. The team manager needed to show that he was all-powerful. So he protested my win.

Fortunately, the Ferrari lap scorers stopped for their pasta and vino, and my wife at that time, who was a superb lap scorer, kept a full record that tied in exactly with the organizers' score. So we got reinstated and won the race by a lap, but that was only after overcoming the protest by the team you were driving for."

The last straw for Surtees was the 1966 LeMans. He says, "In that year the Fords won LeMans. On the test day, we put together a strategy of how, with the hare and the hound

principle, it was possible to perhaps beat the Fords. The Ford drivers were racers. They weren't people who would necessarily just hang back. And there's every possibility that if you really pressured the Fords in the early stage of their development, we could perhaps break them. Well, it comes to the event, and suddenly, because Mr. Agnelli is going to sit in the stands, the whole program and driver arrangement is changed, which destroyed the program with the hare, which was going to be myself, perhaps breaking the main challenge." The break came when, Surtees says, "I had to drive the car that wasn't the potential winning car. I went to see old man Ferrari and we had our divorce."

Despite Ferrari's un-British brand of discipline, Surtees says, "It was wonderful to be involved [with Ferrari]. It was a memorable time with rather a sad ending for both of us, Ferrari and me, which was brought about through political juggling by people in between and certain other persons' ambitions. That's the way life is.

"He came right in some ways. Just before he died we met up again, and he said to me, 'John, we must remember the good times and not the mistakes we made.' I think that referred to the fact that we probably lost a couple of world championships, which was rather sad." Adding some intrigue of his own, Surtees adds, "There are certain aspects of the break with Mr. Ferrari and I said would never be revealed, and that will be the case. Still, what I'm proud to see is what a fantastic team, the international team, which has been created in Maranello and that is something that I partly helped to create in the time that I was there."

2003 Frankfurt Auto Show

The Alfa-Romeo 8C Competizione concept (pictured, right) was unveiled at Frankfurt this year. It's a two-seater based on the Maserati 4200GT, and is powered by a supercharged version of the 400-hp 4.2-liter V8 engineered by Ferrari. The Alfa Styling Center designed the car, internally called Sportiva Evoluta. The car is expected to be on sale in mid 2005. A limited run of 1,000 cars is planned.

Just as Italdesign-Giugiaro recently refreshed the 156 sedan and sport wagon to adopt more of the facial features of the 147 hatchback, now they've also redone the **Alfa Romeo 166**. The 166 is powered by a 240-hp 3.2-liter V6 used in both the 147 and 156 GTA models. It goes on sale everywhere but North America in November.

Alfa also introduced the GT Coupe, now called simply **Alfa GT**, which goes on sale in December. The car is a four-seat coupe derived from the 156 and was designed by Stile Bertone. The GT will be initially offered with three engines: a 140 hp 1.8-liter, a 165 hp 2.0-liter with gasoline direct injection and a 150 hp 1.9-liter turbo diesel. Alfa plans to build 20,000 a year.



Alfa Re-enty On Back Burner

Reuters / September 8, 2003

FRANKFURT -- GM Chairman Rick Wagoner said plans to sell Fiat's Alfa Romeo brand in the United States were "on the back burner." He said selling Alfas was one of the few areas where GM and Fiat would cooperate in sales and marketing.

He added that joint ventures with Fiat were running better than expected and the two companies were looking for other areas to cooperate, even though both GM and Fiat are selling fewer vehicles using parts from the ventures than they had planned.

Wagoner said Fiat and GM would continue to explore other areas where they could cooperate such as sharing platforms.