

# BRM P25

## **Cartrix 0950 BRM P25**

**- Joakim "Jo" Bonnier, Dutch Grand Prix 1959**

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**- Harry Schell, Monaco Grand Prix 1958.**

By Holger "Slaasshh" Thor

When rumours were out that a World Championship for drivers would be released in 1950, a few English gentlemen gathered together to create "The English Ferrari", and promote British technology, knowledge and materials to the world. British Racing Motors, or BRM as it would soon be called, was born. One of the main personalities behind BRM was Tony Vandervell, who would later win fame with his Vanwall cars, but after a few years all power was assembled in the hands of Alfred Owen.

Their first creation was the revolutionary BRM V16 with front engine, but this car failed to live up to the high expectations. So in 1956 the next project was released, being the BRM P25. A more conventional car with a 4 cylinder 2.5 litres engine.

Debut was the British Grand Prix on Silverstone in 1956, and BRM entered three P25's driven by Mike Hawthorn, Tony Brooks and Ron Flockhart. None of the cars made it to the finish line, but some potential was shown by the performance. Driven by personalities such as Stirling Moss, Jean Behra and Harry Schell development of the car continued over the next seasons, but no victory was achieved. An especially bitter season was 1958, since their main "local" competitor, the fine Vanwall cars created by Tony Vandervell, took the new released World Championship for manufactures.

Finally, on May 31st at the Dutch GP on Zandvoort in 1959, the team's long, hard struggle was over. Swedish driver Joakim "Jo" Bonnier took his own and BRM's maiden Grand Prix win in his BRM P25. But second place went to Jack Brabham in his Cooper-Climax T51 with rear engine, so the writing was on the wall.

Tony Brooks won two more races that season in his Ferrari D246, the French and German Grand Prix's respectively, but after that there would be no more wins for a Formula One car with front engine. The designs of John Cooper and Colin Chapman would outclass the front engine technology. Only exception being the Italian Grand Prix in 1960, but this race was boycotted by all the British teams for security reasons, so Phil Hill had an easy stand in his Ferrari D246. By all fairness BRM quickly adapted the new technology, and they went on to win the world title together with Graham Hill in a BRM P57 in 1962.

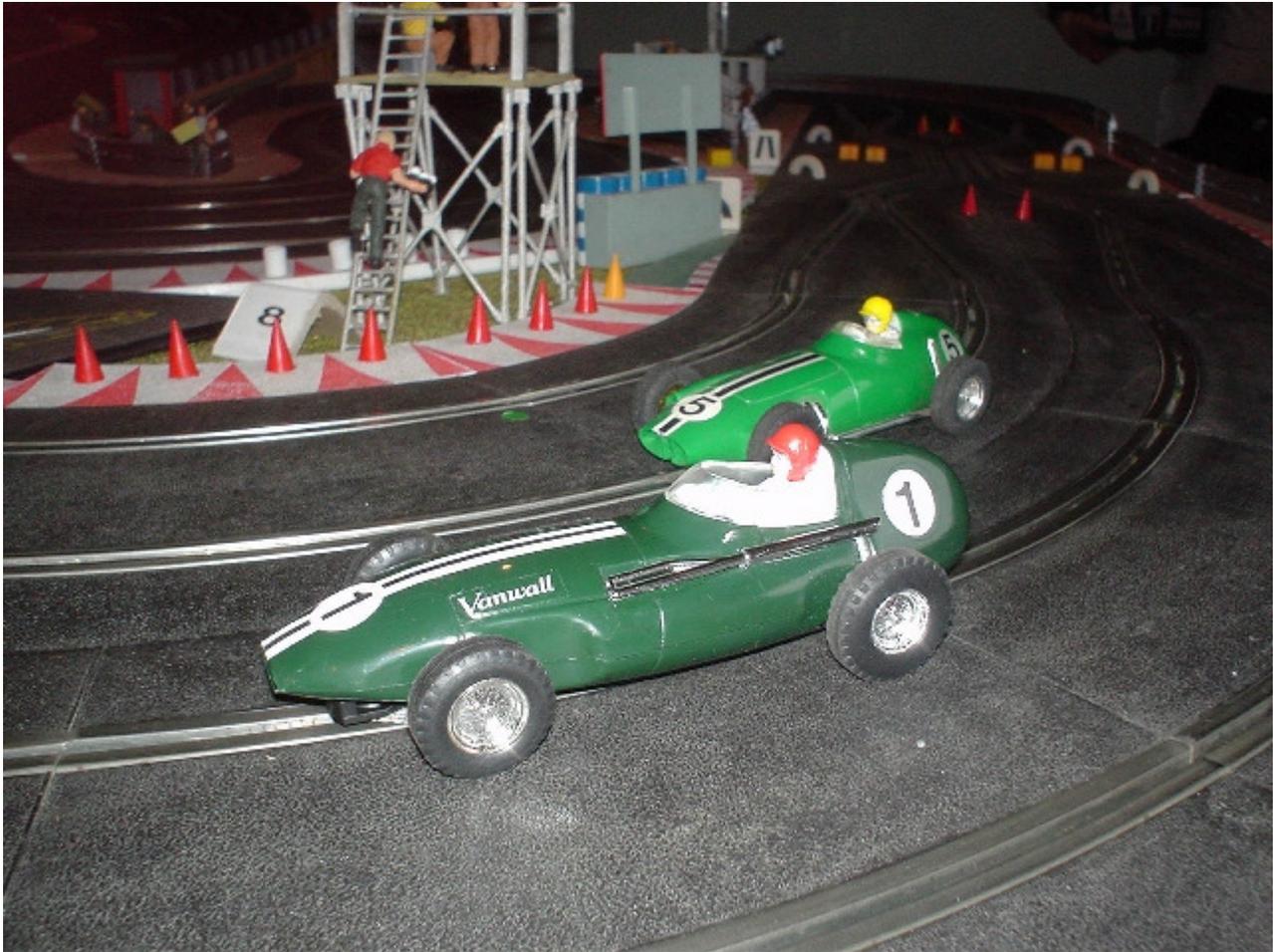
BRM went on to become a regular Grand Prix winner, but in the mid seventies they somehow faded out of business.



Joakim "Jo" Bonnier in his BRM P25 #7 taking a superb win at Zandvoort, Holland, in 1959. But the future in the shape of "Black" Jack Brabham and his Cooper-Climax T51 with rear engine is just at his wheels! (I know the photo shows a T53 with wrong race number, but I didn't have anything better at hand).

Swedish born Joakim Bonnier, or "Jo" as he was called, was an international socialite, high educated and heir to the Bonniers Aktiebolag publishing empire. He made his debut in Formula One in 1957 in a Maserati. After his maiden Grand Prix win at Zandvoort he was highly competitive in the early sixties, especially in sports car races, and he won the German Grand Prix (actual a Formula Two race) in 1960. He continued to race in Formula One with private entries long after he was competitive. Bonnier moved to Switzerland long before it became the habit by his fellow drivers. Together with Jackie Stewart he was the main man behind the creation of the Grand Prix Driver's Association (GPDA). As a funny remark he is often seen together with Graham Hill in some scenes of the famous John Frankenheimer movie "Grand Prix" from 1966.

Sadly Joakim "Jo" Bonnier was killed on June 11th 1972 leading at Le Mans in his own Ecurie Bonnier entered Lola-Ford Cosworth T280, when he on lap 213 collided with a Scuderia Filipinetti Ferrari 365/4 Daytona driven by Swiss amateur Florian Vetsch. Before his crash, Bonnier sat fastest lap of the race and came close to a sensation outclassing the high favourites from Equipe Matra-Simca Shell.



Within their "The Power and the Glory" series Scalextric re-released their old BRM mould as C.098 BRM P25. As seen here on the back row, it is unfortunately a fantasy car. First of all the green colour is all wrong, the central stripe does not belong there, the race number should be plain white on the green car, and no P25 was ever entered a Grand Prix nor a one-championship race with race number 5.

Harry Schell was born in Paris to American parents. The Franco-American made his Grand Prix debut in a Cooper-JAP in Monaco back in 1950. In the years that followed he raced HWM and Gordini in Formula Two while enjoying his playboy stile life. In his Vanwall VW1 he battled for the lead during the opening laps of the French Grand Prix at Reims in 1956 against a trio of Lancia-Ferraris, until his engine blew up on lap 5. He took over Vanwall VW2 from Mike Hawthorn later in the race but finished a disappointing 10th. In 1956 he also gained his greatest success winning the sports car race on the Nürburgring in a Maserati 300S partnered with Stirling Moss, Jean Behra and Maurice Trintignant.

In 1957 he drove a works Maserati 250 F, finishing a fine third in the Pescara Grand Prix, and in 1958 as a works driver for BRM Harry Schell produced a career best second place in the Dutch Grand Prix on Zandvoort in his P25. He finished that years championship in a fine 5th place with 14 points. He stayed with BRM in 1959, but then switched to the Yeoman Credit Cooper team in 1960.

On May 13 that year Harry Schell was killed in a fatal crash driving his Cooper-Climax T51 while qualifying in the wet for the International Trophy non-championship Formula One race on Silverstone.



Harry Schell driving his BRM P25 #8 at the Monaco Grand Prix on May 18 1958. Starting as no. 12 on the grid he finished 5th 9 laps down the winner Maurice Trintignant in his Cooper-Climax T45.