

Ferrari F156

Scalextric C.2640A Ferrari F 156 "Sharknose"

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Scalextric C.2727 Ferrari F 156 "Sharknose"

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Superslot H.2640A Ferrari F 156 "Sharknose"

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By Holger "Slaasshh" Thor

In spring 1961 Formula One faced some major changes in its regulations. The main thing being the engine volume reduced to 1.5 litres. While the British teams Cooper, Lotus and BRM were discussing pro and contra of these new regulations, the Italians at Ferrari in a very untypical Italian matter just constructed a brand new car and engine to start the season. So when the season was of, they were well prepared compared to their British counterparts. In this season this little car bore fruit with five victories out of seven races including a fine 1-2-3-4 finish at Spa, Belgium. Only tremendous efforts and victories at Monaco and the Nürburgring by Stirling Moss in his Lotus-Climax 18/21 could stop these red cars.

This magnificent little car was the famous Ferrari F 156, designed by engineer Carlo Chiti, and today known to the race world as the "Sharknose" model.

Scalextric C.2727 is the F 156 with race number 3, which the German count von Trips qualified as number 5 in the same race on the Nürburgring. He finished in second place only beaten by Moss and the Lotus-Climax. Von Trips had previously won the Dutch and the British Grand Prix that season, and when he started on Monza on September 10th everything was settled for celebrating him as champion of the world. Fate decided otherwise. On the second lap, approaching the Parabolica, his F 156 and the Lotus-Climax 21 of Jim Clark collided. Clark crashed without injury, but the Ferrari hit a spectator fence and was tossed into a roll. Von Trips was thrown from the car and was killed along with 14 spectators.

Wolfgang Reichsgraf Alexander Berghe von Trips, as his full name was, became famous as being the first German to be admired by the whole world since the end of WWII. He was the last of the old von Trips dynasty from Cologne, a dashing young man with a film star look. In his early years he was known as "Count Crash" in the British motor sport press, because of his many accidents at the beginning of his career. But after being team mate to Mike Hawthorn in the late fifties, he was nicknamed "Taffy" by Hawthorn for reasons which have been lost in the mists of motor racing history.

On September 10th 1961 Taffy von Trips had originally been booked on a flight from Düsseldorf to Chicago. The young heir to the Hemmersbach castle, the last of the von Trips dynasty, should have been the German representative on an agricultural exhibition in the United States. This plane crashed over Ireland with no survivors. On this very day Taffy von Trips had two chances to die, but no one to survive.

On the coat of arms of the von Trips dynasty, there were three words in Latin: IN MORTE VITA (in death there is life)!

The lack of a competitive engine for the British teams changed in 1962, and Ferrari failed to win a race. The Ferrari F 156 continued to be used for two more seasons scoring single wins in 1963 and 1964 respectively. John Surtees in Germany in 1963 and Lorenzo Bandini in Austria the year after.



Phil Hill in his beautiful Ferrari F 156 on the Nürburgring 1961. As Ferrari had previously given the world of motor racing a F 553 "Squalo" (shark) and a F 555 "Supersqualo" (Supershark), it was more than obviously that the F 156 would be nicknamed "Sharknose".



Taffy von Trips the same afternoon in the Eifel mountains. On his silver helmet even his famous symbol of the "Scuderia Colonia" is visible.

Superslot H.2640A has race number 50 and is a copy of the car, Giancarlo Baghetti drove in the French Grand Prix at Reims on July 2nd 1961. Italian born Giancarlo Baghetti became famous by winning this his maiden Grand Prix, as almost all the big names went off or broke down, and at the end Baghetti was left to slipstream past Dan Gurney in his Porsche 718 on the very last lap. Baghetti is the only race driver to date, who has ever won first time out in a Grand Prix. But the story is even better than this, since Reims was not Baghetti's first Formula One race. Or victory for that sake...

Back in those days there was a tradition of more than 10 Formula One races during the season, which did not qualify as official Grand Prix's and did not count for the World Championship. One such non-championship race was the Sicilian Grand Prix held on Siracusa on Tuesday, April 25th, 1961 to celebrate the Allied landings on Sicily during WWII. Most of the teams decided to use Siracusa as a serious test session prior to the start of the World Championship season. Ferrari brought their original F1 team including Phil Hill, Taffy von Trips and Ritchie Ginther, but besides that, they entered a second (or sister) team called Federazione Italiana Scuderie Automobilistiche (F.I.S.A.) with the Italian drivers Lorenzo Bandini, Renato Pirocchi and Giancarlo Baghetti. This was in fact Baghetti's first ever Formula One race. And he did only make one big mistake in the race, when he at the end of the race went down the escape road after the finish line. He stood in the pit lane afterwards and seemed to find it difficult to take the enormity of what he had accomplished - winning his first Formula One race and beating all the established star drivers of the day. Stars like Stirling Moss, Graham Hill, Jim Clark, Dan Gurney not to mention his established colleagues of the official Ferrari SpA SEFAC team.

But there was more to come. Namely Grand Primo di Napoli, which took place at Posillipo in Naples on May 14th, in fact the very same day as the Monaco Grand Prix. So when the stars of the Ferrari SpA SEFAC team battled it out in Monte Carlo (and were severely beaten by Stirling Moss and his Lotus-Climax 18 of the RRC Walker Racing Team), the F.I.S.A team once more represented Ferrari in a Formula One race. And strangely, Giancarlo Baghetti, in his second time out in the F 156, won again. Although it must be admitted, that the thirteen cars large field wasn't the strongest.

And then came Reims and Giancarlo Baghetti won his third victory out of three possibilities. And this time it was a "real" one - an official Grand Prix.

Unfortunately for Baghetti this stayed as his only ever Grand Prix win. But who else can state, that he won his first three times out in a Formula One race? He retired from racing in 1968 and started a new career as a photographer working for Playboy. He then became the publisher of a new weekly magazine called Auto Oggi. He died of cancer in 1995.



Giancarlo Baghetti and his Ferrari F 156 #50 preparing for the French Grand Prix at Reims in 1961. His immortal battle with the Porsche 718's of Dan Gurney and Joachim "Jo" Bonnier is about to begin. What a magnificent car (and driver) to have in your collection!