

Ferrari F555

Cartrix 0940 Ferrari F 555 "Supersqualo"
- Eugenio Castellotti, Italian Grand Prix 1955.

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- Dr. Giuseppe "Nino" Farina, Belgian Grand Prix 1955.

By Holger "Slaasshh" Thor

The 1955 pre-Formula One season was dominated by great expectations of the clasp of the giants, Lancia D50 vs. Mercedes W 196, With powerful 8 cylinder engines they were both mechanically superior to their competitors. One of them being the Ferrari 555 "Supersqualo" designed by Aurelio Lampredi. This car was powered by the same 4 cylinder engine which had shown good performance in previous years.

The F 555 first appearance was at the Monaco GP on May 22nd, but the result was only average. Three F 555 's were entered driven by Piero Taruffi, Paul Frere and Harry Schell. Juan-Manuel Fangio and Stirling Moss in their Mercedes 'es both led the race, but had to retire due to mechanical problems, and Alberto Ascari drove his Lancia D50 into the harbour! To his own surprise Maurice Trintignant ended up winning the race in an old Ferrari F 625. Best performance of an F 555 being one shared by Taruffi and Frere ending in 8th place.

At the Belgian GP on Spa, June 5th, the Ferrari team hired the World Champion from 1950, Dr. Guiseppe "Nino" Farina. He could do no wonders against the "8-wheeled" Mercedes either, but he did come in a fine third after Fangio and Moss. Following Farina on 4th was Paul Frere in a second F 555, making it a more or less acceptable day for the Maranello team.

Just four days after his crash in his Lancia D50 in the harbour of Monte Carlo, Alberto Ascari had a fatal accident testing a Ferrari sports car. Already being in the red numbers, the tragic death of Ascari forced the Lancia team to withdraw from international racing. The Belgian GP marked the last race of the young Italian driver, Eugenio Castellotti, in the fantastic and futuristic, but less successful Lancia D50.

By interference of the Italian Government, the whole Lancia team was handed over to the rivals

from Ferrari. That meant cars, drivers, mechanics etc.

So at the end of the season, it was Italian born Eugenio Castellotti, who in an F 555 gave the Tifosis a bit to cheer at. Starting as number 4 on the grid of the final round of the 1955 season on Monza, September 11th, he took a fine third after Fangio and Piero Taruffi in their Mercedes W 196 's. Umberto Maglioli finished 6th in a second F 555. Original the Ferrari team had entered

three of their "new" Lancia D50 cars driven by Dr. Farina, Gigi Villoresi and Castellotti. But due to

a heavy crash of Dr. Farina because of a tyre burst during practise, all three cars were withdrawn and Castellotti was handed over the only available free F 555.

1955 would not be the best year for the Maranello team, failing to win a single race with their F 555, and they had a lot of different drivers behind their steering wheels during the year. Being the successor of the previous F 553 "Squalo" (Shark), the F 555 "Supersqualo" (Super Shark), despite ending up with 270 HP, needed a more powerful engine to have any chance of beating their more potent rivals. The F 555 had a brief but heroic life of just one season, becoming the last 4 cylinder Formula One engine from Maranello.

On the grid of the first round of the 1956 season, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Peter Collins was behind the steering wheel of an F 555, but then the "new" Lancia-Ferrari D50 took over.



Eugenio Castelotti in his Ferrari F 555 with race number 4, preparing for the GP on Monza in 1955. He would finish third in the race, and he did the same in the point table of the season. In 1956 he would win both the Mille Miglia and the Sebring 12 Hours. A second place at the French GP at Reims behind team mate Peter Collins would be his best Formula One result of the season.

At the beginning of 1957 Castelotti headed the front pages because of a glamorous affair with the Italian opera diva Delia Scala. Mr. Enzo Ferrari would have preferred him heading the motorsport pages of the newspapers instead. So when Jean Behra performed some sensational lap times in his Maserati 250 F, Mr. Ferrari personally demanded Castelotti to break up a romantic weekend in Firenze and come to Modena for testing. It was a very upset, irritated and out of balance young driver who entered the Modena Auto Drome on March 14th, 1957. On lap 3 his car left the circuit, hit a small spectator stand and Eugenio Castelotti was killed on the spot.



The GP at Spa in 1955.

In his Mercedes W 196 #10 Juan-Manuel Fangio is successfully defending his World Championship title from the previous year, and Dr. Giuseppe "Nino" Farina in his Ferrari F 555 #2 can do nothing against it. Dr. Farina ended the race a fine third behind the conquering silver arrows, in what would be the last Formula One race of his career.

Dr. Farina had won the first ever World Championship in 1950 in a dominant fashion, but from 1951 onwards he was overshadowed by the two magnificent drivers of the time, Juan-Manuel Fangio and Alberto Ascari. He struggled on until the Belgian GP in 1955, where he retired.

There were several half-hearted comebacks, notably at Indianapolis. At the end he had 5 GP wins to his tally.

Dr. Farina was one of the least popular drivers of his day. Born into the famous Farina coach building family, he grew up wealthy and arrogant. He gained a doctorate in political science before the war. It is ironic that after years of surviving the danger of motor racing Dr. Farina met his death on June 30th on an Alpine road between Geneva and Chambéry while on his way to watch the 1966 French GP. He was 59 years old.