

Vanwall

Scalextric C.2552A Vanwall
- Stirling Moss, German Grand Prix 1957.

Scalextric C.2663 Vanwall
- Tony Brooks, Belgian Grand Prix 1958.

By Holger "Slaasshh" Thor

The English self-made man, Tony Vandervell, was one of the main characters behind the BRM project early in the fifties, but he was far too dynamic a person to accept the slow progress of the BRM racers. So soon he created his own team, buying cars manufactured by others and racing them in the Formula Libre under the name of Thinwall. One of the more successful of these cars was Thinwall Special number 3, a racing green modified Ferrari with a Tipo 375 engine. Mr. Vandervell's main task was still to beat the Italians, but until he succeeded he could as well learn from his arch rivals.

For the 1955 Formula One season Tony Vandervell combined the names Vandervell and Thinwall

into "Vanwall" and had his first construction called Vanwall VW1 ready for action. Driven by characters such as Ken Wharton, Mike Hawthorn and Harry Schell he had a mixed season, and at the end his factory had produced three more, almost identical cars, VW2, VW3, and VW4. For 1956 Tony Vandervell hired Frank Costin and Colin Chapman to improve the chassis. It was

Frank Costin who said about the first Vanwall: "Wonderful engine, horrible chassis!". Continuing

with the cars VW1 to VW4 the team had a fair good season, and Stirling Moss won the first victory for Vanwall in VW2 at the non-championship Silverstone International Trophy race in May. Other drivers that year were Maurice Trintignant, Harry Schell, and veteran Froilan Gonzalez.

The 1957 season was to become the break through for the Vanwall team. Entering VW1, VW3, VW4, VW5, and VW7 during the season, they paired Stirling Moss up with Tony Brooks, Roy Salvadori, and Stuart Lewis-Evans. At the British Grand Prix at Aintree, Moss started in VW1, Brooks in VW4, and Lewis-Evans in VW5. Moss lead from the start, but on lap 21 his engine fluffed and misfired. After a few stops Moss took over VW4 from Brooks, who was not fit to drive the whole race after serious injuries after a Le Mans crash. In VW4 Moss took a superb first Grand Prix win for Vanwall. Moss again won in VW5 at Pescara and on Monza making him the runner-up to Juan-Manuel Fangio in his Maserati 250F in that years World Championship. Adding VW8 and VW10 to the car park 1958 would prove to be even better for the green rockets. The team was not ready for the first round of the championship in Argentina, so Stirling Moss took the liberty to win the race in a private Rob Walker entered Cooper-Climax T43. During the rest of the season Moss won the Dutch (VW10), the Portuguese (VW10), and Moroccan Grand Prix (VW5). Never the less he was beaten by a single point by Mike Hawthorn,

despite the fact that Hawthorn won only one single race during the season in his Ferrari D246, namely the French Grand Prix at Reims. For the fourth time in a row Moss was runner-up in the

point table. Tony Brooks had an almost as successful season winning the Belgian (VW5), the German (VW4), and the Italian Grand Prix (VW5). After a total of six victories it came as no surprise, that Vanwall won the new founded World Championship for constructors.

But after the season, there was sadly almost no room for celebration. The young promising Stuart Lewis-Evans had crashed in VW4 at the last race in Morocco on lap 12, not a serious crash, but the rough ground ripped open the Vanwall and it burned furiously. Lewis-Evans managed to get out of the wreck, but he had been seriously burned and in fact died from his injuries seven days later.

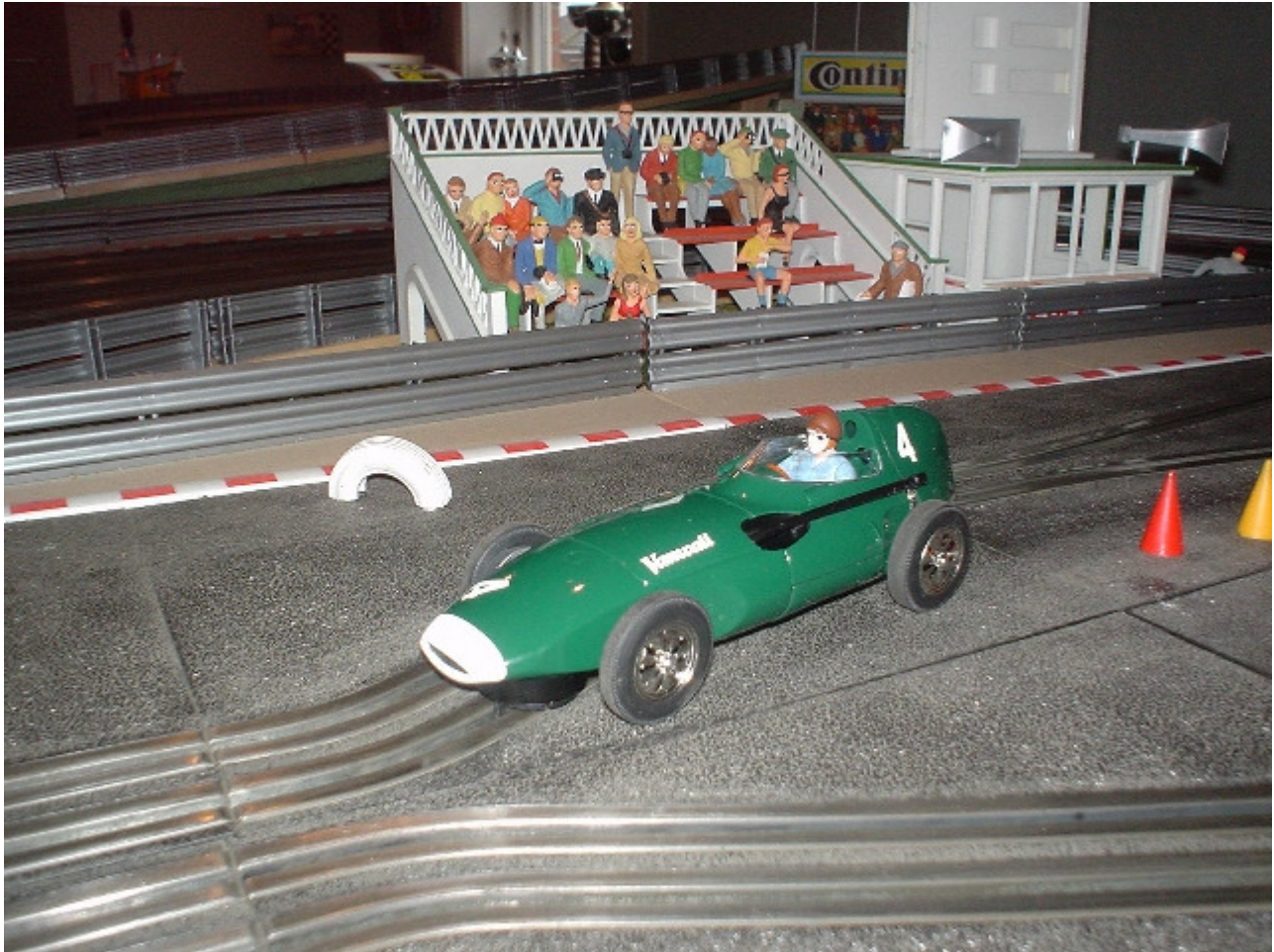
This was the most bittersweet moment in the Vanwall history. How difficult wouldn't it be to

- win the final race of the season
- have your driver lose the Driver's Championship by one point
- win the Constructor's Championship from the arch rival Ferrari
- lose the life of one of your drivers
- all at the same time!

On January 12th 1959 Tony Vandervell announced, that he had to "slow down" on doctor's order. That was almost the end of the Vanwall team. In 1960 the team tried again with a new low-line car called VW11, then came the Lotus-Vanwall VW12 ending with the rear engine driven VW14 in 1961. None of them having any success at all. Having a total of 9 Grand Prix victories to its tally, the name Vanwall will forever shine in the world of motor sport racing. Green for Glory!



Stirling Moss in his Vanwall VW5 #10 at the Nürburgring August 4th 1957. In this race he finished fifth after Fangio in his Maserati 250F and the Lancia Ferrari 801's of Hawthorn, Collins and Musso. Moss was runner-up in the Championship four times during his long and excellent career, but he never claimed the title. As Moss himself says today, he has over the years probably won more fame as being the driver with most Grand Prix victories, 16 in total, never to win the world title, then if he had won one or two titles. After a near fatal crash at Goodwood at Easter 1962 Moss ended his career.



Tony Brooks in his Vanwall VW5 #4 winning the Belgian Grand Prix on Spa, June 15th 1958. Note the VW5 now being modified with new exhaust pipe and wheel design compared to the 1957 version. The dentist Brooks became famous winning the non championship V. Gran Premio di Siracusa at Pescara in 1955 in a Connaught B-Type, becoming the first Englishman to win in an English car on the continent since 1923. Brooks was third in the championship table in 1958 and when Vanwall withdraw from international motor sport, he signed for Ferrari for the 1959 season. In his Ferrari D246 he won the French and German Grand Prix and ended the season as runner-up to the new World Champion Jack Brabham in his Cooper-Climax T51. After that his career faded a bit, and he retired at the end of 1961. Winning a total of six Grand Prix 's Tony Brooks was one of the few old heroes to survive his passion for motor sport racing.



Within their "The Power and the Glory" series Scalextric re-released their old Vanwall mould as C.097 Vanwall. As seen here heading a BRM P25 from the same series, this is not based on a real livery or driver. But if you can imagine the car being plain British racing green without the central stripe, the race number being plain white on the green car without the circle, and the drivers helmet being white instead of red, you can always count this car as Vanwall VW10 #1 in which Stirling Moss won the Dutch Grand Prix at Zandvoort on May 26th 1958. But, as said, it does require more than a bit of fantasy.



Airfix Motor Racing 5103 Vanwall. This kit contains all the parts required to build the car, such as body, driver (or part of him), exhaust pipe, windscreen etc. Moving parts as axles, wheels, engine etc. came in a different kit, identical for almost all the Airfix Motor Racing cars of that area.