

1947

First Ferrari victory with 125 S at the Rome GP

There's a first time for everything, be it your first day at school or the day you started your first job. These events live on inside you as memories. This is the case for Ferrari and its first victory which came in 1947 courtesy of the 125 S. That win would be the first milestone in the genuinely unparalleled sporting career of a team that has clocked up more Formula 1 victories than any other.

That first win had its roots in mid-1945 when Enzo Ferrari commissioned Gioachino Colombo to design a completely innovative car for him. Ferrari's ambition was, of course, to beat the Alfa Romeos which he knew intimately as he had spent so much time with the Milan team, first as a driver, then as sporting director, racking up triumph after triumph in the pre-War years.

As far as Enzo Ferrari was concerned the engine was the heart of any car. Hence his incredible focus on the power unit from that first design onwards. The choice fell on a 12-cylinder architecture, which would have the power to deliver the kind of performance required. The engine moniker, 125, referenced its unit displacement: 125 multiplied by 12 gives the overall displacement of the engine, a mere 1,500cc.

The months flew by as work ploughed ahead on building the engine with Gioachino Colombo handing over the design reins to Giuseppe Busso. Luigi Bazzi assisted in the fine tuning and the unit's power output burgeoned on the test-bench, eventually rising to just under 120 bhp at 6,800 rpm.

In the meantime, Gilco of Milan, a company that specialised in high-strength steel tubing for the aeronautical industry, was busy making the tubular chassis. It was stiff but light, just as Ferrari had requested, with two longitudinal side members and a central X-shaped cross-member in oval-section tubes. On March 12 1947, an engine roared across the countryside between Maranello and nearby Formigine. The as-yet-unbodied 125 had sprung to life and the great Ferrari adventure had begun.

Two months later, on May 11 1947, the 125 S made its racing debut at the Piacenza Circuit. The S in its name stood for Sport, referring to its open sports car body style. At its wheel was Franco Cortese. Two cars were actually entered in the race – the second was a 125 C which, although identical in terms of its running gear had a narrow single-seater body (hence the C for 'competition'). Nino Farina was selected to drive it. Unfortunately, the Turin-born driver was unhappy with the car he'd been allotted and demanded his team-mate's vehicle. Ferrari refused and Farina failed to show at the start. Cortese's 125 S was leading the race when it had to retire with a fuel pump failure.

Enzo Ferrari later dubbed the maiden race "a promising failure". Happily, it was a failure that lasted a mere nine days as, on May 20 1947, Franco Cortese drove the 125 S to victory in the Rome Grand Prix. He completed 40 laps of the Terme di Caracalla circuit laid out on the tree-lined boulevards around the ancient Roman baths, for a total of 137.6 kilometres, at an average speed of 88.5 km/h. This was the first of six victories the car went on to deliver in 1947, one of the most notable of which was at Parma with Tazio Nuvolari at its wheel.

1948

Unveiling of the 166 MM Barchetta at the Turin Motor Show

On September 15 1948, Ferrari unveiled a car at a motor show for the very first time. The presentation at Turin was the culmination of a dream in a way. Having been a driver, team manager and racing car constructor, Enzo Ferrari was now the owner of his own car company, launching a small-series model at an illustrious international show.

The car in question was the 166 MM. The MM in its name stood for Mille Miglia, a race won the previous May by Clemente Biondetti and Giuseppe Navone in the Allemano-bodied 166 Berlinetta.

The 166 MM was, of course, destined to make automotive history.

Not merely for its sporting successes but, first and foremost, because it ushered in a whole new type of car, the Barchetta. This moniker, meaning little boat, was bestowed on it by the press because of its shape. From that moment onwards, the term would be used to describe all open-top sports prototypes.

The 166 MM was a very important car for Ferrari, because it embodied so many expectations.

While clearly a very fast, powerful vehicle its soft, simple lines also lent it a unique elegance and grace. The 166 MM, in fact, set the blueprint for Maranello's future road cars. It was the first of its kind and Enzo Ferrari was well aware of that fact.

The versatile sports prototypes had proved themselves capable of winning on circuits of all kinds – permanent, city, dirt track. They were now, however, ready to step into the limelight at other prestige international events.

Concours d'Elegance, for instance, were starting to gain popularity, becoming an important avenue both for meeting new clients and selling cars customised to suit each owners' tastes and requirements.

Many of the customers were privateer drivers who bought the 166 MM in its racing set-up to field in various competitions. Others, however, were simply well-heeled drivers who opted for the road-going version, often happily also specifying various modifications to the exterior and the cabin.

Ferrari wanted to apply the same approach to other international motor shows, and was eager to launch the car at what was one of the world's most important events - Turin was also home to various car marques and coachworks.

For the 166 MM Touring Superleggera's body, Ferrari turned to the Milanese coachworks that had invented the eponymous Superleggera construction system, which had already proved its worth in the aeronautics industry.

The patented method involved fixing aluminum alloy panels directly to a small-diameter steel tubular spaceframe. As a result, the chassis and bodywork formed a single, homogenous unit, providing good structural rigidity and anticipating the weight-bearing chassis concept that would be introduced years later.

The 166 MM's clean, simple forms also proved exceptionally aerodynamically efficient.

It had a very low dry weight of just 650 kg too, but its V12 engine unleashed 140 bhp and its fuel tank held 90-litres.

Just 25 Touring Superleggera-bodied 166 MMs were built. One was purchased by Giovanni Agnelli and was his first Ferrari.

1949

Ferrari wins its first 24H of Le Mans, with Luigi Chinetti/Lord Selsdon driving the 166 MM Barchetta

The hours seemed to crawl by and eventually he began losing track of them. But, nonetheless, Luigi Chinetti continued to clutch the steering wheel of his car as it ate up the asphalt on a circuit he now knew by heart. It was a long haul. Very long. 13,492 km, in fact.

Chinetti had been working as one with his car for over 20 hours. It was just the two of them together against everyone – and everything – else.

His co-driver and the car's owner, Lord Selsdon, better known as Peter-Mitchell Thomson, had become unwell and, after just an hour or so behind the wheel, was forced to throw in the towel.

That left Chinetti as master of his own destiny. So began his battle against the clock, his rivals and the laws of mechanics but, in the end, he succeeded and in doing so became one of the all-time greats of motorsport.

In 1949, Chinetti became the first man to win the world's toughest, most famous and spell-binding race, the 24 Hours of Le Mans, on three consecutive occasions. Chinetti was Italian-born but lived in America. He'd originally gone to the States in May 1940 to race at Indianapolis, but within a few days of his arrival Italy entered the War. In the end, Chinetti made the wise decision to stay in the US and take up American citizenship. That said, he remained an Italian at heart, which partly explains his desire to import the cars built by his friend, Enzo Ferrari, into the States. At the end of the War, in fact, Chinetti returned to Italy and paid the Drake a visit. He wanted to race Ferrari's blistering cars for a very simple reason: to boost their sales.

Ferrari and Chinetti had first become friends through motor racing, as they had mutual links to Alfa Romeo.

Chinetti won the gruelling Sarthe marathon in both 1932 and 1934 in the gorgeous Alfa 8C. He enjoyed a very long racing career: a full 15 years after his victory at Le Mans he was still at the top his game and highly motivated. He was also just about to give a constructor that had only been running for two years its first victory in the illustrious 24 Hours of Le Mans.

The win came against all odds as it was the first time a 2-litre car or a V12 engine had triumphed.

The 166 MM Barchetta shot across the finish-line to victory, effectively launching a new game-changing marque on the international scene: the Prancing Horse.

The 166 MM had already proved its mettle when Clemente Biondetti drove it to victory in the Mille Miglia. This was the same chassis, in fact, used by Chinetti and Lord Selsdon when they won at Le Mans.

Just two weeks after the Le Mans' win, Luigi Chinetti triumphed in the 24 Hours of Spa in another 166 MM, with Jean Duras as his co-driver. As predicted, the victories did the trick and he sold several cars in the US that same year.

1950

Ferrari debuts in F1 in second GP in history

Although life had come to a standstill during the war, by 1950 the world was a whirlwind of activity. People were eager to get going again, to rebuild their country and lives, to channel their energy and resources into new challenges.

Post-war industrial rebirth had begun and the automobile world, too, sprang into action as new models were presented and the number of private cars on the road climbed.

The racing world was just the tip of the iceberg of this new hunger for progress, and drivers once again were adored for their fearless, superhero-like feats.

The Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) set out to provide stricter regulation for racing and decided to launch a new top category starting in 1950. The result was the first F1 World Championship.

Six European Grands Prix were selected and a seventh, the Indy 500 in the United States, was added.

The pairing of the European races with the American event was an attempt to bring together two worlds that differed both in terms of regulations and sporting mentality. In Europe, motor racing was synonymous with technological research and seen as a way of promoting car sales. In the US, however, the focus was mainly on giving the public a spectacle and providing entertainment.

The 1950 season began with the British Grand Prix at Silverstone in England, but Scuderia Ferrari chose not to take part, opting instead to compete in an F2 race at Mons in Belgium where Ascari, Villoresi and Cortese delivered a one-two-three finish in their 166 F2s. In fact the F1 world title was decided on the basis of each team's top four placings and they could choose when and where to compete. According to the regulations, F1 cars could use either supercharged 1.5-litre engines, or 4.5-litre naturally-aspirated power units.

Enzo Ferrari decided to field three supercharged 125 F1s from the second round of the season, the Monaco GP, for Alberto Ascari, Luigi Villoresi and Frenchman, Raymond Sommer. May 21 1950 was thus a historic date in motor sport history as it marked the Scuderia Ferrari's Formula 1 debut.

The 125 F1s were less powerful and heavier than their rivals. Ferrari, of course, was well aware of this and already thinking ahead to a new single-seater.

The Monaco race was marred by an accident on the first lap. A freak wave wet the track at the tight Tabac corner, causing Giuseppe Farina to spin while he was second behind Fangio. The Italian driver and nine other competitors were forced to retire as a result of the incident.

Juan Manuel Fangio dominated the 100-lap race for its entire three-hour-plus duration, starting from pole and then setting the race's fastest lap in his Alfa Romeo 158. Alberto Ascari finished second a lap behind, while Sommer was fourth. Villoresi unfortunately had to retire with gearbox problems.

Enzo Ferrari was patently dissatisfied with this result and decided to push forward the development of the new car and a more powerful engine. He put pressure on his technical staff, and in the course of the season, they produced three new naturally-aspirated V12 engines: first the new 3,300 cc 275, then the 4,100 cc 340 and, last but not least, the 4,500 cc 375. The engineers' efforts had produced three evolutions in a few short months, a fitting display of the Maranello team's engineering potential.

1950

Giannino Marzotto and the Ferrari 195 S win at the Mille Miglia

Giannino Marzotto, nicknamed 'The Flying Count', was one of the most famous gentleman drivers, but his real job was in the textile industry. However, he was certainly made of the right material – so to speak – to race as a professional.

He went down in history for his race gear – donning a jacket, shirt and tie for every race, but they were his everyday clothes and it was normal for him to drive dressed like that. Marzotto's victories included the Mille Miglia in 1950 and 1953 with the Ferrari 195 S and 340 MM.

1953 was also the same year that he came fifth in the 24 Hours of Le Mans with his brother Paolo in a 340 MM converted into a 375 MM Berlinetta but still with 3-litre engine. This result, and those achieved in the other races by the crews with the new 4,500 cc 375 MM helped Ferrari win the first World Sportscar Championship in 1953.

The story of Marzotto and Ferrari started in 1948, when the driver met Enzo Ferrari at the factory to buy a 166 Inter Touring 2-litre. At that time a car could be customised from scratch, so Marzotto went to Maranello to do precisely that. The Marzotto family were excellent Ferrari customers, and Gianni, when racing with the Lancia Aprilia, demonstrated his speed. There he developed a frank relationship marked by mutual respect, although with no shortage of disagreements. To understand what sort of driver Marzotto was, suffice it to say that he used to change gears without the clutch, by ear, listening to the rising rev count.

In October 1949 Ferrari tested him in the Vermicino-Rocca di Papa time trial, which Marzotto won. The following year, four members of the Marzotto family started the Mille Miglia with four Ferraris paid in cash - two 195 S models entered by Scuderia Ferrari for Giannino and his brother Vittorio, and two 166 MM of Scuderia Marzotto for Paolo and Umberto.

The fans' eyes were on the official cars of the more famous Alberto Ascari and Luigi Villorresi, but at the end of a rain-soaked edition with 375 starters, Giannino Marzotto and Marco Crosara won in the 195 S Berlinetta Touring. They were followed by the sister car of motorcycle champion Dorino Serafini and Ettore Salani and the Alfa Romeo of Juan Manuel Fangio and Augusto Zanardi.

Vittorio Marzotto and Paolo Fontana finished in ninth position with the 195 S Barchetta, with coachwork by Fontana himself. However, the other two brothers had to retire. After 13 hours and 40 minutes of driving, at 22-years-old, Giannino Marzotto was the youngest winner of the Mille Miglia. There is an anecdote related to the pre-race - when Marzotto tested the car, he realised that it wasn't running like the one he had driven before and sought guidance from Ferrari. He was told that the chief mechanic Luigi Bazzi had 'strangled' the engine to protect the safety of the young driver, and it was restored to full power for the race.

This triumphal year for Marzotto also saw him in first place in the 3 hours of Rome and the Dolomites Gold Cup, again with the Ferrari 195 S and 166 MM.

1951

Froilan Gonzalez brings Ferrari its first F1 GP victory in the 375 F1

“When, in 1951, Gonzalez and his Ferrari left the 159 and the entire Alfa team in his wake for the first time in the history of our direct clashes, I cried for joy. But mixed in with those tears of enthusiasm were tears of pain because that day, I thought to myself: I’ve killed my mother”.

The words of Enzo Ferrari in his book, *Ferrari80*. By his mother, the Commendatore meant, of course, Alfa Romeo, where he had not only been a test and works driver but also head of the racing department, developing models that proved hugely successful on the world’s circuits.

Gonzalez had beaten the previously-uncatchable Alfa Romeos of Fangio and Farina, and that long-awaited triumph reawakened memories of Enzo Ferrari’s past.

The date was Saturday, July 14, 1951, and the place was Silverstone in Great Britain.

Argentinian driver José Froilan Gonzalez started from pole and held sway over his fellow-countryman Juan Manuel Fangio, finally roaring across the finish-line with a 50-second lead and taking the first of Ferrari’s unbeaten string of F1 victories.

Silverstone was a two-fold challenge between men and machines: a 400-kilometre-plus Argentinian and Italian dual for supremacy. A total of 90 laps which Gonzalez completed in precisely 2 hours, 42 minutes and 18 seconds.

A gruelling distance, particularly given how spartan and difficult-to-drive those early cars were.

It was also a hard-fought race with plentiful passing and position-swapping. Gonzalez’ victory was due in part also to the gentlemanly behaviour of Ascari who had to retire after his car developed problems. As lead driver, the Italian was permitted under the rules of the day to take over the Argentinian’s car but turned down the opportunity.

In fact, when the cars pitted to refuel after the halfway point in the race, Gonzalez actually offered the Italian his drive but Ascari signalled that he should keep going. The Ferrari 375 was at an advantage because it was less thirsty on petrol than the Alfa 159, and so required fewer pit-stops and was faster to refuel.

Once he got back out on the track, Gonzalez put his foot down and built up a substantial lead over Fangio, ensuring he was first across the finish-line at the former Royal Airforce Station circuit. The other Ferrari in the race, driven by Gigi Villoresi, finished third.

Froilan Gonzalez was nicknamed “El Cabezón” because of his large head which hung out of the cockpit at every corner. He was also known as “The Pampas Bull” because of his aggressive press-on driving style. Even the way Gonzalez sat at the wheel was unusual: his elbows jutting out from his sides, his hands grasping the top of the steering wheel as his torso followed curves of the track, as if he were trying physically to urge his car through them.

He also never gave up and that was exactly what Enzo Ferrari liked about him.

1952

Alberto Ascari, in the Ferrari 500 F2, secures a first Formula 1 world title

On September 7 1952, Monza crowned a new king when Alberto Ascari won his sixth consecutive grand prix to become, very deservedly, F1 World Champion and give the Scuderia Ferrari its first Drivers' World title. Ascari had completely dominated the season delivering five poles and six race fastest laps on top of his victories.

Ferrari was no longer content with simply getting to the podium after the second position delivered by Ascari the previous year ahead of team-mate José Froilan Gonzales, the first driver to win an F1 grand prix in a Prancing Horse single-seater. The Scuderia Ferrari's goal for 1952 was clear: win the championship.

The World Drivers' Championship for that year and the following season - 1953 - imposed Formula Two regulations, with limits on the engine displacement set at a maximum of 2 litres (naturally-aspirated), or 750 cc (supercharged) in a F2 chassis and there was no weight limit. Ferrari thus fielded the 500 F2 equipped with the new 2-litre in-line four-cylinder engine.

The overall rankings would be based on the best four results out of the eight races. As usual, the race calendar included the Indy 500, although not all of the European constructors normally took part. That year, however, Enzo Ferrari decided to enter a car for Alberto Ascari, the 375 Indianapolis. This was to be Maranello's first and only official participation in the legendary North American race.

1952 was a significant year for the Italian company on and off the track. As well as the F1 title, another major milestone was winning the Mille Miglia and endurance racing in the sports-prototype class was increasingly important for selling cars to privateer teams. A good example was Vittorio Marzotto's victory at the Monaco Grand Prix with the 225 S, Ferrari's first on that track.

In the F1 World Championship the Scuderia Ferrari fielded a blistering trio comprising Alberto Ascari, Nino Farina and Piero Taruffi, who were flanked on a couple of occasions by Gigi Villoresi and André Simon.

To prepare for the Indy 500 at the end of May, Ascari had to skip the Swiss Grand Prix in Berne, which took place two weeks beforehand and was won by Taruffi. Ascari had an unfortunate time of it in the US and was forced to retire after a problem with a wheel. Two races in and with no points to his name, his season seemed compromised but starting with the third round at Spa-Francorchamps, the Italian won all six remaining rounds of the Championship.

He repeated that feat the following season to win his second Drivers' title. No other Italian driver has been F1 World Champion since and only Michele Alboreto has come close, also - unsurprisingly - in a Ferrari in 1985.

1952

Vittorio Marzotto, in the 225 S, drives Ferrari to a first win on the Monaco circuit

Perhaps not everybody knows that the Monaco Grand Prix was not always a Formula 1 affair. Before it became one of the key F1 races, between 1929 and 1952 other categories and sports cars competed in the famous race.

That last year holds a special place in the history of the Prancing Horse, because on 2 June 1952 a Maranello car claimed its first victory in the Principality.

Vittorio Marzotto triumphed at the wheel of the 225 S Spyder Vignale, followed by four more 225 S cars, with Eugenio Castellotti, Antonio Stagnoli, paired with, Clemente Biondetti, Jean Lucas and "Pagnibon", the pseudonym of Pierre Boncompagni - a Frenchman of Italian descent. The race for sports cars of 2 litres and above was squeezed between the Mille Miglia and the 24 Hours of Le Mans and, while some drivers didn't attend, others did so to prepare for Le Mans. Not all teams had the budget to handle all three events. However, 20 cars were nevertheless enrolled, with Ferraris, Jaguars, Aston Martins, Gordon's and Talbot-Lagos supervised directly by the manufacturers. The Ferraris bore the colours of the Marzotto and Guastalla teams, and the four 225 S cars entered were powered by V12 2,715 cc engines, with an output of 210 hp, with the body by Vignale either the closed or open version. There was also a 340 America, with bodywork by Paolo Fontana, entered for Piero Carini.

Unfortunately, Luigi Fagioli was involved in what appeared a minor accident during practice, but died of his injuries a month later. Exiting a tunnel, Fagioli's Lancia Aurelia skidded violently into the wall. The driver was saved by his helmet, but three weeks later suddenly deteriorated and died just after his 54th birthday. Several accidents during the race knocked out several other drivers, including Stirling Moss. Marzotto crossed the line first after 100 laps, in a time of 3 hours and 21 minutes, covering a distance of 314 km! More than just a Grand Prix, it had evolved into an endurance race.

Vittorio was the oldest of the four Marzotto brothers, all drivers, and he raced between 1948 and 1955 almost exclusively with Ferrari - notching up strong results and a win in the 1952 Giro di Sicilia.

However, Monaco was his most important victory and one that cemented his name in racing history, providing Ferrari with the first of its nine wins to date on the famous street circuit.

1953

Ferrari World Sportscar champion with the 340 MM and 375 MM

While the F1 World Championship has always been seen as the very top echelon of motorsport, sports cars were actually more successful commercially and as technical test benches for a long period of time.

Open-top two-seaters that could be either used in competition or sold in road-going trim, these were the spiders favoured by the affluent young people of the day who liked both speed and the good life. They were also, of course, equally popular with celebrities and VIPs from the worlds of entertainment, finance and business.

In fact, sales of sports cars and their road-going iterations generated more revenues than building single-seaters on the company balance sheet.

Over the years, the terms Barchetta and Prototype were introduced to describe these cars also. Barchetta, which means Little Boat in Italian, referenced a particular body shape, while the Prototype evolved from manufacturers' habit of using competition cars to test solutions for use on road-going models.

In 1953, the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) gave the go-ahead for the organisation of the World Sportscar Championship with a trophy awarded directly to the winning manufacturer. This meant that constructors were given greater credit than in the F1 World Championship which, at that particular time, only awarded a Drivers' title. The F1 Constructors' title, in fact, was only introduced in 1958.

For this reason, all works drivers raced in both categories, often alongside wealthy gentlemen drivers who had bought the cars, or paired with up-and-coming talented youngsters hungry to grab the limelight and drives from more established champions.

The sports car category also brought racing to the people as legendary likes of the Mille Miglia, Targa Florio and Carrera Panamericana were quite literally raced on open roads and city streets. Others still were competed on roads partly open to traffic, including the world's most famous endurance race, the 24 Hours of Le Mans.

The 1953 season kicked off in the United States with the 12 Hours of Sebring which was deserted by the European manufacturers as only their best four results counted towards their final points. The privateer 166 MM fielded by Ed Lunken and Charles Hassan, however, finished sixth.

The next round was the Mille Miglia. The Scuderia Ferrari decided to make a strong start to its Championship, fielding four 340 MM. Two were bodied by Vignale for Count Giannino Marzotto and Welshman Tom Cole who raced on an American licence, and two were clothed by Touring for Luigi Villoresi and Nino Farina.

Decked out in his signature shirt and tie, Marzotto not only won the race but also set a new average speed record of over 142 km/h, repeating his triumph of 1950 delivered in the Ferrari 195 S Coupé, in which his friend Marco Crosara had also been his navigator. The 340 MM used by Marzotto was the one in which Villoresi had won the Giro di Sicilia a month previously. A blistering piece of engineering capable of unleashing in excess of 300 horse power, it was, nonetheless, very challenging to drive. Tellingly, Marzotto won ahead of Juan Manuel Fangio, Felice Bonetto and Cole.

The third round of the season proved unlucky for the Maranello cars. The Scuderia fielded three 375 MM Berlinetta Competizione Pinin Farinas in the 24 Hours of Le Mans. Two sported the 340 MM engine, while the one given to Alberto Ascari and Villoresi was fitted with the 375 F1's new 340 bhp 4.5-litre.

Brothers Giannino and Paolo Marzotto were fifth across the finish-line, while Nino Farina and Mike Hawthorn were disqualified for a brake fluid top-up not permitted under the rules.

From the next round, the 24 Hours of Spa, all three 375 MMs sported the 4,500cc engine. Farina/Hawthorn triumphed, while first position in the equally gruelling and prestigious ADAC 1000 Km-Rennen Nürburgring went to Ascari/Farina, this time aboard a Spider rather than a Berlinetta.

Maranello did not compete in the Tourist Trophy, but did enter five cars in the Carrera Panamericana through Luigi Chinetti and Franco Cornacchia's Scuderia Guastalla. Guido Mancini and Fabrizio Serena's fourth position guaranteed it the points it needed to clinch the title in the World Sportscar Championship. A whole new chapter in the Ferrari legend had just begun.

1954

The first car in the famous 250 family is presented at the Paris Motor Show

The 1954 Paris Motor Show marked a turning point for Maranello's road car production. The City of Light - and no other setting could have been more appropriate - saw the unveiling of the 250 Europa GT, then called the 250 GT, designed by Pinin Farina.

It was the successor to the 250 Europa, introduced in Paris in 1953. It caught the eye with its sportier lines, along with different engine and chassis options. It was the template for Ferrari's entire production over the next 10 years, and was the model that summed up Enzo Ferrari's car concept, all packaged with the typical elegance of the Turin body shop.

The 250 GT marked a change in Ferrari's assembly process, from hand crafted to production line, with a boom in volumes that doubled in just three years. In fact, a few months before the Paris exhibition, Ferrari had expanded the factory, creating a new light alloy foundry, with the aim of increasing production and improving the company's profitability to finance its racing activities.

Just three years after the historic meeting between Enzo Ferrari and Battista "Pinin" Farina in a restaurant in Tortona in 1951, the agreement between two heavyweights of Italian motoring reached its zenith, with the creation of an icon of automotive history.

Until then, Ferrari usually let its customers choose a body shop to complete and customise a car.

Often the same model was aesthetically very diverse, with many different details, even in the choice of materials, like aluminium rather than steel for the body.

However, Ferrari understood that to make a quantum leap and place his own imprint on his "creations", to give them a unique character, he needed a single partner: Pinin Farina shared his vision.

Grace and power had to go hand in hand in the development of new products, with mechanics and style merged into a single body.

Ferrari forged his "trademark" with the 250 GT, defining his product standards for road cars, which would instantly stand out from those of rival companies.

The 250 GT was Maranello's first real GT: successful on the track, in terms of performance, as well as on public roads too.

1954

Umberto Maglioli drives a Ferrari 375 Plus to victory in the last Carrera Panamericana in Mexico

The Carrera Panamericana holds a special place in the motorsport history books, regarded now as one of the most gruelling endurance races to ever have taken place. More than just a race, it was an exhausting cross-Atlantic adventure. 3,000 kilometres of often untarmacked roads traversing Mexico from end to end, from the border with Guatemala to that with the United States was the ultimate test for car and driver. With consecutive stages of 950 km divided into two parts with a break of just half an hour, it's clear to see why only five editions were held. Starting in late November of 1950, the authorities called time on it in 1954 due to the extreme danger.

Meanwhile, the reputation of the 'marathon' had grown equal to that of the Mille Miglia or the 24 Hours of Le Mans, both races with large radio and press following. Despite the difficult conditions and expense of sending cars and people, all the biggest European and North American manufacturers wanted to race there to promote their marques and win the prize money. Not only this but to sell cars in the United States (for European manufacturers), using the big earnings to offset their investments.

However, this 'raid' on America wasn't always successful, because sometimes the cars were totally wrecked in an accident. Unfortunately, some champions also failed to return from Mexico, one of them being Felice Bonetto.

Many winners found their image inextricably linked to the Carrera. This was so for Umberto Maglioli, who began racing with his mentor Giovanni Bracco in endurance tests such as the Mille Miglia and Targa Florio. In 1952, he drove a Lancia Aurelia in his first Carrera, finishing fourth behind Luigi Chinetti, the famous NART founder. This result smoothed the way for him to join Ferrari in 1953, but not before winning the Targa Florio with Lancia.

Mike Hawthorn won the 12 Hours of Pescara for Ferrari and then went to the Panamericana with the 375 MM and the company of another 176 entrants. Lancia turned up with a strong team and totally dominated the race. However, tyre problems forced Maglioli, despite winning four stages, to stop and switch to the car of Mario Ricci, who sponsored the entire shipment of cars from Maranello, entered by Scuderia Guastalla of Franco Cornacchia and Luigi Chinetti.

Maglioli launched into a furious chase on the long straight stretches of the final stages, earning the nickname from the Mexican press of "el suicida del volante" or even the "mad Italian", but he just couldn't make up the gap. Ferrari nevertheless won the Sportscar Championship.

Maglioli set a world record in the Chihuahua-Ciudad Juárez stage, won at an average of 222.59 km/h. During the Cuernavaca motorway stretch, the newspapers reported that his 375 MM even touched the 270 km/h mark. In 1954, after winning three Sportscar races, Maglioli returned in triumph to the Carrera Panamericana. Victory in the Carrera had a special appeal because it was definitely the hardest race of the season. There were no Lancias, but there were Porsches and Alfa Romeos on the grid.

The race was a family affair between Phil Hill-Richie Ginther, with a blue and white 375 MM Vignale Spider, sporting an eye-catching rear fin, and Maglioli with a 375 Plus Pininfarina Spider, who excelled at the wheel of the very powerful, high capacity racing car. His greatest ability was to instinctively feel out and 'know' circuits he had never driven on. He knew how to manage the tyres in the first part of the race and to put his foot down on long final stretches.

Maglioli's 375 Plus was given to him for the race by the American customer Erwin Goldschmidt, a relative of the famous banker Jakob, and was sold to another

American customer shortly after the event. The duel ended with victory for Maglioli in the last Carrera Panamericana, in 17 hours 40 minutes and 26 seconds, with a record average of 173.692 km/h. Some say that the decision of the organisers to discontinue the race was taken on the basis of his performances.

Ferrari also won the World Sportscar Championship in 1954. In addition, the name of Maglioli became synonymous with Targa Florio, a race that he won three times in 1953, 1956 and 1968. He also came third for Scuderia Ferrari in the Italian Grand Prix at Monza in 1954 and triumphed with Parkes at the 12 Hours of Sebring in 1964 in a 275 P..

1955

Launch of 250 Coupé Pinin Farina

Unveiled at the 1954 Paris Motor Show, the 250 Europa GT was an immediate success, giving an immediate boost to other projects being developed on that template.

At the time, examples of any particular model were not all alike. They varied in function of the materials chosen for their construction, from the metal of the bodywork – which determined the weight and cost of the car – down to other details of customisation, with real changes applied to meet specific customer requirements. The same name could therefore be used for cars with markedly different styles.

These variations gave rise to ideas for experiments aiming to create a new special series. For example, the bench behind the front seats in the first cars acted as a luggage compartment.

In 1955, Ferrari and Pinin Farina were working on several fronts. The first prototype of the Pinin Farina Berlinetta was produced with a very rounded shape to improve aerodynamics. Seven others followed in various shapes, all of which were aluminium. They were considered prototypes of future “Tour de France” Berlinettas, sold to customers specifically for racing purposes.

Several unique examples based on the 250 Europa GT were also made for customers, but with totally different bodies. The one with chassis number 0407GT is famous and easy to spot due to the solutions adopted. The metallic grey model had a prominent and slightly turned down nose, incorporating a modified radiator grille with a large central Prancing Horse, rounded roof and stretched rear. It also featured vertical taillights and dual rear wipers. Its interior had orange Connolly leather with inserts on the seats and doors manufactured by Maison Hermès of Paris. It also sported a clock with rally trip-master function and a retractable side table for the roadbook. Commissioned by an Italian customer, it ended up in the United States.

However, Pinin Farina’s main project was the new 250 GT Coupé intended replace the 250 Europa GT and due to be presented at the 1956 Geneva Motor Show. The result was a completely different car from the previous example, with more geometric shapes, especially in the rear, with two eye-catching tail fins that followed a straight line down the side. The grille was lower and elongated, as were the struts and rear deflectors. Some versions also had an air intake on the long bonnet.

All of these variations on the theme were also the result of different production processes too.

Indeed, Pinin Farina could not directly produce all the cars at the new premises in Grugliasco, after the factory moved from Corso Trapani in Turin. As a result, 250 GT production was transferred to the Boano body shop and later, Ellena.

The car brochure included: “The production line model that encapsulates the experiences of the sports car”. The essence of Maranello GTs captured in a single line.

1956

Juan Manuel Fangio is crowned F1 world champion at the wheel of the Ferrari D50

On the eve of the 1956 Formula1 World Championship, Juan Manuel Fangio and the Scuderia Ferrari agreed to tackle the season together.

The Argentinian-born son of Italian emigrants, Fangio already had three titles under his belt from 1951, 1954 and 1955, so he was the hottest driver on the scene as well the favourite to win again in 1956.

He had already raced Ferraris in the F2, Formula Libre and Sportscar categories but never in an F1 World Championship Grand Prix.

This new partnership aside, the season start was exciting for another, more technical reason.

On July 26 1955, Ferrari had taken delivery of all of Lancia's racing department material in the company courtyard at Via Caraglio in Turin, as the latter had pulled out of competition as a consequence of the death of Alberto Ascari and growing financial woes. Included in the haul were six examples of the D50 single-seater.

The D50 had proved extremely promising, but Lancia had never managed to fully exploit its potential. However, once in the hands of the Scuderia Ferrari, the car began to deliver on its promise.

At the first Grand Prix of the season in Buenos Aires, the Prancing Horse team fielded four D50s entrusted to Fangio, Luigi Musso, Eugenio Castellotti and Olivier Gendebien, while young Peter Collins was still in the 4-cylinder 555.

Because of his astonishing achievements, Fangio was lead driver. This role was never formally acknowledged but was clearly his. Luigi Musso, for instance, handed over his car to the Argentinian, as permitted under the rules of the day, after the latter's developed a fuel pump problem.

Juan Manuel Fangio started from pole and clocked the race's fastest lap. He was first across the line in Musso's car and the points were split between them.

Two months later, Fangio and Castellotti won the 12 Hours of Sebring in the Ferrari 860 Monza, a feat they followed up with a second-place finish in the 1,000 Kilometres of Nürburgring and a slew of other fine performances, contributing to Ferrari's victory in the World Sportscar Championship.

In the second Formula 1 Grand Prix at Monaco, it was Collins' turn to hand over his D50 to Fangio after the latter's car hit the harbour wall, damaging its rear wheel. They came joint second, but Fangio once again also took pole and scored the race fastest lap.

At Spa-Francorchamps in Belgium, the Argentinian again qualified fastest but in the race was unlucky to develop a gearbox problem. Collins won ahead of the Ferrari of local hero Paul Frère who was driving in his final GP. In the next race at Reims, Fangio proved uncatchable in qualifying and with the fastest lap during the race, but luck was not on his side and he finished fourth after a lengthy pit stop.

Back in Modena that weekend, Enzo Ferrari's mind was elsewhere, as it would be for quite some time to come. On Saturday, June 30, his son Dino passed away after a battle with muscular dystrophy and his funeral took place on the same Sunday as the French Grand Prix.

Fangio seemed to plunge into a psychological crisis but was reassured by his position as the team's lead driver. His luck changed from the British Grand Prix onwards too. Although he took neither pole nor the race fastest lap, he won the race, while his team-mate Collins, who was topping the rankings, had to finish the grand prix in Alfonso De Portago's car.

At the Nürburgring, Fangio dominated the running from qualifying and right through the race, smashing the track record which had been unbeaten for 18

years. Collins retired and the three-time World Champion jumped to the top of the standings, just one race from the end of the season. The duo were now both in the running for the title along with Stirling Moss and Jean Behra of Maserati. Monza witnessed a remarkable display of sportsmanship that has gone down in motorsport history. Fangio qualified fastest but in the race itself a steering arm snapped. Behra too was out of the race. Musso refused to give the Argentinian his D50 as he wanted to win his home Grand Prix, but was later forced to retire also. Nonetheless, when 24-year-old Collins pitted, he saw Fangio without a drive and handed over his car to the Argentinian, thereby ruining his own chances of winning the Championship. Collins was certain that he would get another shot but it was not to be.

Collins and Fangio finished second behind the Maserati of Moss and split the points between them. This result handed the Balcare champion his fourth World Drivers' title, successfully concluding a tough season both for him personally and Enzo Ferrari, who topped the standings for the first time since Ascari's victory in 1953. Ferrari and Fangio went their separate ways at the end of the season, as the Argentinian chose to return to Maserati for which he won his fifth and final world title.