



SHELL

HISTORY

HOMETOWN RIVALRY, PART 4

As Ferrari and Maserati battled fiercely for the 1953 Formula One World Championship, Maserati pulled ahead in 2-liter sports car racing—but Ferrari soon struck back. KARL LUDVIGSEN revisits the clash of the Mondial and the AGCS/2000.



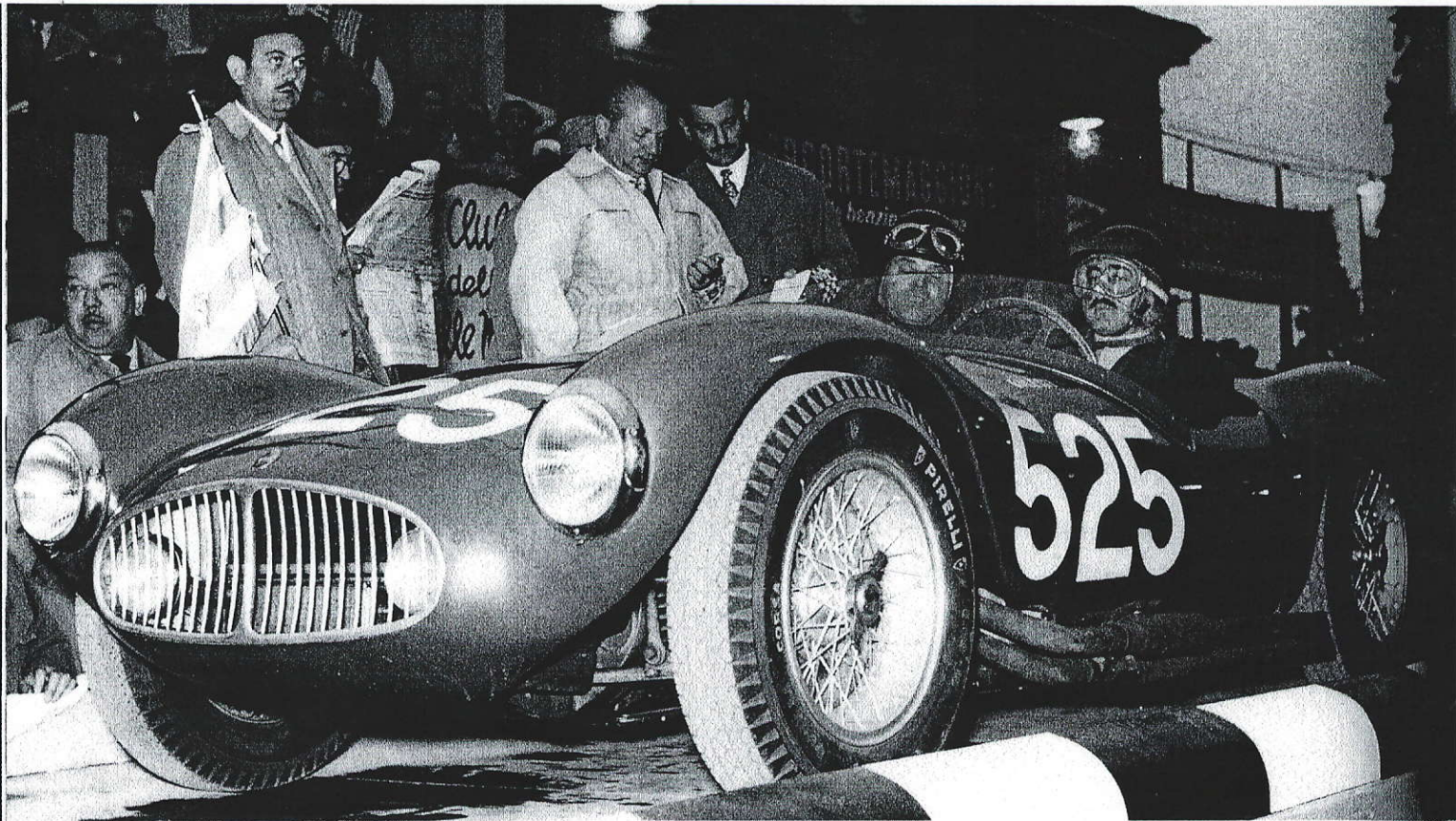
Maseratis lead at the start of Imola's inaugural race on June 20, 1954, but Umberto Maglioli took the win in the #36 Ferrari.

Ferrari was the king of early 1950s sports car racing. In '53, Ferrari's big 4.5-liter sports-racers and superb driver cadre shrugged off challenges from Jaguar, Aston Martin and Cunningham to win the first-ever FIA world championship. Hometown rival Maserati had nothing to offer in response, just as it hadn't in 1951 and '52 when Ferrari's 166 MM had dominated the popular 2-liter sports car category over the cycle-fendered, single-camshaft Maserati A6GCS.

But things were stirring on Modena's Via Ciro Menotti. The Orsis—father Adolfo and son Omer—spun off the less interesting parts of their mini-conglomerate and began to focus on their auto business. Work began on a new twin-cam 2-liter production car that had the potential to make Maserati a significant player in the road car world for the first time, while Alberto Massimino and Vittorio Bellentani delivered a Formula Two car that kept the Ferrari 500 honest in the 1952 world championship. *[Ferrari won the world championship in both '52 and '53, when Formula One was run to 2-liter Formula Two specifications. For consistency, we'll refer to these single-seaters as F2 cars.—Ed.]*

Because Massimino's 2-liter twin-cam engine for Formula Two was derived from Maserati's single-cam six, it was no great leap for Maserati to install the F2 engine in a slightly modified A6GCS chassis. Several such cars were built at the end of 1952. Some of the F2-engined A6GCSs had cycle fenders, while one was given fenders that were faired back into the body—international sports car rules had outlawed cycle fenders, and this was Maserati's first response.

Although the faired-fender car was publicized in early 1953 as the first of a new breed of Maserati sports cars—espe-



cially by U.S. importer Tony Pompeo—it was in fact a transitional machine. Since October of 1952, a new engineering breeze had been blowing through Maserati in the person of Milanese Gioachino Colombo, then a prematurely balding 40 years old.

Colombo had long been associated with Alfa Romeo, from whom he made a detour after World War II to create the first V12 Ferrari. He was with Alfa again in 1951 for Fangio's world championship, and was deeply involved with the Milan firm's *Disco Volante* or "Flying Saucer" sports-racing cars, so named for their curvaceous and aerodynamic lines.

Colombo's first priority was to deal with Maserati's Formula Two car, updating its six-cylinder engine with an improved combustion-chamber design and oversquare dimensions of 76.5 x 72mm for 1,986cc. Next, with Bellentani's help, he turned to the sports-racer.

Interest in the 2-liter sports car category was growing, especially in Italy, and arch rival Ferrari was giving the class less attention in favor of large-displacement competition. The

Trident's traditional customers eagerly awaited a new sports car to take the place of the now-outdated A6GCS.

The new car would also be an A6GCS, affectionately referred to as the *Aseigiessie* by Maserati's clients. Officially it was the A6GCS/2000 or, with a more commercial slant, the Sport 2000.

The new car showed the influence of Colombo's experience with the *Disco Volantes*, especially in its rounded central cross section, and when paneled in aluminum by Merdardo Fantuzzi or Celestino Fiandri it was one of the most handsome sports-racing cars of all time. The hood sloped astonishingly low between upswept front fenders to an oval grille. The early cars all had full Plexiglas windshields, some with a sexy central dip that reflected the positions of driver and passenger.

Fabricated in Milan by Gilco after Maserati made the first ones, the A6GCS/2000's frame was a platform of steel tubes in which the drive line was centrally located, not offset as it had been in the cycle-fendered A6GCS. The independent

front suspension was carried over from the A6GCS and consisted of coil springs and unequal-length steel wishbones.

The A6GCS/2000's live-axle rear suspension was close kin to that of the F2 Maserati, though the front and rear anti-rolls bars were new for a Maserati sports-racer. A limited-slip differential was added after mid-1954.

Although broadly similar to previous Maserati sixes, the A6GCS/2000's aluminum cylinder block had a new architecture, with wet iron cylinder liners guiding die-cast aluminum pistons. A narrow aluminum casting enclosed the bottom end, its flat sump cover a separate removable casting.

The head contained twin overhead camshafts and two spark plugs per cylinder. The latter were normally fired by dual Marelli distributors, though some of the sixes were magneto-sparked. Induction was through three twin-throat Weber 40DCO3 carburetors.

Maserati initially rated its A6GCS/2000 six at 165 bhp at 6,750 rpm with a compression ratio of 8.5:1. Power was delivered through a twin-disc clutch

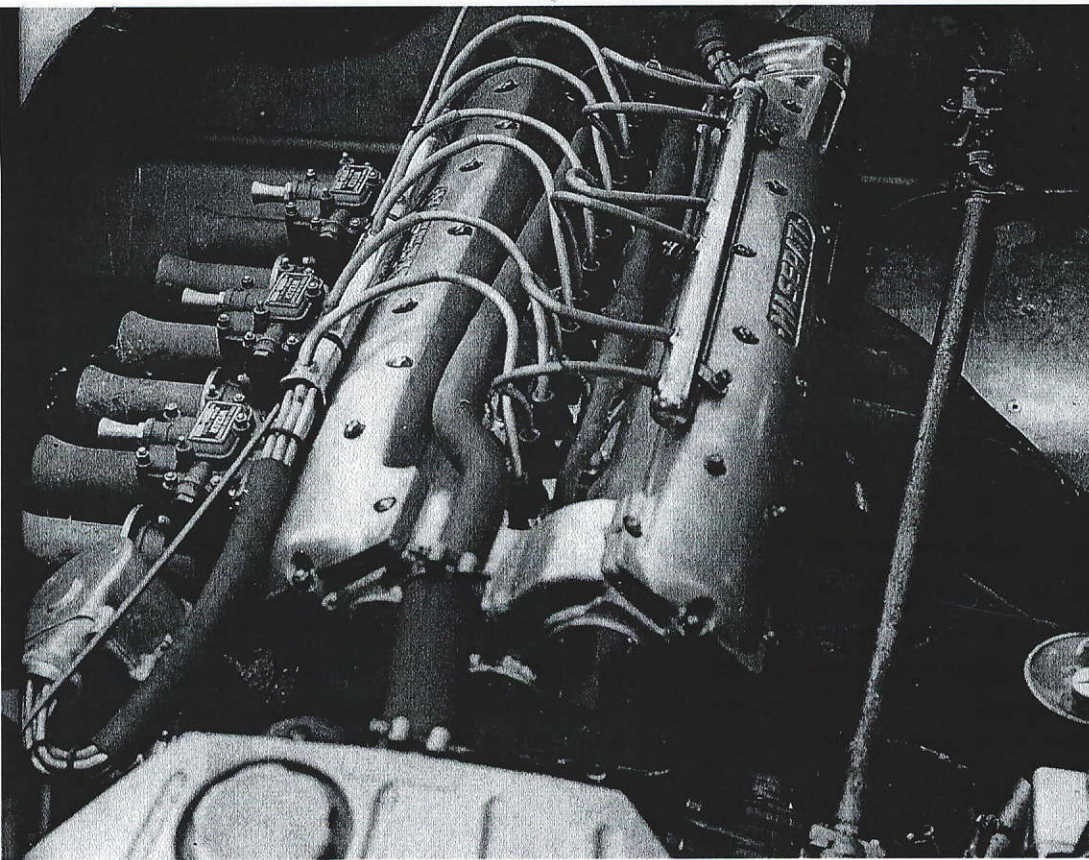
and four-speed transmission in unit with the engine.

That gearbox required constant use, said British racing driver Roy Salvadori: "Because of its narrow power band, with absolutely nothing below 5,000 rpm, I had to work very hard to keep the A6GCS engine in its restricted power band."

Although not a lightweight at 1,540 pounds dry, the Maserati was quick: Zero-to-60 mph went by in 6.8 seconds and the car's top speed was in excess of 130 mph. The A6GCS/2000 had brakes to match its speed, new front drums measuring 12.9 inches with rears of 11.4 inches. The drums sat inside the 4.5-inch rims of 16-inch Borrani wheels.

The whole ensemble prompted Britain's *The Autocar* to say, "This Maserati sports car is a most desirable property, the sight—let alone sound—of which will make any enthusiast's mouth water."

Photographs of the new model first appeared in March 1953, and the Orsis cheerfully leaked the news that it had been tried, unpainted, at the



Modena Autodromo by works tester Guerino Bertocchi, world champion Juan Manuel Fangio and Biellese driver Emilio Giletti. On his third lap, Giletti broke the outright track record for sports cars, previously held by a 3-liter Ferrari. Bertocchi later matched his speed. Though no times were quoted for Fangio, he praised the engine and the "extraordinary roadholding."

The Maserati was so well-balanced and easy to drive that it was affectionately dubbed "Auntie." "You can louse up a curve like crazy and the Maser will make you look like Ascari," said owner Fred Proctor.

Its sole disadvantage was its left-hand drive, which followed the tradition of the earlier

Opposite: Emilio Giletti and Guerino Bertocchi (at wheel) drove their Maserati to first in class, sixth overall at the 1953 Mille Miglia. Above: A6GCS/2000's 2-liter six-cylinder engine.

A6GCS. "It was fine on left-handers," noted Roy Salvadori, but on "right-hand corners not only was the driver's weight in the wrong place, but it was not possible to 'sight' the car properly for the corner." This held true for America's many airport races as well, but was no disadvantage in Italy's classic over-the-road contests.

It was just such a race—the 676-mile Giro di Sicilia—that saw the new model's first appearance on April 12th,

Below left: Roy Salvadori raced Gilby Engineering's Maserati extensively in England in 1953 and '54. Below right: Pininfarina displayed this A6GCS/2000 coupe at the 1954 Turin Auto Show.

1953. It wasn't a fairy-tale debut for the works car, however: Emilio Giletti was not among the top ten finishers.

Three A6GCS/2000s were prepared for the Mille Miglia on April 26th. Luigi Musso retired past Rome, but Sergio Mantovani finished 10th with R. Palazzi, while the mustachioed Giletti was sixth accompanied by test driver Bertocchi. The two cars were first and second in class, with the nearest 2-liter Ferrari well back in 15th

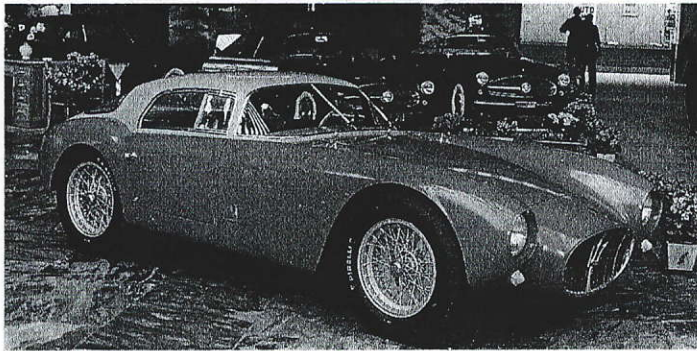
overall, fifth in class. At a stroke, the new Maserati was crowned 2-liter king over the Ferrari 166s.

Three weeks later in Sicily's grueling 358-mile Targa Florio, the new car's prowess was confirmed. Giletti was second overall behind a 3-liter Lancia, followed by Fangio—in one of his few races in the Sport 2000—co-driving with Mantovani. There were no 2-liter Ferraris in sight.

June brought more successes, with outright wins in two contests for 2-liter cars: the 143-mile Circuito di Caserta on the 21st and the 242-mile Giro dell' Umbria on the 28th. The first fell to Mantovani ahead of Musso, who led Giulio Musitelli's Ferrari. In the second, Musso led two Lancias to win. Musso won outright again at Avellino on July 12th in a tortuous race over 117 miles that saw no Ferraris in the top three spots.

The A6GCS/2000 scored class victories in the 12 Hours of Pescara, the Tuscan Trophy and the *Supercortemaggiore* race at Merano. At the end of the year, Swiss racer Toulo de Graffenried took a car to Brazil, winning a hillclimb and a sports car race at Interlagos.

Britain's Gilby Engineering acquired a car for Roy Salvadori to race; team patron Sid Greene drove the car to the circuits on the road. Against less potent but lighter Bristol-powered cars, Salvadori scored class wins at Castle Combe and Snetterton in '53 and several outright wins at Castle Combe in '54—plus a hard-fought triumph over Stirling Moss in a Lister-Bristol at Goodwood.



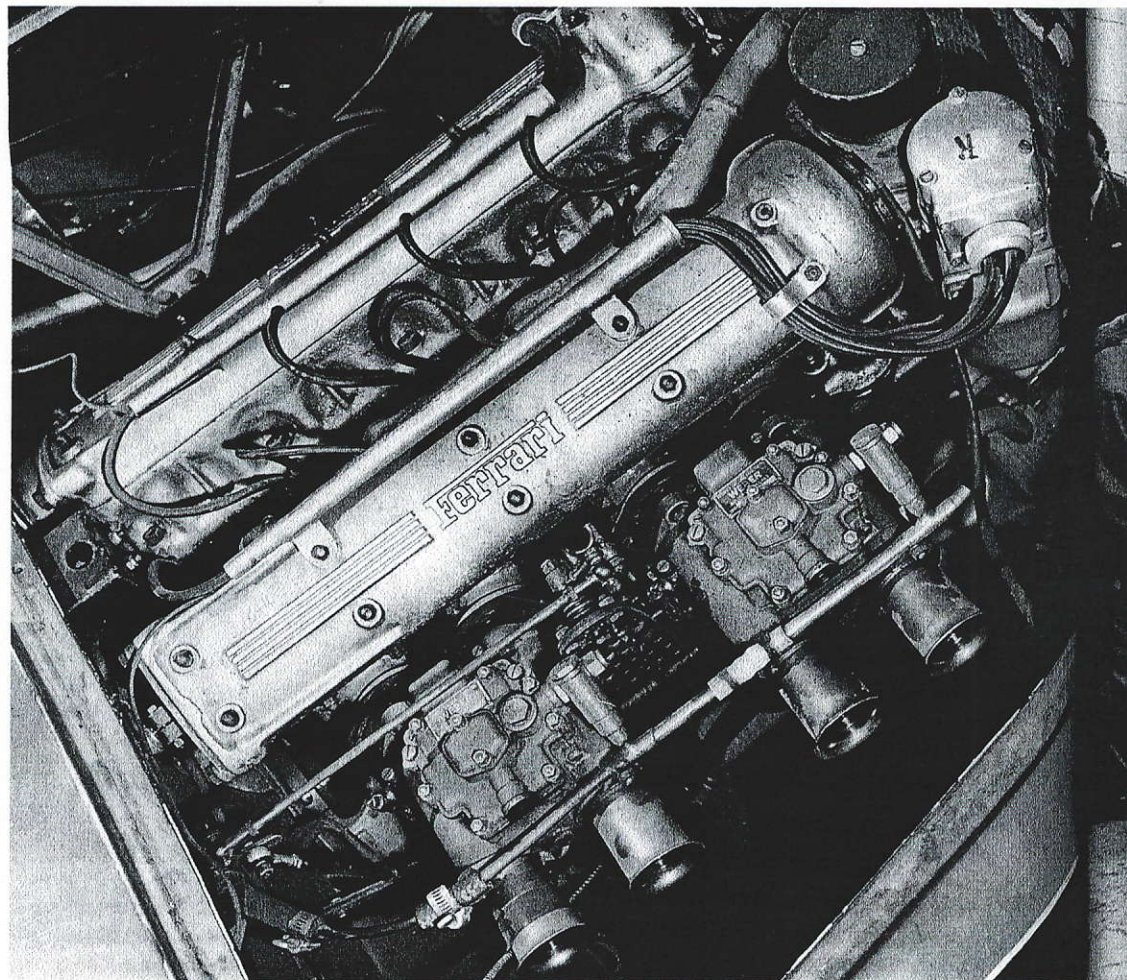
Although Salvadori initially raced his car with the full windshield, for the 1954 season it was rebuilt with a screen for the driver alone and an aluminum tonneau cover over the passenger's seat. This was standard wear for most cars in 1954, as was an increase in engine power to 170 bhp at 7,300 rpm with a higher compression ratio of 8.75:1. The revised car was officially known as the A6GCS/54, and American racers including Bill David, Tom Friedman, Don McNaught and Fred Procter tabled \$8,000 to buy one.

In all, Maserati made 52 cars of this type through 1955—a signal commercial success. Not all were bodied by Fantuzzi or Fiandri, however. Pininfarina built three coupes for Guglielmo Dei of the Scuderia Centro-Sud; although fabulous-looking, these cars never achieved racing success to match their insouciant style. One roadster was bodied by Frua while Vignale clothed one car as a spectacular roadster for Tony Parravano.

The Maserati's successes and popularity did not go unnoticed at Ferrari. When the

Modenese carmaker boasted of "The return of the glorious Maserati to racing..." in its advertising, it was like waving a red flag to a bull. When Enzo Ferrari began developing a new family of sports-racers powered by four-cylinder engines in 1953, he didn't overlook the need to create a rival to this annoying Maserati.

Ferrari's recidivism from his advanced V12—an exceptional engine in its time—to four-



Above: Ferrari Tipo 110 2-liter four cylinder, shown here in a Siata! Opposite: Ferrari driver Vittorio Marzotto won the 2-liter class at the '54 Mille Miglia by just nine seconds over a Maserati.

cylinder engines—which had been all but extinct in top-line racing since the first World War—was one of the most remarkable of the many striking steps he took during his career. One reason for this change, wrote Gianni Rogliatti, was that Ferrari was "extremely open to all the proposals put forward by

those who worked with him and was willing to test anything that could reasonably be tested. This enabled the company to accumulate enough experimental and statistical data to make any of the large car manufacturers green with envy."

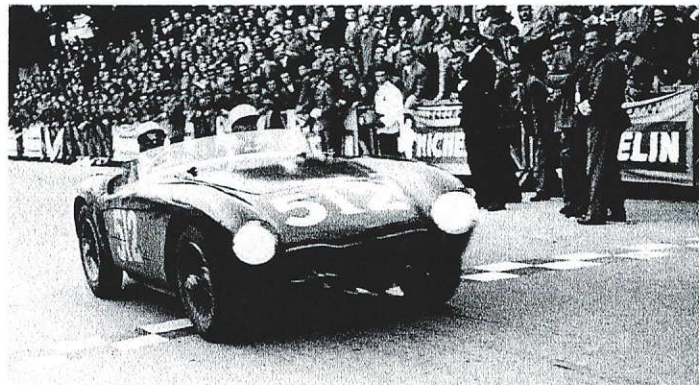
In other words, Enzo Ferrari subjected his early engines to a

ruthless Darwinian selection process: Many types were created so that only the most worthy would survive.

The first target of the Ferrari four-cylinder engine had been Formula Two, where the new 2-liter Tipo 500 demonstrated its superiority over the previous twelve in its very first race at the Modena Autodromo on September 23, 1951. Alberto Ascari won the race, then won the next two world championships against steadily increasing competition from Maserati.

If the light, efficient and torque-rich four-cylinder

Below left: Enrico Sterzi finished 15th overall, fifth in class at the Mille Miglia in 1954. Below right: The last of the Series 1 Mondials received refined Scaglietti coachwork.





engine worked so well in a Formula 2 car, reasoned Ferrari and his chief engineer Aurelio Lampredi, why not try it in larger sizes? Since early 1952, they'd been running a *Tipo 500* equipped with a 2.5-liter version of the four in preparation for 1954's Formula One engine requirements. In 1953, just such engines were installed in two Vignale-bodied spyders that had brief racing careers in Europe before being sold to South American owners.

An even bigger four of three liters was installed in a sports-racer bodied by Modena's Autodromo to a design by Lampredi. This was the conceptual prototype of the *Tipo 750* that first raced and won a year later at Monza, a victory that gave the model its characteristic name.

While the 3-liter Monza would receive a new and more ambitious four, its 2-liter equivalent could use a derivative of the engine that had been so successful in the *Tipo 500* F2 car. To distinguish the 2-

liter sports car from its single-seater sister, the new model was given the name "Mondial" ("World") in honor of the two world championships won by Ascari using its powertrain.

Like the Maserati, the Ferrari had a race-proven engine; unlike the Maserati, it avoided cylinder-head gasket problems by combining head and block in an aluminum alloy casting that extended downward three-quarters of the length of the cast-iron wet cylinders. The cast-aluminum crankcase extended down to the bottom of the engine and was enclosed at its base by a shallow aluminum sump. Internal ribs supported the five main bearings, 63mm in diameter instead of the F2 engine's 60mm in the interest of endurance-race reliability.

Another difference from the F2 engine was a transverse magnesium case that carried a shaft and bevel gears to drive three Marelli components: a

central dynamo and two magnetos (or two distributors) to supply the dual ignition. Carburetion was by two Weber 40DCOA3 dual-throat carbs on the right, with efficient blended-pipe exhaust manifold on the left.

Carried over to the Mondial was the *Tipo 500*'s elaborate overhead cam valve gear. The valves were closed by hairpin-type valve springs, while the mushroom-shaped tappets had their own coil springs to hold them against the cam lobes. This elaborate belt-and-braces mechanism was created by Lampredi expressly to eliminate valve-gear problems, and it was largely successful.

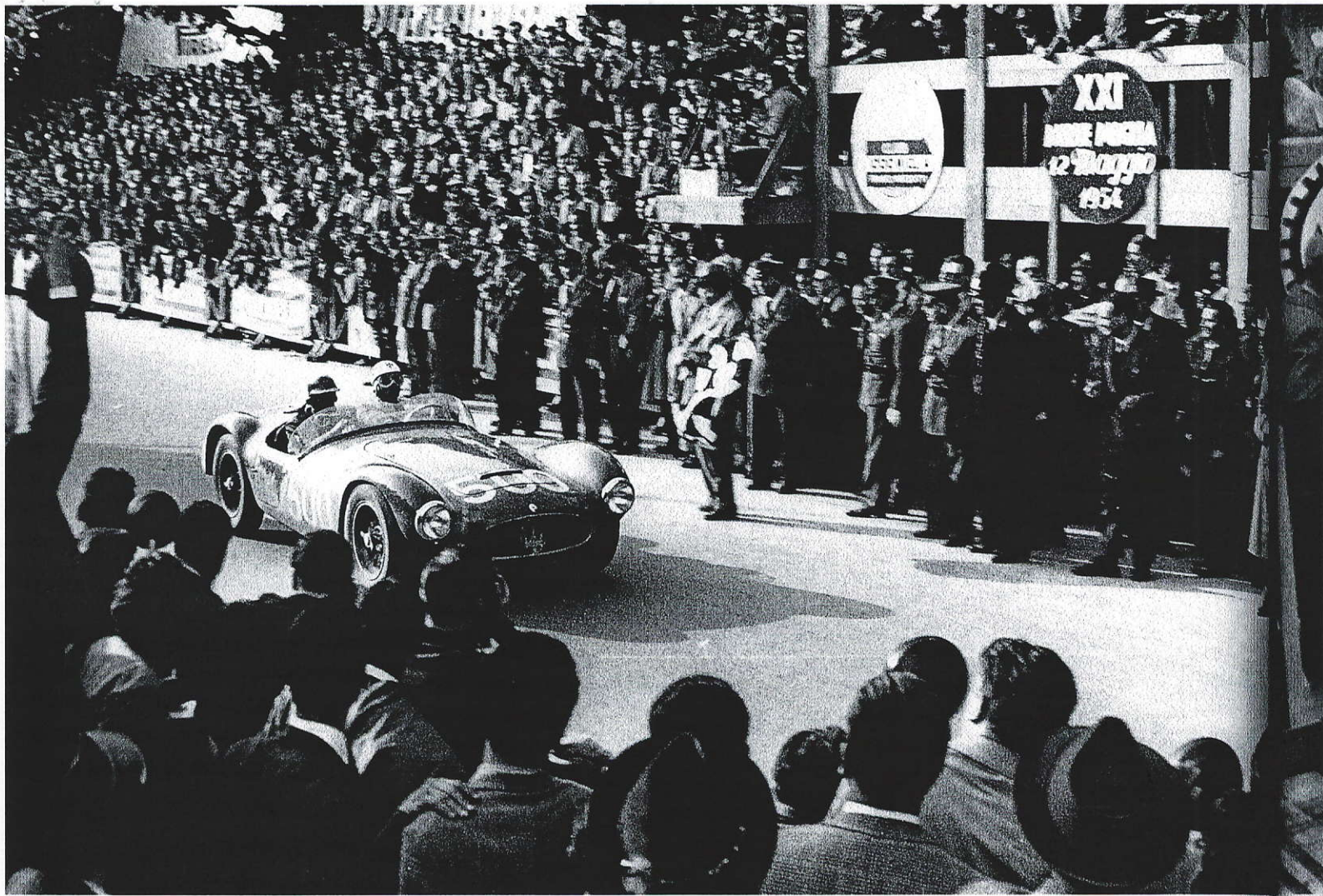
Internally designated the *Tipo 110*, the revised motor featured a bore and stroke of 90 x 78mm for 1,985cc. Fully skirted aluminum pistons gave a compression ratio of 8.5:1. Ferrari initially rated the Mondial's engine at 160 bhp at 7,000 rpm. Powering the first 20 Mondials, the *Tipo 110* engine was upgraded through 1954 with bigger

42mm carburetors and a 9.2:1 compression ratio, raising output to 170 bhp at 7,200 rpm.

Drive was delivered through a twin-disc clutch to a rear-mounted transaxle like the *Tipo 500*'s. Initially, the transaxle contained four forward speeds; a fifth ratio was later added. A ZF limited-slip differential was used for the final drive.

Lampredi carried over the single-seater's de Dion rear suspension to the Mondial. Transverse leaf springs and adjustable Houdaille dampers resided at both ends, but no anti-roll bars were fitted. A worm-and-wheel steering box sat on the right-hand side to suit sports car racing's predominantly clockwise circuits.

Shared with the bigger-engined Monza, the Mondial's brakes were much larger in diameter than the Maserati's at 13.8 inches, although they were narrower. Sixteen-inch Borrani wire wheels carried 5.50 tires in front and 6.00 tires at the rear, the latter being the same size the Maserati used all around.



The Ferrari's 88.6-inch wheelbase was shorter than the Maserati's 90.9 inches. The A6GCS/2000 also had a wider front track (52.6 inches versus 50.3 inches) but a narrower rear track (48.0 inches for the Maserati, 50.6 inches for the Ferrari). Ferrari quoted a dry weight of 1,560 pounds.

The Mondial appeared at a time of rapid evolution in Ferrari body design. A fresh impulse came from Enzo Ferrari's son Alfredo ("Dino"), who received a spare 166 MM chassis from his father. Dino came up with some ideas of his own to be executed by local coachbuilder Sergio Scaglietti; together, they conceived an aggressive and fluid line for Dino's 166 MM. Scaglietti bodied the Mondial that scored the early-1954 successes based on this design, with its unusually small front grille.

Initially, however, Ferrari turned to the proven source of Pininfarina for bodies for its customer Mondials. Pininfarina's Mondial bodies were scaled-down versions of Ferrari's big V12-engined racers, though they had a personality of their own with forward-thrusting snouts and "speed lines" along their flanks from the front-wheel openings. Pininfarina also made two clean-lined berlinettas on the Mondial chassis.

Toward the end of production of the Series 1 Mondial in 1954, body manufacture was turned over to Scaglietti. In all, six of the first 20 Mondials received Scaglietti bodies.

As usual, Ferrari debuted the new car with factory drivers in order to secure its reputation. No less a pairing than Alberto Ascari and Luigi "Gigi" Villorelli drove the

Mondial to second overall behind a big Ferrari V12 in a 12-hour race at Casablanca on December 20, 1953. To their credit, they defeated a 4.5-liter Talbot and two privately entered DB3S Aston Martins.

Some time would elapse before the Ferrari Mondial and Maserati A6GCS/2000 met head-on. Emilio Giletti and Luigi Musso teamed up on January 24th to take an A6GCS/2000 to sixth place overall in the Buenos Aires 1,000-kilometer race, with no other 2-liter car in sight. The Ferrari raced in Africa again early in 1954, with François Picard winning his class at Agadir on February 27th and Maurice Trintignant doing likewise at Dakar on March 7th, placing second overall. A similar result fell to Picard at Marrakech on April 19th.

In the Giro di Sicilia on April 4th—an event that should have suited the

Mondials—Luigi Musso's Maserati was fourth overall and first in class, with no 2-liter Ferraris in the top ten.

The two rivals finally clashed in earnest at the Mille Miglia on May 2, 1954. Among those driving A6GCS/2000s were Maserati ace Musso and Bruno Venezian, both carrying passengers. In the new Ferraris were Franco Cortese, Enrico Sterzi and the oldest of the racing Marzotto brothers, Vittorio. The latter was the only one of this group to tackle the 992-mile race solo.

The outcome could not have been closer. It took Musso 6:09:01 to reach Rome, the nominal midway mark, with Marzotto a few seconds faster in his Ferrari at 6:08:49. Save for Venezian, whose Maserati was nine minutes behind, no other 2-liter car was close to menacing those two.

Musso and Augusto Zocca's



Opposite: Luigi Musso's A6GCS/2000 finished second in class at the '54 Mille Miglia. Above: Franco Cortese prepares to start the same race in his Ferrari Mondial; he finished fourth in class.

finishing time back in Brescia was 12:00:10, but it's clear they had some problems during the second leg. Their overall time was more than 20 minutes slower than Giletti's time from the previous year, when he had been much slower on the first leg to Rome.

Vittorio Marzotto had his own problems, including an unwanted change of spark plugs—"It's going fine!" he protested. His time at the finish was 12:00:01, a negligible *nine seconds* faster than Musso's after a full day of racing. Marzotto and the Mondial finished second overall, first in class; Musso was third overall, second in class.

Venezian's Maserati came in fifth overall, third in class. The Mondials of Cortese and Sterzi finished 14th and 15th overall, fourth and fifth in class.

On May 15th, a six-hour race at Bari for 2-liter cars saw Maserati the winner with Cesare

Perdisa ahead of the Ferrari of Mario Della Favera. The next day, Musso won outright over 153 miles at Naples, beating Giulio Musitelli's 3-liter Ferrari.

At the Targa Florio on May 30th, Musso won the 2-liter class and finished second overall. Luigi Bellucci's similar Maserati came in fourth, with no Mondials finishing in the top six.

Save for its narrow win in the Mille Miglia, the Mondial wasn't having much success in the European contests. Its luck turned on June 20th at Imola in the 156-mile inaugural race for the city's new circuit. Robert Manzon set the fastest lap in a Mondial and the race was won by Umberto Maglioli in a similar car, with Musitelli second in another Mondial. Trident driver Musso could only manage third place.

At Collemaggio on July 4th, however, the positions were reversed: Bellucci won with his Sport 2000 after Musso set fastest lap and retired. Cortese's Mondial was second, Giorgio Scarlatti's Maserati was third. In the Dolomites on July 11th, Sergio Mantovani was the outright winner with an A6GCS/2000, defeating bigger-engined Ferraris.

The marques met again on September 11th at Northern Ireland's demanding Dundrod road circuit. Of the four Maseratis that started the 697-mile race, three retired or were disqualified. The fourth, driven by Musso and Mantovani, finished an outstanding third overall, beaten only by a Lancia D24 and a Ferrari Monza.

Four laps behind in ninth place was a Mondial driven by

Americans Bob Said and Masten Gregory. Theirs was the last of the Series 1 Mondials, cars distinguished by their transverse-leaf front springing, and wore a refined interpretation of the Scaglietti bodywork.

Complex and pedigreed though it was, Ferrari's Mondial didn't succeed in establishing the same dominance over the A6GCS/2000 that its Formula 2 car had enjoyed over the comparable Maserati. In 1954, as in 1953, Luigi Musso and his Sport 2000 were Italy's 2-liter sports car champions.

This would satisfy neither Ferrari nor its loyal customers for long. Maranello would produce a Series 2 Mondial in 1955 to compete against Maserati's upgrade of its stalwart six. The battle for 2-liter sports-car supremacy was far from over. ●