Beat: Automobiles

Mille Miglia 2014

Thousand-mile race

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USPA NEWS - The Mille Miglia victories of 1931 and 1955 are highlights of 120 years of Mercedes-Benz motorsport history. Exclusive compressor-sports car models SS and SSLK and 300 SL racing and production sports cars dominate strong showing of Mercedes-Benz.

Stuttgart "" A strong contingent of exclusive classics from Mercedes-Benz Classic will be lining up in May 2014 to drive the Mille Miglia from Brescia to Rome and back. Following in the tracks of the legendary original road race held from 1927 to 1957, the modern regularity race is a captivating reminder of two pinnacles of the 120-year history of Mercedes-Benz motorsport: the victories of Rudolf Caracciola/Wilhelm Sebastian in a Mercedes-Benz SSK (1931) and Stirling Moss/Denis Jenkinson in a Mercedes-Benz 300 SLR (W 196 S, 1955) are glorious moments in the racing tradition of the Stuttgart-based brand.

Mercedes-Benz Classic actively maintains this heritage through its continued participation in the regularity races. For the first time the "Mercedes-Benz Tribute to Mille Miglia"? regularity rally opens the route to classic cars which are not part of the official starting field. In addition, Mercedes-Benz in cooperation with the Museo Mille Miglia in Brescia will show the "Experience Hans Liska"? exhibition featuring race posters and drawings of the famous press and advertisment artist.

The great involvement is an expression of the long-standing ties of the Stuttgart-based brand to the Mille Miglia: in 2013, Mercedes-Benz signed a long-term partnership agreement with 1000 Miglia S.R.L, organisers of the thousand-mile race, as the sole automotive principal sponsor of the Mille Miglia. A thousand stories, a thousand miles: the Mille Miglia is a true legend in motorsport history. For historic automobile enthusiasts all over the world, the regularity race counts as one of the main events on the annual race calendar.

This year, the thousand-mile journey from Brescia to Rome and back will take place from 15 to 18 May 2014. Mercedes-Benz Classic is lining up at the start with numerous original vehicles from the era of powerful, supercharged racing sports cars as well as with racing and production sports cars from the 1950s. Brand ambassadors Roland Asch and Bernd Schneider will be piloting this year. Private collectors will also be participating in the Mille Miglia in their own exclusive Mercedes-Benz vehicles.

"Our involvement is a reminder of how closely the Mercedes-Benz brand is connected with the history of the Mille Miglia, which was perhaps the toughest street race in the world in its day,"? explains Michael Bock, Head of Mercedes-Benz Classic. "This year there is special significance to our active role in maintaining this unique bond, which combines motorsport success with innovative strength, passion with rivalry. That´s because we are devoting 2014 to the celebration of magic moments from 120 years of Mercedes-Benz motor racing history."?

In addition to the rally for vehicles that competed in the original race between 1927 and 1957, the organisers of the Mille Miglia will for the first time stage the Mercedes-Benz Tribute to Mille Miglia in 2014. This sporting competition will take place governed by the same rules as the actual Mille Miglia on the identical route from Brescia to Rome and back. The vehicles will start one hour before the competitors of the main field. Selected Mercedes-Benz vehicles not qualified to participate in the Mille Miglia are invited to take part in the tribute event. For example, this applies to the 300 SL Roadster (W 198 II) for classic vehicles built between 1958 and 1981 as well as for selected sports cars built after 1981.

This exclusive addition to the Mille Miglia is supported by Mercedes-Benz Italy. Mercedes-Benz will also bring the fascination of the legendary 1000-mile race to life with the "Experience Hans Liska"? exhibition. The show features race posters, drawings and other works from famous graphic artist Liska and will be hosted at the Museo Mille Miglia in Brescia from the beginning of June. In particular in the 1950s Hans Liska put his stamp on the public perception of the Mercedes-Benz racing triumphs with his images. He also immortalised the 1955 Mille Miglia in impressive pictures.

Outstanding Mercedes-Benz victories in 1931 and 1955
Mercedes-Benz and the Mille Miglia belong together, in fact they are inseparable. Of particular significance are the overall victories of

1931 and 1955, both of which are defining moments in the motorsport heritage of the Stuttgart manufacturer. These were not the only glorious chapters of the racing history books written at the Mille Miglia, with further contributions coming from a class win by Rudolf Caracciola and Christian Werner in 1930 in a Mercedes-Benz SSK and second place overall in 1952 by Karl Kling in a 300 SL racer (W 194).

Car enthusiasts have been staging the Mille Miglia out of the Tuscan town of Brescia since 1927. In the fourth edition of the road race leading over a distance of 1000 miles to Rome and back Mercedes-Benz scored a class victory for the first time in May 1930. The powerful Mercedes-Benz SSK racing sports car driven by Caracciola and Werner made quite an impression: “Forging his path through the dust, Caracciola, the German champion, appeared in his squat white Mercedes“, wrote the reporter from British “Motor“ magazine in his race report published on 15 April 1930.

At one point on the home leg, in the high country of Bologna, Caracciola lay in fourth place, but eventually fell back to sixth place. This was enough to take a class win for cars with engines greater than 5 litres.
In 1931, Caracciola became the first non-Italian driver to take overall victory in the Mille Miglia. He was joined in the Mercedes-Benz SSK by co-driver Wilhelm Sebastian. From 12 to 13 April, Caracciola delivered a superlative performance throughout the 1635 kilometre race at the wheel of the SSK.

His average speed in the marathon from Brescia to Rome and back was 101.1 km/h “ the first time that the 100 km/h barrier had been broken at the Mille Miglia. In the mid 1930s, Caracciola reflected on this achievement in his first autobiography “Rennen “ Sieg “ Rekorde“ (“Races “ Victory “ Records“): “1600 km on dusty country roads, passing gorges and ravines“¦ around fearsome corkscrew bends and snake-like passages; through cities, towns and villages and again along dead-straight roads at an average of 150, 160, 170 km “¦ one night and then another day.“ He received a gold medal from the King of Italy and a cup from the Automobile Club of Germany in recognition of his victory.

Mille Miglia opens the door to a return to motor racing. Following the end of World War II, Mercedes-Benz returned to motorsport in 1952 with the newly developed 300 SL racing sports car (W 194). The first race appearance for the 300 SL, with its distinctive gullwing doors, was at the Mille Miglia. On 3 May 1952, there were three 300 SLs on the starting line in Brescia. On 4 May, Karl Kling and Hans Klenk finished in second place, with Rudolf Caracciola and co-driver Paul Kurrle following in fourth. Mercedes-Benz thus was the only manufacturer to finish with two vehicles in the top five in 1952. For racing manager Alfred Neubauer a dream was coming true. “That day, I started to feel young again,“ the racing director later recalled.

This success was followed in 1955 by the second overall victory in the Mille Miglia by Mercedes-Benz with the 300 SLR racing sports car (W 196 S). Stirling Moss and his co-driver, Denis Jenkinson, won the thousand-mile race with an average speed of 157.65 km/h and the fastest time ever recorded of 10:07:48 hours. An all-time record. Second place belonged to Juan Manuel Fangio, who had entered as a solo driver, making for the perfect one-two. Mille Miglia success was not just the realm of the 300 SLR racers in 1955, with 300 SL (W 198) production sports cars also enjoying outstanding results that year:

The team of John Fitch/Kurt Gesell were victorious in the Gran Turismo class for over 1600 cc, followed by their teammates Olivier Gendebien/Jacques Washer and Salvatore Casella (Places 5, 7 and 10 overall). A legend is reborn. Although the original street race took place for the 24th and last time in 1957, the legend of Mille Miglia has never been more alive. Today, the Mille Miglia runs from the northern Italian town of Brescia to Rome and back as a regularity race. Challenging special stages await competitors along the thousand-mile course.

The exclusive event is only open to vehicle models that took part in the original race series. As well as racing sports cars and production sports cars from Mercedes-Benz, other vehicles are eligible, such as the Mercedes-Benz 180 D Ponton saloon (W 120), as driven to victory in the Diesel class by Helmut Retter and Wolfgang Larcher at Mille Miglia 1955. A year later, Erwin Bauer and Erwin Grupp steered their Mercedes-Benz 220 a (W 180) to a win in the Special Series Touring Cars class, which allowed extensive modifications to the engine and chassis.

Mille Miglia 2014 begins with scrutineering and issuing of documentation from 13 May to midday on 15 May (Tuesday to Thursday). On the evening of 15 May, competitors will leave Brescia at 18:00 for the first stage (228 kilometres), which runs to Thermae Abano via Padua. 16 May (Friday) sees the second stage (710 kilometres) start at 07:00, with the first cars scheduled to arrive in Rome around 22:30. The field of historic vehicles sets off from Rome on 17 May (Saturday) at 06:30 for the third stage (552 kilometres) to Bologna; the fourth and final stage (218 kilometres) then heads back to Brescia on 18 May (Sunday). In total, the 2014 Mille Miglia covers a distance of 1708 kilometres.

Mercedes-Benz Classic cars at Mille Miglia 2014. Mercedes-Benz SS 27/170/225 hp (W 06), 1930 "“ road-going version. With a displacement of 7.1 litres, the Model SS (Super Sport) six-cylinder in-line engine delivers up to 125 kW (170 hp) without supercharger, and up to 166 kW (225 hp) with the supercharger. Despite its powerful engine, the Mercedes-Benz SS is considered to be a Gran Turismo model, which is indicative of the wide range of bodies available. The Model SS had a baptism of fire as a racing car with up to 184 kW (250 hp) when it entered and won the Bühler Höhe Hill Climb. This was just the first of many racing triumphs.

A total of 111 Mercedes-Benz SS cars were built, starting in November 1928, with the model staying on the price lists until July 1935.
Technical data "“ Mercedes-Benz SS 27/170/225 hp, road-going version
Production period: 1928-1933
Cylinders: in-line 6
Displacement: 7065 cubic centimetres
Power: 125 kW (170 hp), with supercharger 165 kW (225 hp)
Top speed: 190 km/h

Mercedes-Benz SSK 27/170/225 hp (W 06), 1928 "“ road-going version
The SSK (model series W 06) is the most exclusive and alluring of the six-cylinder supercharged sports cars belonging to the Mercedes-Benz S-Series. The model designation stands for Super Sport Short ("Super-Sport-Kurz"? in German), alluding to both the car"˜s particularly sporty character and its shortened wheelbase.

In the summer of 1928, works driver Rudolf Caracciola won the Gabelbach, Schauinsland and Mont Ventoux races in the brand-new SSK at the first attempt. In 1930 and 1931 he won the European Hill Climb Championship at the wheel of the SSK. The lighter and yet more powerful version from 1931, which was also known as the SSKL (German abbreviation for "Super Sport Short Light"?), also scored some spectacular victories. One of the most significant was its 1931 win in the legendary thousand-mile Mille Miglia race in Italy.

Technical data "“ Mercedes-Benz SSK 27/170/225 hp, road-going version
Production period: 1928-1930
Cylinders: in-line 6
Displacement: 7065 cubic centimetres
Output: 125 kW (170 hp), with supercharger 165 kW (225 hp)
Top speed: 192 km/h
Mercedes-Benz 300 SL racing sports car (W 194), 1952
Mercedes-Benz re-entered the international motorsport scene after World War II in 1952 with the 300 SL racer (W 194).

The car is based on an extremely light space frame that provides excellent torsional stiffness. Arching over this is are the elegant curves of the streamlined light-alloy body formed from aluminium-magnesium sheet. Because the space frame extends relatively high up the sides, the W 194 could not be equipped with conventional doors "“ this is how the racing sports car got its characteristic wing-like doors, hinged at the roof.

This feature, which from 1954 onwards was also adopted for the production 300 SL (W 198) sports car is the reason for the nickname given the car in the English-speaking world: the "Gullwing"?. The car is powered by an M 194 125 kW (170 hp) in-line six-cylinder engine with a displacement of 2996 cc. The 300 SL was unveiled in March 1952 and was first raced at the Mille Miglia in May 1952. Many major successes were enjoyed by the W 194, including a clean sweep of the top-three at the Bern Grand Prix, spectacular one-twos at the 24 Hours of Le Mans and the third Carrera Panamericana in Mexico and first place at the Nürburgring Jubilee Grand Prix.

Technical data "“ Mercedes-Benz 300 SL racing sports car (W 194)
Period of use: 1952
Cylinders: in-line 6
Displacement: 2996 cubic centimetres
Power: 125 kW (170 hp)
Top speed: 240 km/h
Mercedes-Benz 300 SL "Gullwing"? (W 198), 1954-1957
The 300 SL "Gullwing"? had its world première at the International Motor Sport Show in New York in February 1954.

This new high-performance sports car was based on the legendary 300 SL racing car (W 194) from the 1952 season. A light weight

space frame with high torsional stiffness carried the engine, gearbox and axles. As with the racing version, there was nowhere to install conventional doors, meaning the gullwing doors became an unmistakeable feature on the production sports car too. The W 198 also boasted a four-stroke fuel injection petrol engine, a world-first for a production car. This not only improved efficiency, but also increased engine power to 158 kW (215 hp) “ around 20 percent more than the racing car version, which relied on a carburettor.

Depending on the final drive ratio used, the 300 SL could reach a top speed of 260 km/h. This made it the fastest series production car of its time and the dream sports car of the 1950s. At the Mille Miglia, John Fitch and Kurt Gesell won the Gran Turismo class for engines greater than 1600 cc. In 1956, 300 SL Coupés also joined the pack at the Mille Miglia, where the team of Fürst Metternich and Graf Einsiedel took sixth place in the large GT class.

Technical data “ Mercedes-Benz 300 SL “Gullwing“ (W 198)
Production period: 1954-1957
Cylinders: in-line 6
Displacement: 2996 cubic centimetres
Power: 158 kW (215 hp)
Top speed: up to 250 km/h
Mercedes-Benz 220 a (W 180), 1954-1956
Spring of 1954 saw the launch of Model 220, also designated 220 a (W 180) internally, the first Mercedes-Benz six-cylinder model with a unibody design.

Its modern, roomy Ponton body, debuted by Mercedes-Benz half a year earlier in the form of the medium-sized Model 180, offered unheard of spaciousness and comfort. In a first for series production vehicles, the Model 220 enjoyed safer handling characteristics thanks to a single-joint swing axle. Under the leadership of Karl Kling, the Sports department specially prepared three vehicles for use at the Mille Miglia 1956. These featured a version of the twin carburettor that would be fitted to the 220“˜s successor, the 220 S, taking engine power to around 85 kW (115 hp). To ensure a sporty drive, shorter, harder springs and modified shock absorbers were fitted.

In addition to this, drivers changed gear via a floor shift of the type found in the 190 SL (W 121), instead of the steering wheel gearshift provided as standard.
Technical data “ Mercedes-Benz 220 a (W 180) “ series production version
Production period: 1954-1956
Cylinders: in-line 6
Displacement: 2195 cubic centimetres
Power: 63 kW (85 hp)
Top speed: 150 km/h
Brand ambassadors for Mercedes-Benz Classic at Mille Miglia 2014

Roland Asch
Born on 12 October 1950 in Altingen
Trained as a master automotive mechanic, Roland Asch began his motor racing career as a hobby, but achieved victories like a professional: after winning the German Hill-Racing Championship in 1981 and the German Motor Racing Trophy in 1983, he had his debut in the German Touring Car Championships (DTM) in 1985.

In 1988, he became DTM vice-champion with the Mercedes-Benz 190 E 2.3-16 of the BMK team. In the late 1980s, he won the overall rating in the Porsche 944 Turbo Cup three times, and in 1991 the championship title in the Porsche Carrera Cup. In the early 1990s, he achieved a total of five wins and various good placings in the DTM for Mercedes-Benz. In 1993, he became DTM vice-champion for the second time, and in 1995 moved to Ford in the Super Touring Car Cup. Roland Asch remains very closely associated with Mercedes-Benz as a brand ambassador.

Bernd Schneider
Born on 20 July 1964 in St. Ingbert
The five-times DTM Champion Bernd Schneider achieved his first motor sport successes in kart racing and in Formula 3, also competing in Formula 1, in the Le Mans 24-Hour Race and in the FIA GT Championship, which he won in 1997. The DTM was to become the stage where he would celebrate his most spectacular victories: Schneider joined the AMG-Mercedes team in 1992, winning the DTM championship title for the team in 1995 after having come third in the overall rating in 1992 and 1993. Following the revival of the DTM as the German Touring Car Masters in 2000, Schneider was Champion in 2000, 2001, 2003, and 2006.

He was also vice-champion in 2002. Bernd Schneider is still closely associated with the Mercedes-Benz, and is active for the company as a test driver and brand ambassador.

Did you know?
Mercedes-Benz is celebrating 120 Years of Motorsport in 2014 ““ next on the calendar is the Historic Trophy Nürburgring (30 May to 1 June 2014).

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