

## 12C 36

If the engineering target of the tipo C had been the 1934 Mercedes W25, it had hit the mark squarely, and surpassed it. The W25 was also built to the vertical aero design concept. The twin rail vertical 'U' section chassis was 2725mm, or 8'.9" between wheels and weighed, well, a little more than the 750kg weight limit before crash diet. Up front it had wish bones with coil springs and telescopic shocks. At back a diff with two swing axle half shafts, cross leaf and friction shocks.

The tipo C, as mentioned had the pull IFS, and the transaxle IRS, resulting in a much more precise and balanced package. In simple terms, a good handling Italian chassis.

The 1934 version of the ME25 engine was a straight eight of 3.36 liters. Its construction was the same as the P2 with its wet liner steel cylinders and welded up steel water jackets, here with a twin block layout. Interestingly, they staid with the Daimler / Fiat tradition of blowing the pressure generated by Roots supercharger through the carbs. Power was 354hp at 5800.

So the 8C 35, as debuted, had twenty or so less horsepower with better handling.

Mercedes being Mercedes, and funding being no problem, that was not the car faced for competition by the 8C 35 at Monza and thereafter. By September of '35 the W25 was a more rounded design and incrementally lower. The ME25 though was a different engine. The 78mm x 88mm steel cylinders had been replace by eight new ones measuring 82 x 102 mm. Displacement moving up to 4310cc. Power was now 462hp at the same 5800rpm. Disturbingly Merc had taken a page from Jano and the tipo C, they had moved the trans to the rear to improve balance and handling.

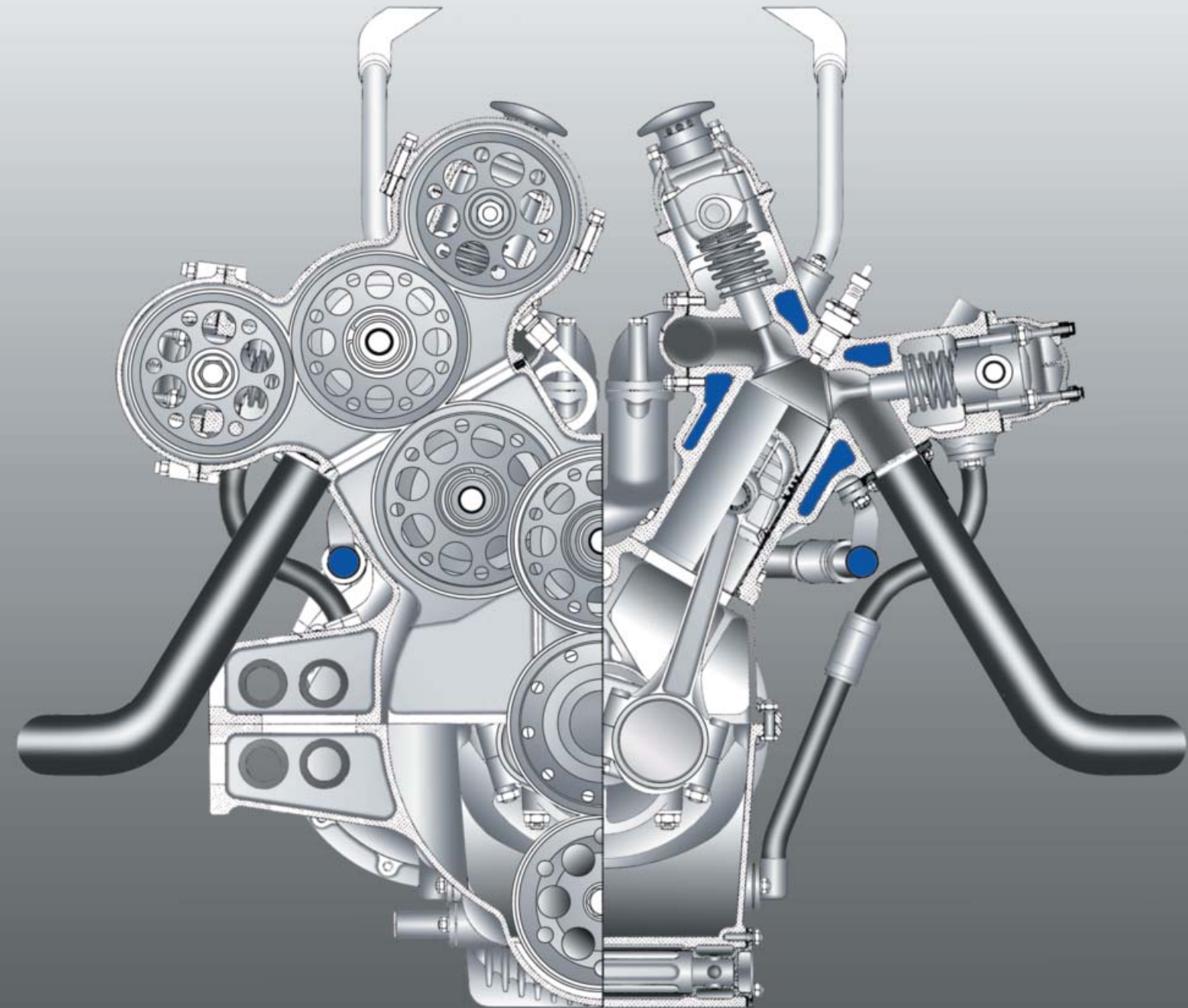
Jano was aware of all of this, industrial espionage of the time being a mix of Joseph Goebbels' loud mouths, the engineering press, the braggadocio of pit lane and astute observation.

Jano's plans for the 12C once again involved the resourceful use of available research, established materials application & process. His experimentation with producing a small run of 6C 1900s with alloy dry-liner blocks was to become the basis of the new twin block twelve. Here the cylinders had a bore of 70mm rather than 68. The stroke and crank throw would be the same with its 88mm stroke. The head, that was here cast as one with the blocks, owed its dimensions and internal passage design to the 6C 2300, with its 70mm bore. It owed its inclined angle between cams of 104°, and its spring loading (three coils) to the P2 & P3. At 35mm the valves were larger than any previous P3.

A debate between the improvisational ability of early aero welded up steel versus current aero spec alloy casting with steel liner development time line is valid. What is not of debate is the thermal dynamic quality and structural integrity of Jano's choice. This had been well proven by this pioneer of, and by 1935, authority on the process.

The cam drive gear tower was at the back. The supercharger was geared off the front of the crank, fed by a dual throat horizontal Weber. Width of the twin six dictated that the external water pump was moved to the front. And there was one very sizeable aero magneto sharing the busy front end as well.

Dimensionally the tipo C chassis was identical to the 8C 35, as the length of the twin six engine with front blower was a match of the center drive straight eight with its side saddle superchargers. Engine



weight increased the 12C 36 to formula limit. Balance was still superb.

Its debut was set for the May 10th running of the Grand Prix at Tripoli.

Mercedes arrived with four of their screwed up W25Ks for Caracciola, Fagioli, von Brauchitsch and Chiron. Von Brauchitsch, who was more Arian ideal than jockey in size, barely fit into the new 2450mm chassis. This was five inches shorter than the P2 for Christ's sake. Being the boys from Stuttgart, the car looked lower and more formidable, had more power and was rife with experimentation. Even without its unusable 600hp ship anchor, they had managed to slip in some new 86mm cylinders to replace the previous 82s. Bringing it up to 4.740, increased compression just a tenth. Power was hovering around the 490hp mark at the same peak of 5800 revs. For experimentation, they looked back to the dawn of IRS and reintroduced the deDion rear end around their transaxle, which now sported cantilevered leafs and

telescoping shocks. Though this was to prove seminal for getting this much power to the ground for decades, in this undrivable beast it was just something more to go wrong.

Auto Union had broken the five hundred horsepower barrier, and with a ZF limited slip diff, were hoping to keep it going in the right direction under all commands. The boys from Zwickau had Varzi, Stuck and Rosemeyer piloting the new C Types.

Alfa, or rather Scuderia Ferrari, had brought three new 12Cs for Nuvolari, Tadini and Brivio. Pintacuda was given an 8C 35. New boy Farina was supposed to drive a sister 8C 35, but he and the car were no shows.

The rest of the field was filled out with private P3 and miscellaneous Maserati of increasingly obsolete capability.

This was not to be an auspicious debut for Jano's new twelve. During practice a tire blew on Nuvolari's car. He was thrown from the cockpit and busted a number of ribs. Told by the doctors not to race he ar-

rived on the grid in the spare car, wrapped in plaster.

The race unfolded as might be expected at this North African circuit. The Mercs were unstable at speed with their short wheelbase. Two dropped out and two slowed with press release problems: fuel feed parked von Brauchitsch, experimental brakes for Caracciola and Fagioli, Chiron just parked. The Alfas couldn't get a handle on the Auto Unions power at this eight mile track. At the front Stuck and Varzi fought it out, Rosemeyer's car caught fire. Nuvolari shouldn't have been out there, but brought the spare 12C home eighth. The rest of the Alfa team didn't seem to be up to the task. They all finished gathered around Nuvolari a lap down and behind the two remaining Mercs of Caracciola and Fagioli. The finish was another Libyan embarrassment. Orders from beyond the river Styx, I mean the Rhine, were given for an Italian, in this case Varzi, to win for fascist propaganda purposes. Orders were given and Stuck slowed for Varzi on the last lap. This all came as news, unpleasant news, to Varzi, who took the lead from Stuck while running fast lap of the race.

The African misadventure continued at the GP of Tunsie a week later. All that was left of the Scuderia's Alfas were a 12C for Brivio and an 8C 35 for Pintacuda. Mercedes sent most of the team home, leaving Caracciola and Chiron to carry the standard. All three AU's were on the grid with the usual suspects: a pissed off Varzi, Stuck and Rosemeyer.

Of the eleven starters, four finished. Here all the AUs parked. Varsi's attitude was on display. He threw that type C around with complete abandon, testing the limit of mid-engine suspension dynamics and tire adhesion and construction. He found the limit. At a hundred and fifty-five, it is said, the car cut loose. It rolled several times, throwing metal of all shape and

size in great and small arcs. What was left of the car, which wasn't much, ended up in a cactus patch. As if a vision from some fever dream, Varzi crawled out from under the wreck and walked away.

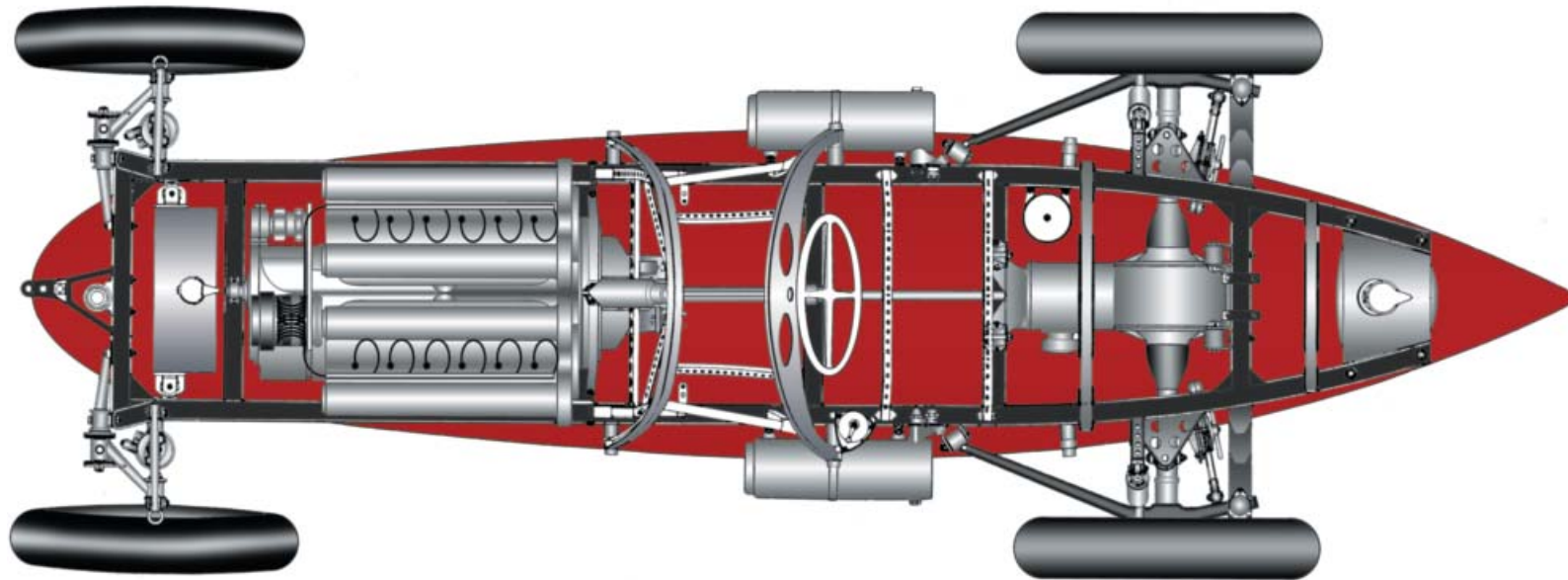
After that no one much noticed that Caracciola limped a W25K home first. Behind was Pintacuta in the 8C 35, following in third, for full front line team ignominy, was Wimille piloting the Bugatti T59, followed in fourth was Sommer campaigning, admirably, his private P3. That was all that was left of the starting grid.

The Scuderia should have waited for a European debut of the 12C, like the June running of the Spanish GP. But it was '36 and international affairs were not some distant concern for the teams. Italy was being sanctioned for Mussolini's Imperial folly in Abyssinia. So he put the official kybosh on Italian teams racing in French and British events. The 6C 2300 B's market introduction was undermined by this nonsense, now the 12C's intro was being muddled by more BS from the loud mouth. Jano had to be pleased.

The brown shirts goose-stepped into the Rhineland DMZ in March, making their future intentions obvious. France and Britain distinguished themselves by pursuing appeasement.

In the wake of all this, Spa and LeMans were cancelled by what the French press chose to call labor problems.

Events moved onto sunny Spain for the June 7th running of the VII Gran Premio de Penya Rhin. Mercedes brought a couple of their well tuned but clumsy W25Ks for Chiron and Caracciola. Auto Union was showing the banner brightly after the Tunis debacle with Varzi and Rosemeyer. A couple of V8RI Masers were entered by the factory under private management. Isn't that Bertocchi directing things in the pits?





Sommer and Villapadierna entered their 3.2 liter P3s.

Scuderia Ferrari was managing the factory effort with one 12C for a partially recovered Nuvolari and two 8C 35s for Brivio and the new boy Farina.

A stiff but smiling Nuvolari brought the 12C its maiden victory, to rather more animated joy of the Scuderia boys. He covered the 303 kilometers in two hours, forty three minutes and seven seconds. Caracciola came across three and a half minutes later. Farina showed signs of future achievement for third. The AUs came across in formation behind in 4th and 5th, Sommer and Villapadierna followed in their P3s.

Within the month Spain descended into the hell that was their civil war and a regional weapons test for the Axis.

A week after Spain events moved to the Eifel Mountains. The conditions couldn't have been worse. It was just simply a case of the cloud level being right at track level. If you were below it, it was raining. The rest of the time you were just driving through it, with a reported visibility of 20 to 40 meters at best.

Undaunted by such conditions, some three hundred thousand hiked up and around the fourteen-mile course for the 10th running of the ADAC Eifelrennen.

Mercedes brought their K cars for Caracciola, Chiron and Fagioli. Low man on the totem, Lang, was probably happy to be given an old W25, with some stabilizing distance between the wheels. He'd be using it to good advantage.

AU was on hand with a full compliment: Rosemeyer, Varzi, Stuck, and new boy, von Delius. Who seemed to have gained a von before his name after substituting for Varzi in Spain and taking fourth.

Alfa would be represented by two fresh 12C piloted by the Scuderia's Nuvolari and Brivio. For good meas-

ure Severi and Farina would be in 8C 35s.

The rest of the field was filled out by a 6C34 and V8RI Maser and a Bugatti that was entered but didn't start.

At flag's drop Nuvolari stepped out into a commanding lead, followed by Rosemeyer. Brivio was close behind in his 12C, followed by Farina making a name for himself in the 8C 35.

To the knowing humour of anyone not wearing a party armband, the front line Mercedes disappeared into the fog of mechanical maladies.

On the sixth lap of this ten lap, one hundred and forty-one mile race, Rosemeyer passed Nuvolari and dropped below cloud level to let the German crowd know it. Rosemeyer then began the drive of his life. In fog only his eyes seemed to penetrate, he started putting up lap times that were thirty seconds quicker than Nuvolari. The Alfas flew in close formation and not far adrift of Rosemeyer's X-ray vision pace. At the checker, Rosemeyer was two minutes twelve seconds in front of Nuvolari, with Brivio and Farina thirty seconds behind. This was an amazing against-the-Eifel-elements victory for Rosemeyer. It was also vindication for Jano's 12C tipo C design. On this track, on this day, it proved just how fine a piece of machinery this is. It was also a fine finish for the Scuderia whose race management had been uneven at best.

Lang, the mechanic that the Mercedes team didn't want to move from the pits to the driver's seat, deserves mention for bringing the '35 W25 in two minutes thirty seconds behind Farina.

The 12C's next appearance was a purely for the Milanese event. Hell, it was a late June picnic race for the Alfa workers. It was held at Sempione Park, right in the center of town. It was a tiny two point five seven

kilometer circuit run between the Arco d. Pace and via Legnano with a swing around the sports arena. To give it some color, silver in this case, Varzi brought an AU. Probably the short wheel base type C he had made for Spain, but didn't run. He would be arrayed against Tazio and Farina, who'd been promoted to a 12C for this warm afternoon. Tadini and Brivio were at the helm of a couple of 8C 35s. Biondetti had a private tipo B. Piero Dusio was honing his future standards of engineering through competition in a 6C 34 Maser.

Once again the tipo C chassis proved what a finely balanced piece of work it is in this ridiculously restricted venue. Sixty laps later that afternoon Nuvolari came home first, with Varzi behind, having struggled to snake the AU around here between families on blankets with open picnic baskets. Farina earned his ride with third.

The 12C's next appointment was back in the Eifel,

in full glare of the Goebbels propaganda machine for the 9th Grober Pries von Deutschland.

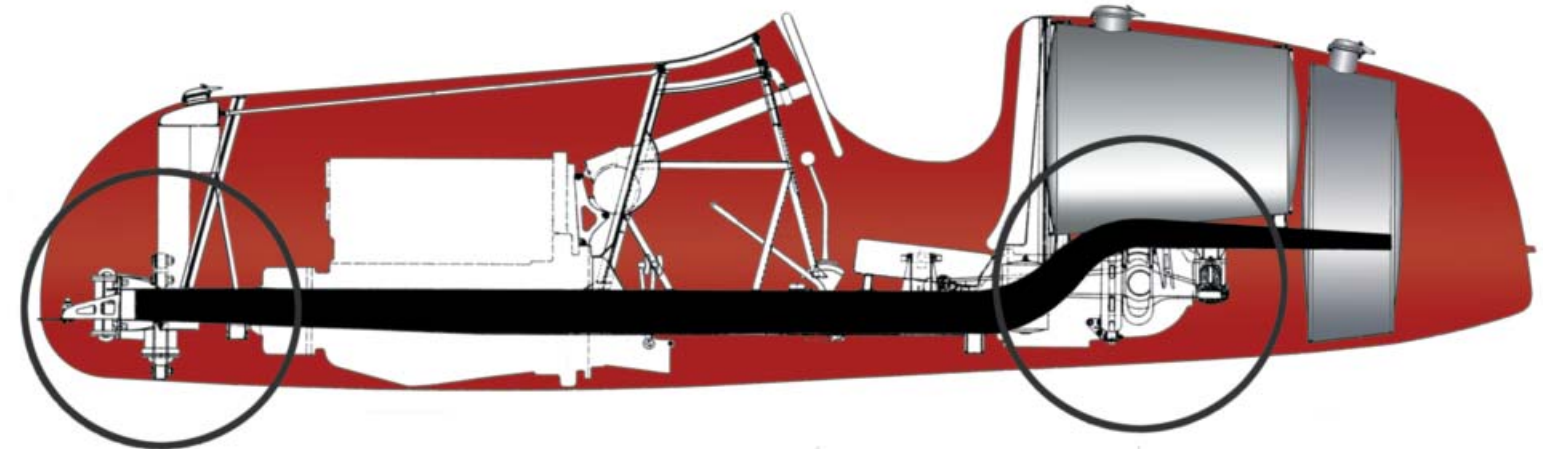
The home teams were there in full regimentals. AU brought four cars for Stuck, Rosemeyer, Hasse and Delius. Varzi was a no show.

Mercedes brought five W25Ks for Caracciola, von Bratwurst, Fagioli, Chiron and Lang.

The Scuderia brought 12Cs for Nuvolari, Brivio, Dreyfus and Severi.

Ettore sent a factory T59 for Wimile. Sommer was again in attendance with his tipo B. Dick Seaman was making his move from Formula B success with the Ramponi Talbot to a Maserati V8RI.

This was a case of Rosemeyer ascendant. Practice times for most of the fast boys had been in the ten minute and change bracket. During the race Rosemeyer was turning consistent sub ten laps. Nuvolari was running a close second until his plug troubles expanded to the transaxle.



The in-pit entertainment was Neubauer bellowing musical chairs driver switches as the Mercedes disintegrated beneath them. Caracciola drove three separate cars during the race.

First, second and third went to Rosemeyer, Stuck and Brivio. All of whom finished roughly three minutes apart after four hours of racing at an average of 81 miles an hour. Yes, Caracciola did finish, a lap down in Fagioli's car. Or was it Lang's? And Dick Seaman? He finished in eighth, in his team mate Trossi's 4C Maserati. The indefatigable, no other word for the guy, Sommer, brought his P3 home right behind Seaman, four laps back, in a four year old car.

First week of August, it must be the Tuscan sea side. The four mile course of Livorno hosted the 10th Coppa Ciano. This would be a thirty lapper on the way to that table by the sea with the finest food Italy had to offer. It didn't turn out to be just a regional afternoon. Auto Union brought the front line team of three, Rosemeyer, Stuck, and Varzi. Mercedes, while listed on the entry lists, decided the W25K had done enough damage to their reputation, and called it a season.

The Scuderia's drivers were there in force. Nuvolari and Brivio had 12Cs. Pintacuda and Dreyfus were given 8C 35s. They actually entered a P3 for Biondetti. Gherzi was there with a Maser 6C-34. That wasn't the only head scratcher, there was a 6C 1750 entered.

The AUs flew to the front in the opening lap. Before the field had even come around Nuvolari's IRS came adrift. In Olympic track time he was back in the pits threatening for one of the team cars. Pintacuta was pulled in. Three laps down, Nuvolari took off after the field. Well, let's admit it, he was after the AUs at the front.

So let's see, his fast lap was 3:23, so he went out ten

minutes back in this one hour and forty minute race.

The Tuscans were treated to a drive of mythic proportion. The very afternoon from which wet eyes and horse voices create the memories of legend. He not only caught and passed the entire field, he ran the Auto Union team down to the point where the close formation Alfas came in one, two, three.

Events moved onto the warm breeze and dangerous mountain switchbacks of Pescara. Mercedes sent out the press release of rigid responsibility. They were testing for the Swiss GP...hey Fritz, come over here to the microphone and say that without clearing the lie from your throat. You know the W25Ks were shit if Neubauer would give up a fortnight of high summer dining in Italy.

This, the 12th Coppa Acerbo, would be sixteen uncertain laps of this sixteen mile course. The weather was to be a factor on race day. Not the rain and fog of the Eifel, but the blazing heat of the August Adriatic. It was reported to be 43C (109F) at sea level. Just cool enough in the mountains to chill some sweat through the switchbacks.

The three majors were there for Auto Union, with von Delius as fourth.

12Cs would be handled by Tazio and Brivio. 8C 35s for Farina and Dreyfus. Hans Ruesch had his private 8C 35.

The Maserati factory had wasted no time in preparing a V8RI for Dick Seaman. The fifteen car field was rounded out with private and outdated 6C 34 and 8CM Masers.

The locals were treated to four laps of the great Nuvolari pushing his 12C into the distance. This magic moment, actually at eleven minutes a lap it lasted north of forty minutes before he dropped a valve.

He was not alone watching the race from the pits,

or the café next door. Only five cars finished. Rosemeyer, von Delius making a name for himself, Varzi, after four tires stops and Brivio in the other 12C. They all finished on the same lap. The proof of Varzi's tire use is told by his fourth place and fast lap at ten minutes, forty three seconds.

Hot day's work for all.

Events moved on from the wilting Adriatic to the cool breeze off the Wohlensee for the 3rd Grober Preis der Schweiz.

Mercedes big testing was retrofitting the new 4.7 liter engine into the old long wheel base W25 chassis. There were cars for Caracciola, von Bratwurst, Fagioli and Lang.

The Auto Unions would be piloted by Rosemeyer, Stuck, Varzi and tester Hasse.

Tazio and Dreyfus would have the 12Cs. Farina an 8C 35.

Ettore sent along a factory T59/50B for Jean-Pierre Wimille. This was a relic of the *Formula Libre* period, with its solid front and back axle and cable brake system. The engine was a 4.7 liter twin block straight eight dry liner, cast in magnesium under the direction of Jean Bugatti. At peak it allegedly put out somewhere in the high threes, maybe four hundred horsepower, at around 5400rpm. As the name suggests it was based on the T59, and drilled for weight. The end result is it was the same beast to drive as it always was. A car that finished most of its races in the pits, from which its exhausted drivers watched the closing laps. This was not the nibble speed of the Marques' establishing tradition.

Another Bugatti entry was of note, Earl Howe at the wheel of a 3.3 liter T59. Lord Howe, why bother?

A couple of Maser 8CM and V8RI rounded out the grid. Oh, and of course Sommer and his P3.

This was Rosemeyer's year. He had gotten a handle on the dynamics of mid-engine performance as defined by the six liter, 530hp AU. He led Varzi and Stuck across the line three hours later. Caracciola put on quite the show as log jam until flagged over and eventually joining his teammates in the pits. Casualties of their over-wrought 4.7 all. Nuvolari and Dreyfus didn't even last half distance. Not a Scuderia race management success.

Next stop Monza.

Mercedes gave it a pass. Auto Union brought five cars for the full team. Nuvolari, Dreyfus and Farina all had 12Cs. The Scuderia Turino and Maremmiana filled the remaining grid with Maserati of various vintage and modification.

Nuvolari again took the lead from start. Three laps in Rosemeyer wasn't to be denied. Nuvolari kept him in sight for three hours and forty three minutes, finishing two minutes back on the same lap. Von Delius, Dreyfus, Pintacuda (8C35) and Piero Dusio (Maserati 6C 34) rounded out the six that finished of the twelve starters.

A week later it was time to end the Continental and Italian season at the all red event at Modena. Three Maser 6C 34s were arrayed against the Scuderia's remaining inventory of a 12C for Nuvolari, a couple of 8C35s for Tadini and Farina. There was a reason that the Scuderia had so few cars on the grid here. The reason was half a world away. This little fifty lap afternoon in Modena saw Nuvolari take the victory and the Italian Championship.

Ferrari was now about to expand his portfolio from competition director and publicity manager to Italian diplomat. Considering the astutely caustic press Rome was generating this year, a little sports diplo-

macy couldn't hurt.

With FDR's policies loosening the grip of the depression on the United States it seemed a good time for the bread to be joined by the circus. The call for Motorsport distraction was heralded by George Washington Vanderbilt III, Willie K's nephew (The third George Washington Vanderbilt in his family?), Boston Redskins owner George Preston Marshall and Indianapolis Speedway owner Eddie Rickenbacker.

They were responsible for raising the money with the idea of building a race track near the site of the original Vanderbilt Cup races on Long Island. A much better idea than the utter chaos created by running it through the streets and over level crossings as Uncle Willie had.

The site they chose was land next to Roosevelt air field, where Lindy had taken off for Paris in '27. The original idea was much like Brooklands, 'The right cars, the right people'. The best garages, immense canopied grand stands, club houses serving the best cocktails (finally). A setting for East Coast gentry to socialize amidst the roar and scent of speed.

Unlike Brooklands this was to be no concrete banked bowl. The partners even envisioned something quite different than what American racing had matured into. The heritage was equine ovals rented for the purpose, then built to spec to keep the cars from trashing the horsey set's betting venue. The twenties had produced the unequaled Board Tracks. Immense wooden structures that were equal parts velodrome and coliseum. Fire had consumed this page in American racing history. Often by arson's match, paid for by the land developer that had built it. Land cleared, roads in, time for houses.

The Vanderbilt on Long Island and the Savannah Grand Prize had been venues in the earliest tradition

of unpaved road racing. Some dirt, some oiled gravel. The partners seemed to have a vision of that great and glorious past. What they got from their architect Mark Lienthal and board track promoter Art Pillsbury, was an amalgam of all things come poorly into focus.

The track was four miles in length. It was anchored by a 3775 foot straight that ran the length of the grandstands, garages and clubhouse. It then turned left, then left again, then right and so on through a series of increasing and decreasing radius corners, sixteen in all, all dirt, all flat as a pool table and all visible from the grand stands. It was a facility that looked to the future of road racing, as it ran on the surface of its past.

Bringing the European racers and American racers together in 1936 was not a case of a shared formula, as it had often been.

As European racing had diverged into Formula Free-for-all, American racing had gone its own direction. It had been at the instigation of Richenbacker to expand entries at Indy. The idea being to create a formula that would interest the major manufacturers, of which there were many more then, to enter racing. More specifically Indy. The Formula, remembered to history as the 'Junk Formula,' had a minimum weight of 1750lbs, superchargers were banned and displacement could be anywhere from 100 ci to 366ci. For no logical reason they reintroduced the riding mechanic, so the cars were large, heavy and rarely well balanced.

The American manufacturers, for the most part, ignored the formula and competition. Just as they ignored engineering developments generated by American Motorsport competition.

Studebaker, one of the companies that were involved with competition for promotional benefit, built

an Indy car. The engine was derived from the Mar-que's President model. It was a straight eight flat head displacing 336ci. It was robust enough to have performed reasonably well during its prime, which was the 1932 & '33 season.

The term Junk formula was a result of stock block cars being modified and run privately, rather than manufacturers utilizing the opportunity to develop advanced engineering for competition publicity and possible influence on their mundane showroom selections.

Then there was Harry. Miller's dominance of American racing had been one of the reasons for Richenbacker and the triple A changing the rules. And the rules were intended to create cars as far from the elegant projectile 91ci Miller as possible. Once again though, it would be Harry that would set the standard for the formula, and by proxy, establish the future of American racing.

In the Twenties Miller had been asked by a famous boat racer to build an engine that was compact and had intense low end torque delivery. The result was the superb Miller 151 Marine. It was an in-line four, four valve with five bearing bottom end. Watching Dick Loynes' *Miss California*, dry land racer and promoter Bill White thought, "why not put it in a car?" White bought a 151 Marine and put it in a Miller 91 chassis. White eventually went to Harry and they put together a 200ci automotive engine that was lighter.

Miller went on to develop the engine further with 220ci. Harry developed it for his customers limited budgets after '29. Sales reflected the times. Miller filed for bankruptcy. All assets were sold at auction.

Dick Loynes bought all the drawings, patterns, engines and parts. Miller employee Fred Offenhauser gambled his future and bought the tools, machine and

hand, kept the building and managed to keep Harry's employees together. Loynes and Offenhauser formed a loose association to look after the long establish racing clientele. As the thirties progressed Fred continued to develop the in-line four to initially 255ci, then 270.

On paper these American dirt racers, with their finely crafted Miller / Offy sixteen valve, twin cam, four liter engines owed no apologies. But add the extra weight, breathing through a couple of carbs and connect it to a two speed tranny, well, it wasn't in the same league as the 12C with its four liters and Roots blower, sending 430hp to its four speed transaxle. What was in the same league were the liter and a half ERAs with roots pumping out that same 250hp as the Miller / Offys.

Twenty nine of the forty five entrants for the Vanderbilt Cup at Roosevelt Raceway that October afternoon would be normally aspirated 255ci Miller / Offys. The rest of the American contingent would be piloting an array of potentially useful and utterly useless cars against their European rivals.

There was though the great leveler: the track. Every driver there, from Nuvolari to Mauri Rose had learned their craft on the dirt. None of them though had ever raced on a dirt track like this. The Europeans had cut their teeth on primitive surface rural roads of great distance and character. The Americans on ovals from a quarter to two and a half miles to the lap. Four miles of recently carved sweeping and tight corners cut into a graded and packed field was something new to all.

For the Europeans this would be a respite from the politically charged races on the Continent. No party hacks strutting about looking for benefit of the altered truth, just cigar chomping, heavy drinking reporters



ready to end any word with a vowel when talking to an Italian. For the Americans, racers, promoters and public alike, this would be an eye opening opportunity to see beyond Indy, Richenbacker and the triple A.

This would be Scuderia Ferrari’s third international event this season. He had sent a team to Brazil and Argentina already this year. Three of the Italians in attendance, Nuvolari, Brivio, Farina, had sailed under the Scuderia’s banner. All three would be running 12Cs. The fourth, Carlo Trossi, would be sharing a Maserati 4CM, sent by the factory, with local Fred McEvoy to co-drive.

Ettore sent Jean-Pierre Wimille with a factory T59. There was quite a British contingent present. Lord Howe and Pat Fairfield brought ERAs, Brian Lewis brought his T59, but he’d be racing an ERA. David Evans brought a T51.

For all, from Ferrari and Ettore to Lord Howe and friends, the impressive starting money was irresistible.

Practice was right out of a Mack Sennett comedy. The track was loose, the speed differential great and the driving techniques, well, varied. But they were dirt racers all, so it soon settled into a Mack Sennett two-reeler. The Europeans using power and handling to carve the corners. The American’s using stump pulling low-end torque and impressive drifting techniques to carve track surface.

At flag drop Tazio got out in front and extended his lead, with a smooth and precise slalom through the back markers technique. He took the checker four hours, thirty two minutes and forty four seconds after the much heralded start. Brivio held second until late in the race, when the right-side fasteners on his 12C’s hood gave up and it began flapping wildly. There’s a

reason the dirt racers had leather straps. Wimille’s solid axle Bugatti, so long past its prime in Europe, was back in its element as it moved up from third to second. Finishing there eight minutes shy of Nuvolari, and five minutes ahead of Brivio. Raymond Sommer used his ultimate dirt racing dual shaft drive P3 to maintain and take fourth, one minute later. Pat Fairfield showed form on the dirt for fifth, bringing his ERA home ahead of Carlo Trossi, sharing his ride with Fred McEvoy, in the factory 4CM Maserati. Bill Cummings was the first Miller Offy to cross the line fifteen seconds later and twenty four minutes, fifty nine seconds after Nuvolari had taken the victory.

So ended the 1936 season half a world away, far from the increasing pressure of Continental politics and the internal industrial tensions out beyond the old Portello street-car stop. The 12C, in its tipo C chassis, had shown itself to be an ingenious and capable Grand Prix car in a changing world...and 1937 would change everything.

