

# C HAMPION OF TIME

“It’s good to be a champion, but you don’t need to be the quickest driver in the world. First you need to be a champion in life.”

—Dr Luigi “Gino” Macaluso

*Luigi Macaluso unites time, racing and collecting with authenticity*

BY JAN TEGLER PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

Under a huge glass sphere atop the former headquarters of Fiat in Turin, Italy, is where I met Gino Macaluso. On an unseasonably warm, late-winter day in early 2007, the Sowind Group President hosted a gathering of journalists, designers and friends. The meeting was part business, part pleasure. Invitees had come to have a sneak peak at the eye-catching new watches Girard-Perregaux was launching in advance of the traditional spring shows (they are to the watch world what “Fashion Week” is to the fashion industry) and for a conversation about design. Design is one of Macaluso’s passions and on hand for the discussion were close friend Andrea Pininfarina and a guest speaker from London’s Design Museum.

Viewing the fine timepieces before us was part of our mission and the conversation on design was a bonus. But I



Clockwise from right: An astonishing collection of World Championship Rally cars that doubles an entertainment facility for world leaders in both time-distance competition, time measurement and, with perhaps more significance today, design. One of the world leaders in both is Dr. Luigi Macaluso who has followed his passion and remained a leader in those arenas for his entire adult life. One of the Fiat Abarth 124 giant killer saved for posterity.

was also there to get up close and personal with Signore Macaluso—to see how his combined interests in art, architecture and, particularly, automobiles, inspire the fine watches that issue from the two brands he owns: Girard-Perregaux and JeanRichard.

For a man of such accomplishment, Gino—as he is called by friends and acquaintances—is surprisingly modest and soft-spoken. Such qualities stand in sharp relief to his background in racing, an endeavor that rarely features quiet, reserved personalities. Take a trip 35 years back in time and you will find the watch company president in the cockpit of a Rally Version Fiat 124 Sport Spider 1600. It was in this car, co-driving with Raffaele Pinto, that Macaluso had his most successful season in rally racing.

The buzz from the 1.6-liter, 155-horsepower (DIN) four-

cylinder Macaluso/Pinto Fiat could be heard all over Europe, resonating off mountains, trees and buildings, as the duo won the 1972 European Rally Drivers Championship, took the championship in the Mitropa Rally Cup and helped Fiat earn second place overall in the World Rally Championship for Manufacturers.

Racing was an interest that came to Gino Macaluso early in life. It coincided with a more general interest in automobiles that would lead him to study architecture at Turin University. But before pursuing his dream of designing cars, the Turin native was racing motorcycles in timed stage and regularity tests.

“I was 16 years old when I began racing. In the beginning I raced motorbikes; I especially liked the Gileras. That was one of the motorbikes I raced with the most satisfac-

A treasure in the Macaluso collection and a high point in the Fiat arsenal of motorsport weapons was Lancia's Group C LC2 berlinetta; a corporate hybrid from Abarth design, Lancia management and Ferrari's bespoke 2.6-liter, twin-turbo, DOHC V-8 delivering 600 horsepower. Though technically on point and beautifully accomplished the LC2 never lived up to its promise.



**“Rally racing in that period was not only a technological question, it was a question of logistics. You could win in that period with a simple but very good organization. It’s different than today. Today rallying (WRC) is more like Formula One: short and very expensive.”**

On this page, from the top: Guy Ligier was a friend and competitor on both motorbikes and rally cars, so one of his Ligier JS 11 formula one cars from 1979 is right at home among the host of Italian racing veterans. And the next generation of Macaluso competitors is represented by Fiat’s modern Fiat Cinquecento and Seicento Sporting rally cars driven by Stefano Macaluso (Gino’s son).

tion. This kind of specialty was very popular in northern Italy, France, Belgium, England and Germany.”

Enthusiasm for competition on two-wheels turned to a fascination for racing on four wheels shortly before Macaluso turned 20. Full-bodied racecars and the people and challenges surrounding the sport of rallying intrigued him.

“I moved to cars, to rallies, when I was 19. It’s difficult to say what interested me in this. I was attracted by motor-sports and the people inside it. But Formula cars for me were something far away. I always liked cars with closed or covered wheels, not single-seaters. I liked endurance races like the 24 Hours of Le Mans and sports cars. I also liked rally cars. Rally racing in that period was not only a technological question, it was a question of logistics—a logistic situation. You could win in that period with a simple but very good organization. It’s different than today. Today rallying (WRC) is more like Formula One: short and very expensive.”

In the late 1960s, rallying was a well-established and comparatively economic form of racing in Europe. Growth in the ranks of both amateur and professional participants led to greater coverage of the sport. As ever, visibility proved crucial to attracting auto manufacturers. Macaluso’s participation in the sport coincided with an interest from Fiat in rallying—an interest spurred, in part, by the success of Fiat-owned Lancia, which was already competing successfully with its Fulvia rally cars. He began by racing Ford Escorts and Mini Coopers with friends, and gradually proved himself as a pilot and co-driver. The hometown rally ace’s talent did not go unnoticed by the Turin-based manufacturer. As plans for a works Fiat rally team were put into action, the company asked Gino if he would like to be a driver and tester for the fledgling unit.

“At the end of the ’60s, roles were a lot less clear-cut than they are today. For three years, I ran with several friends alternating driving and co-driving, there weren’t really a pilot and a co-pilot. I then decided that what interested me enormously was also to do development work on prototypes for Fiat, Pirelli and others. At the same time, Fiat realized it needed a driver and tester for the team and they asked me and I said, ‘Why not?!’ It was a dream!”

When Macaluso joined Fiat, the works rally team was not officially up and running. As Gino described it, the group was more of a factory-service organization for customer teams that wanted to race a Fiat in rallies.

“It was only step by step that we became an official factory team. In 1971, we began the team. In 1972 we were not racing officially for Fiat, but we had backing from Fiat. Then, after our win of the European Championship, Fiat decided to be engaged in rally racing officially and created the Fiat rally racing team. The company created a new evolution of the car with the 124 Abarth, giving it a new and different body and suspension.”

The official rally team, Squadra Fiat, featured an impressive roster of drivers, co-drivers and team members, includ-

ing current Ferrari CEO and Scuderia Ferrari executive director, Jean Todt, and Fiat President, Luca Cordero di Montezemolo. Luminaries like Todt and Montezemolo remain friends and, today, Macaluso’s wide circle of comrades and contacts inside and outside the Italian car world keep him very much involved in motorsports.

It’s a pursuit he has dedicated himself to much as he dedicates his energy to Girard-Perregaux and JeanRichard. Currently, Macaluso serves as the President of FIA’s International Karting Commission, the CIK-FIA, a key rung on the ladder of international motorsports. As Gino observed, the CIK is where many young drivers are developed. “I find it particularly interesting to be involved with the first step of motorsports, where the young drivers get involved. This is where the next generation of talent comes into the sport.”



With intimate connections to the past, present and future of international racing, Macaluso is well qualified to comment on the differences between motorsports “back in the day” and today. Like many, he feels the atmosphere of racing has changed. Corporate pressure and a studied lack of emotional investment by drivers are the biggest differences he sees.

“It was much different, yes, and a lot of fun. We all knew each other, the teams, the drivers. In fact, I represented the Abarth brand for Fiat in the Geneva [Auto Salon] show two days ago. [Luca di Cordero] Montezemolo, the president of Fiat, invited me because we raced together in the Fiat team. We are almost the same age. We are very close. We met Colucci. [Mario] Colucci was the engineer for the [Fiat Rally) team and [Renzo] Avidano was the managing director for Abarth at the period. I said to Avidano, ‘You taught me

in a very serious way and it was then very helpful for my life.’ When you are very young and you race, there is a lot of pressure—not the same pressure that a Formula One driver has today. There was a lot of emotion. Young drivers today are educated to cancel their emotions. I thanked Avidano for what he taught me. He was always very, very hard. He was a strict team manager and taught you about working in a disciplined way. I am a disciplined man, so for me it was good. It was a great moment in my life.”

That moment came to an end after three years with Fiat. By 1974, Luigi Macaluso was looking outside racing at other interests. While he still enjoyed the people he was racing with, he no longer had the focus vital to winning. “I stopped because I was no longer as motivated as you have to be. When you are a professional driver, you have to be extremely focused on winning, not just on taking part.”

From left to right: Enthusiastic support of his friends and competitors is illustrated by the Lancia Fulvia HF that had beaten their Fiat siblings for the championship in 1971, the Alpine A110 won the championship in 1973, and the fabulous Lancia Stratos was the 1975 World Rally Champion.



Macaluso turned his attention to completing his architectural studies and looking for a job. An opportunity with a watch-making firm (SSIH), which would later be melded into the well-known Swatch Group, arose. The world of horology had already drawn the young racing driver's interest and he jumped in with both feet. He first served in the company's advertising department, where the experience and many connections he had made in sports proved useful in helping him market the brands (including Omega and Tissot) in the SSIH portfolio. Gradually, he rose through the company ranks to become head of SSIH operations in Italy.

In 1982, Macaluso struck out on his own, founding Tradema, a distributorship for watch brands Girard-Perregaux, Breitling and others in Italy. Bringing the same focus to Tradema that he brought to racing, he built a successful firm with a fine reputation. Simultaneously, he

sowed a personal and financial relationship with Girard-Perregaux that led to a 20-percent ownership stake in the watchmaker by 1987. Shortly thereafter, Macaluso bought GP.

At the close of the 1980s, Girard-Perregaux was not a top contender in the watch industry. In racing terminology, its products would have been deemed too conservative and outdated to compete at the front of the grid. However, Macaluso brought his full attention to the brand and to Daniel JeanRichard, now simply, JeanRichard—a second maker that he founded in 1988. His intention was to win, not just to compete. It is the same attitude he approached racing with and all of the other creative and business endeavours that have been part of his life.

"I enjoy competition. It's important in every job and if you really like your job, it's natural that you should try to be

### 1972 FIAT 124 SPORT SPIDER RALLY

#### ENGINE

Type	Inline 4
Displacement, cc	1608
Bore/stroke, mm	80/80
Compression Ratio	N/A
Valvetrain	DOHC, 4v
Fuel del	2 Weber 2 bbl 44mm
Block/head	Aluminum
Horsepower/rpm	155/7000
Torque/lb-ft/rpm	N/A

#### CHASSIS

Wheelbase, in.	103.3
Track, f/r, in.	53.0/51.8
O/A weight, lbs	2205
Brakes	4 wheel disc
Rotors f/r, in.	8.9
Gearbox	5-spd/rev
Damping	coil over
Susp f/r	unequal A arms/ live axle, radius rods, panhard rod

One of the Fiat 124 Sport Spider Rally specials that carried Raffaele Pinto and Gino Macaluso to their World Rally Drivers championship in 1972. It is surrounded by a modern history of rally racing.



excellent. Without any poetic sentiment, if you have a competition, it's necessary to win. If you just participate, it's not the same."

In 1992, as the revitalization of GP was underway, Macaluso made a move that is now commonplace among fine watch brands. Through his many connections with Italy's most famous sports-car maker, he concluded an agreement for Girard-Perregaux to become the official watch partner for Ferrari. Today, such partnerships are commonplace (Breitling/Bentley, Jaeger Le Coultre/Aston Martin, Anonimo/Shelby, etc.). None seem as genuine as the link between Ferrari and GP, however. Luigi Macaluso has an authentic Italian racing heritage, a long association with the leading figures in Italian motorsports and a competition history with Fiat, the manufacturer that owns Ferrari. Few, if any other watch brands can claim such a direct link to the

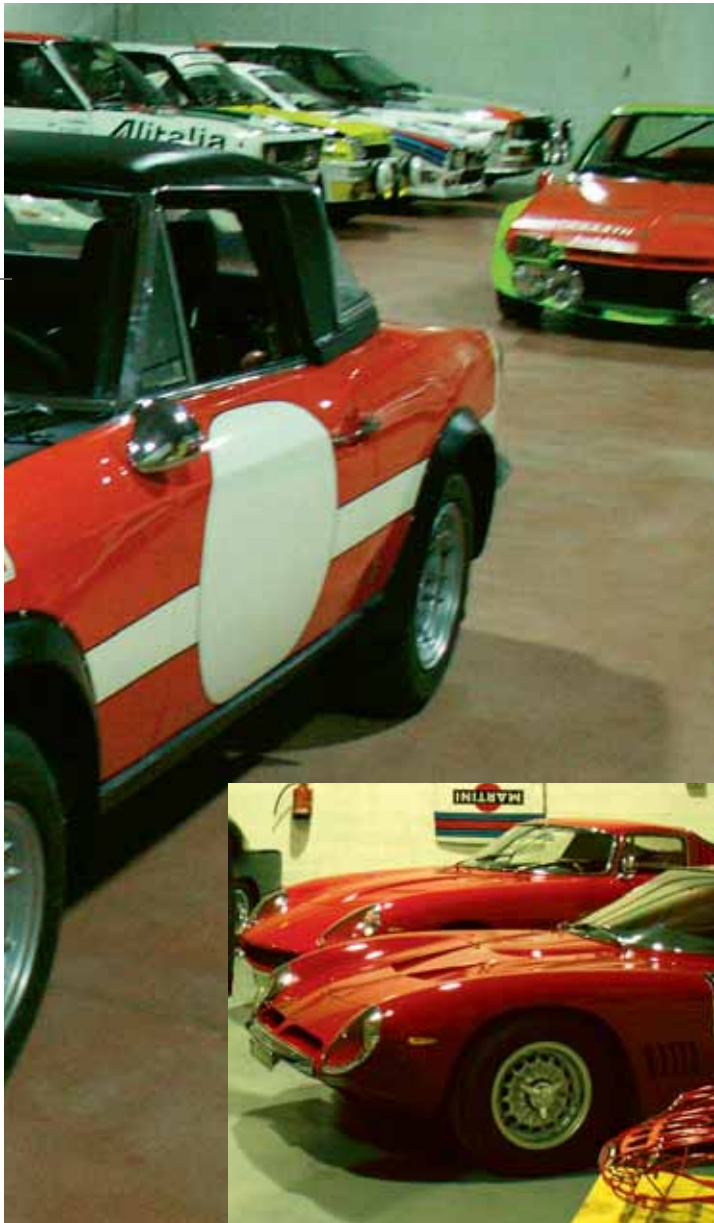


image they seek to associate themselves with when they partner with automobile manufacturers.

Girard-Perregaux and JeanRichard maintain links to motorsports in their collections today (GP's Rallye Monte Carlo Historique collection and JeanRichard's Sebring, Colorado Grand and MV Augusta limited editions), but the companies have gone in a different direction than other makers. That's purely intentional, said Macaluso.

"In 1992 we decided to work with Ferrari. We worked together for 11 years. It was very passionate, a love affair; but I sensed at a certain moment it was time for a change. When I saw a lot of other watch brands start to associate themselves with automobile manufacturers, I decided that my time was finished. I can understand that this could be a good marketing situation for them, but nobody has the right legacy and I prefer to leave that. It's normal that a lot of people like to use a movie or a person to associate themselves with, but it's not necessary that they are really related to that thing."

Gino Macaluso may not be active behind the wheel of a racecar in competition anymore, but he certainly can get behind the wheel of any one of a fabulous group of racing cars he now owns. Later on that day, I was treated to a festive dinner at the expansive garages just north of Turin, where Macaluso keeps his fantastic collection of vintage racing and road cars.

Encompassing two warehouse-sized buildings, it's a sight to behold. One garage houses an amazing collection of rally cars: the Fiat 124 Sport Spider 1600 Gino co-piloted to the European Championship; the Abarth 124; a Fiat 131 Rallye Abarth; a BMC Mini Cooper 1300 Rally; a Lotus Ford Cortina and Ford Escort RS; an amazing collection of Lancia rally cars, featuring the dominating Stratos, a Fulvia HF 1600, the Group B 037 Rallye and Delta S4; the Audi Quattro driven by World Rally Champion Stig Blomqvist; the Fiat Abarth X1/9 prototype piloted by Clay Regazzoni; and the modern Fiat Cinquecento and Seicento Sporting rally cars driven by Stefano Macaluso (Gino's son).

The second garage holds a combination of road cars (Aston Martin DB5, Ferrari 275 GTB, Ferrari F40, Bizzarini Strada, Mercedes 300 SL), endurance racers from the famed Martini Team when it participated with Lancia in Group 5, Group B and Group C sports car racing (Lancia Beta Montecarlo Turbo, Group B LC1 Spider and Group C LC2 closed prototype), a 1979 Ligier JS11 Formula One racer driven by Jacques Laffite and, last but not least, a Gilera motorcycle similar to the example Macaluso raced in his teens.

All in all, they offer a fitting testimony to the passions and authentic connections Gino Macaluso and his watch companies have to motorsports. Whether running against the clock on a rally stage or designing new dials for fine timepieces, Macaluso truly is a "Champion of Time."

## A Year Of Victories

### **1972 World Rally Championship For Manufacturers:**

#### **Fiat 124 Sport Spider: Second Overall**

May 28, Acropolis Rally, Greece: 1st Overall  
September 8, Austrian Alps Rally, Austria: 1st Overall

### **1972 European Rally Drivers Championship:**

#### **First Overall Raffaele Pinto, Luigi Macaluso**

February 13, Costa Brava Rally, Spain: 1st Overall  
June 10, Semperit Rally, Austria: 1st Overall  
June 16, Poland Rally: 1st Overall  
September 2, An Martino Di Castrozza Rally, Italy: 2nd Overall  
October 8, Yugoslavia Rally: 1st Overall  
October 15, 1,000 Minutes Rally, Austria: 2nd Overall

### **1972 Mitropa Cup:**

#### **First Overall Raffaele Pinto, Luigi Macaluso**

May 7, Elan Rally, Austria: 2nd Overall  
May 14, Hessen Rally, Germany: 1st Overall  
June 10, Semperit Rally, Austria: 1st Overall  
September 2, San Martino Di Castrozza Rally, Italy: 2nd Overall

Even devoted racers have to get to work, and a Ferrari 275GTB 4-cam and Bizzarini's striking Strada berlinetta would guarantee entertainment before and after.