



**FERRARI**

TESTA  
ROSSA  
V-12

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# SURPRISE AT THE TARGA FLORIO

The next 1961 championship outing was the venerable Targa Florio held on April 30 over the same course and distance as used in 1960, but now no longer being run by the Florio family. Ferrari entered only a single Testa Rossa for the event, the prototype TR61 (0780) with the 1960-style nose, to be driven by Pedro Rodriguez and Willy Mairesse. For the first time since the introduction of the Testa Rossa series in 1958, Ferrari would rely on another model sports racer to be the big gun in its attack. On a circuit such as the Little Madonie, the V-12 Testa Rossa had clearly proven over the past few years to be inordinately heavy and unwieldy compared to its adversaries. For the 1961 edition of the event, Maranello's hopes rested on a brace of rear-engined 246 SPs with driver pairings of Hill/Gendebien and Ginther/Von Trips.

Looking for a repeat of their 1960 victory, Porsche came to Sicily with an extremely strong team of RS61s, two of which were differing 2.0-liter models for Moss/G. Hill and Bonnier/Gurney. The Italian team Serenissima, or more properly titled as Scuderia Serenissima Repubblica de Venezia, brought along two Maserati Tipo 63s and a 2.0-liter Tipo 60, but none were expected to be capable of fighting Ferrari or Porsche for outright victory.

Ferrari did not bother to send a hack car for practice use, requiring his team members to tour the circuit in Fiat 600 rental cars, not exactly comparable to the real thing. The last day of practice took place with the course closed to normal traffic for a meager four hours, with Moss astounding everyone by virtue of a fantastic 40:51 lap, annihilating his old 1958 record of 42:17. Bonnier also broke the old record, establishing a 42:04 timing, with Von Trips the top placed Ferrari driver at 43:31, and Gendebien following at 43:56, both in the same 246 SP. Hill seemed unable to get to grips with the course, recording slower times with the other 246 SP, although the car had some pesky carburetor problems. Ginther's lap times were exceedingly slow as he seemed to prefer working out the bugs on the 246 SP, and besides never felt comfortable on the course.

The TR61 prototype was taken out first by Mairesse and badly mangled almost immediately, when he left the road on the descent to



*First lap of the Targa and Pedro Rodriguez gets two wheels airborne in the TR61 prototype, which he drove without benefit of practice.*

Collesano, though not affecting it mechanically. The left rear fender was thoroughly jammed into the tire, prohibiting it from continuing and requiring that the Testa Rossa be dragged in after practice and straightened out. This happening prevented Rodriguez from getting any practice laps at all in the car, not improving his outlook on the race.

#### **A Last Minute Adjustment**

Ferrari final race assignments were made, as customary, after completion of practice. Mairesse and Rodriguez kept the TR61 prototype, with Pedro being soothed by drawing the initial driving stint. A bit of a strange decision to let him go first, without the benefit of any practice in the car, but likely done to atone for

the practice situation. The Von Trips/Ginther duo in the fastest 246 SP, and Hill/Gendebien pairings remained intact, flying in the face of all logic. Von Trips and Gendebien had clearly been the quickest in practice and should have shared the fastest car, but the Commendatore decided otherwise. Gendebien protested vigorously at what he considered a blatant attempt to cheat him out of victory, but to no avail. On the morning of the race, as car after car left the starting line, he suddenly announced to Tavoni that he would not take his first driving stint in the mount he was to share with Hill, but replace Ginther as Von Trips' co-driver. As Gendebien absolutely refused to drive, a furious Hill was forced to hurriedly prepare to take out the car himself.



*In the mountain pits, mechanics refuel from churns as Pedro watches from the cockpit. He holed the gas tank on the fourth lap during an off-road excursion.*



*Rodriguez drives slowly to the main pits after temporary repairs.*

On the first lap, Hill stormed off in the 246 SP, caught up to Von Trips, and then both spun when Hill hit him while attempting to pass. They recovered and took off again with the German wisely deciding to let him get by. On the descent to Collesano, near where Mairesse had his practice incident, Hill overdid it, got sideways, nailed a concrete marker post with the Dino's tail, spun around, hit another marker with the front end, and almost flipped. The 246 SP was too badly crippled to continue, though Hill escaped unscathed.

At the end of the first lap, Rodriguez languished in 6th place, struggling to learn just how far the Testa Rossa could be pushed, and quickly realizing its inherent unsuitability for the course. In addition to its basic unwieldiness, the car exhibited some wandering characteristics as the front end must have been slightly damaged by Mairesse.

On the fourth lap, Rodriguez also overcooked things a bit, spinning off the road into a rocky bank that rearranged the rear suspension and holed the gas tank. He continued on very slowly to the Ferrari mountain depot, where the mechanics made temporary repairs sufficient to get him back to the main pit area, though fast motoring was completely out of the question. On the way around, Rodriguez stopped to pick up the spectating Hill and the pair leisurely toured back to the pits.

### **A New Lap Record**

With the TR61 prototype relegated to the dead car park and Hill's mount similarly out of action, only the Von Trips/Gendebien driven 246 SP remained to carry the Maranello fortunes in a see-saw battle for first place against the Moss/G. Hill Porsche. Moss set a new lap record of 40:41 on the 7th lap to regain the lead,

extending it to over a minute by the end of the 8th lap when Von Trips took over the final driving spell from Gendebien. Von Trips went like the wind to catch up, setting a new course record in the process of 40:03, though not needed as the unfortunate Moss suffered a broken ring and pinion only a few kilometers away from the finish line and certain victory, handing the laurels to Ferrari. Along with it went eight points, running Ferrari's total to sixteen, with Porsche garnering six for second place in the event and making their total for the year to date of eight. Maserati finally made the points board, picking up three.

Ferrari had been proven right, winning the Targa Florio for the first time since 1958, with the new 246 SP as the leader of the attack. Still, a great deal of life was left in the Testa Rossas, as subsequent events would prove.

