

## Some German Reflections

by David Blumlein

It was with the encouragement of Brian Harvey, the founder of Grand Prix Models, that I wrote my first article for Four Small Wheels, edition 7-1990. It was a half-page feature which I called "Au Mans" and I had pencilled a simple little sketch of a C-type Jaguar in the Esses at Le Mans to adorn it! The format was a series of brief notes about the cars of which models were available which were relevant to the 24-hour race, and I even had something sometimes to say about the drivers. Only in 1995 did "Au Mans" grow into the fuller offerings I come up with nowadays.

I see from my records that I have now produced over 170 articles – all a labour of love, I might add – and for a change I thought I would hark back this month to that original layout and pick up one or two themes that inspired me when enjoyably turning the pages of recent FSWs.

Have you, like me, so often found the S, SS, SSK, SSKL sports cars from Mercedes confusing? The need to sort these out came to me when I noticed Ixo's SSK model (IXOMUS016) in the most recent edition.

It all started when Dr Ferdinand Porsche joined the Daimler Motoren A.G. in 1923 and one of his first briefs, other than developing the failed Indianapolis 2-litre racing cars, was to create a 6-cylinder engine for a new line of touring cars. The key issue from this was a confusingly named 24/100/140 model which in turn spawned the 33/180 or K (Kurz meaning short) 4-seater tourer. This proves to be our link for, at the time Daimler merged with Benz in 1926, the Grand Prix formula was for 1.5-litre cars and the new conglomerate elected not to build racing cars at this juncture.

However racing was in the company's blood, especially Porsche's, and the K was developed into a series of heavy supercharged sporting models, beginning with the S (for sport) which boasted 6.8 litres and 120bhp with 180 available when blown. It had a lowered chassis and radiator but retained the considerable 11ft 2in. wheelbase of the K, and of course was known as a Mercedes-Benz.

The competition debut of the S came at the very first Nurburgring race meeting of 19 June 1927 when two such cars placed first and second in the over 5-litre sports car event in the hands of Caracciola and Rosenberger. A month or so later the German Grand Prix (these early Nurburgring Grands Prix were run for sports cars) was won on the full north/south circuit by Otto Merz in an S, the model recording additional victories in Baden-Baden and the Freiburg, Klausen and Semmering hill-climbs.

For 1928 the car became the SS (super sport) and now sported a 7.1-litre engine but with a higher radiator to cool it. SS cars scored 1,2,3 at the German Grand Prix at the Nurburgring and Carraciola went on in 1929 to record a superb win in the T.T. on the Ards circuit, but failed against Bentley at Le Mans in 1930.

Just ten days after the 1928 Grand Prix triumph, Caracciola won the Gahelbach hill-climb in a new shortened-wheelbase variation known as the SSK; he was to go on and win the Irish Grand Prix with one of these cars in 1930.

The final variant was the SSKL (leicht meaning light) which was equipped with a larger supercharger yielding 300bhp from the 7.1-litre motor. These cars were not sold to the public but used exclusively by the works, bringing Caracciola his



Mercedes Benz SSKL  
1st Mille Miglia 1931  
1:18th premium die-cast  
by CMC (CMCM055)

superb 1931 Mille Miglia success (the only time a German in a German car was to win this astonishing race) and a further German Grand Prix victory that same year with a stripped version on a wet Nordschleife.

Caracciola won at Avus too, and a year later a specially streamlined version, the work of aerodynamicist Baron Koenig-Fachsenfeld, gave von Brauchitsch a thrilling win over Caracciola's white-painted Alfa-Romeo – Mercedes had effectively pulled out of racing by then as the depression bit!

The first Nurburgring meeting in 1927 reminded me of the economic justification for constructing this, the world's most demanding circuit. Unemployment in the Eifel region west of the Rhine was particularly bad and the local District Councillor, Dr Creutz, suggested building a racing circuit which would have the double advantage of giving employment and then attracting tourism to the area. His vision had the support of local dignitaries especially of one Dr Konrad Adenauer who since 1917 had been the Mayor of Cologne until he was deposed by the Nazis in 1933. This willing servant of course rose to become post-war West Germany's first Chancellor.

I mentioned above Otto Merz who drove on occasions for the Mercedes marque. Aged sixteen, he started as a mechanic at Daimler in 1906 and is chiefly remembered as one of the chauffeurs to the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne. Merz witnessed the Archduke's assassination in Sarajevo in June 1914, an act that directly prompted the First World War. Merz was driving the second car of the motorcade, a Mercedes, and rushed to help the Archduke who was riding in a borrowed Graf und Stift but to no avail.

Merz had a reputation for physical strength and one recalls him ripping off the damaged nearside front wing of his Mercedes SS during the 1929 T.T.!

He came to grief, alas, in practice at the Avus in 1933. Mercedes had decided to build a copy of the Brauchitsch Streamliner but fitted a low lying tail rather than the pointed higher original and this gave the car very dubious aerodynamics – it is thought that the lift generated by this at high speed caught the unfortunate Merz out on the wet track. How often have we heard of cars taking off since then?

## HAND BUILT SALE

In order to create some space in our showroom, we are having a sale of all BBR, Gasoline, Marsh Models, Look Smart and MR Collection hand built. Here is a small selection of the items offered. For the full list of these and other sale items, check our website.

	Was	Now		Was	Now		
<a href="#">BBA042M</a>	Ferrari 250GTO Gerona Rally 1967 #81	£128.50	<b>£109.23</b>	<a href="#">GAS065</a>	Ferrari F2004 USA 2004 - two car set	£399.95	<b>£339.96</b>
<a href="#">BBC040M</a>	Alfa Romeo TZ 2 Le Mans 1965 #41	£178.05	<b>£146.89</b>	<a href="#">GAS10028</a>	Maserati MC12 Comp. Italian GT 2005	£99.95	<b>£84.96</b>
<a href="#">BBC047M</a>	Ferrari 166 Inter Farina 1949 Farina	£191.05	<b>£157.62</b>	<a href="#">GAS10059</a>	Ferrari F430GT2 Spa 24hrs 2006 #58	£99.95	<b>£84.96</b>
<a href="#">BBG184</a>	BMW V12 LM/98 Le Mans 1999 #19	£124.90	<b>£79.95</b>	<a href="#">MM011LE8</a>	TWR Joest Porsche Le Mans 1996 #8	£167.45	<b>£142.33</b>
<a href="#">BBG201</a>	Cadillac LMP Sebring 12hrs 2000 #9	£108.25	<b>£65.00</b>	<a href="#">MM023LE</a>	Shadow Mk3 1972 - signed Peter Bryant	£241.50	<b>£179.78</b>
<a href="#">BBG243</a>	Ferrari F2003-GA Press 2003 Vodafone	£146.30	<b>£120.70</b>	<a href="#">MM024LE</a>	A.C. Cobra 260 Riverside 1963 - 2 car set	£299.60	<b>£254.66</b>
<a href="#">BBG252</a>	Ferrari F2004 Press presentation 2004	£152.00	<b>£125.40</b>	<a href="#">MM024FM</a>	Lola T70 1st Bridgehampton 1966 Gurney	£156.85	<b>£133.32</b>
<a href="#">BBG294</a>	Ferrari Enzo Pininfarina Metallic Red /Gold	£162.55	<b>£138.17</b>	<a href="#">MM147M</a>	March 83G 2nd Riverside IMSA 1983 #14	£162.45	<b>£137.83</b>
<a href="#">BBG324</a>	Ferrari F430GT Le Mans 2007 #83 - open	£175.80	<b>£149.43</b>	<a href="#">MM162M</a>	Ford GT40 3rd Daytona 24hrs 1965 #72	£162.45	<b>£137.83</b>
<a href="#">BBR017B</a>	Alfa Romeo 8C 2900B Le Mans 1938 #19	£159.45	<b>£135.53</b>	<a href="#">MRC142MA</a>	Ferrari 250GT Spyder California Hard Top	£143.30	<b>£118.22</b>
<a href="#">BBR075I</a>	Ferrari 250TDF Tour de France 1958 #159	£149.40	<b>£126.74</b>	<a href="#">MRCDL003</a>	Audi R10 1st Le Mans 2006 - signed Pirro	£262.05	<b>£199.95</b>
<a href="#">BBR127</a>	Ferrari F50 Red 1998 Sultan Of Brunei	£148.35	<b>£122.39</b>	<a href="#">MRCLS149A</a>	Alfa Romeo 2000 Sprint Red 1962	£82.95	<b>£70.51</b>
<a href="#">BBR148A</a>	Maserati 4200GT Coupe Red Detroit 2002	£138.00	<b>£113.85</b>	<a href="#">MRCLS260</a>	Porsche 935/78 Moby Dick Press 1978	£99.95	<b>£84.96</b>
<a href="#">BBRARV002</a>	Alfa Romeo 5C Short Tail 1961	£180.40	<b>£153.34</b>	<a href="#">MRCLS272</a>	Lamborghini Murcielago GT300 JGTC 2005	£94.80	<b>£80.58</b>
<a href="#">BBX010</a>	Ferrari F2003-GA 1st UK 2003 Barrichello	£239.55	<b>£203.62</b>	<a href="#">MRCLS285A</a>	Autoavio Costruzioni 815 1947	£103.70	<b>£88.15</b>
<a href="#">GAS008</a>	Fiat Coupe ITCC 1995 Buttiero #71	£139.90	<b>£92.56</b>	<a href="#">MRX003MB</a>	Ferrari F40 Yellow - fully open	£318.45	<b>£270.68</b>