Turin 8th November 2013. The history of Martini Racing began on 4th April 1968, when the German branch of Martini & Rossi decided to apply its logo to a Porsche 907 belonging to the German BG Racing Team. These were the early days of sponsorship in the motor racing world and the logo passed unnoticed until December 1970, when the Martini Racing Team was officially formed in London. The team called on Wyer Engineering to race a couple of Porsche 917 prototypes in the World Sportscar Championship. The event aroused a lively interest in the world of sports motor racing, as did the innovative livery chosen by the new team: stylish dark and light blue stripes with a central band of red on a silver background. The colour combination was destined to make motor racing history.

No sooner had the event been celebrated than the first victories began to arrive. In Sebring, Vic Elford and Gerard Larrousse led their Porsche 917 to success in the 12 hour race, but the most important victory that year came at Le Mans where Martini Racing celebrated its first ever win in the 24 hour competition, with drivers Marko and Van Lennep. Unfortunately the regulations were changed at the end of the year and the Stuttgart automaker’s racing activities came to a standstill. However, now won over by their passion for motors, the Martini Racing men turned their sights to Formula 1, the queen of the world racing categories, deciding to support the brave initiative undertaken by the Pederzani brothers, owners of the Bologna-based firm, Tecno: having already dominated the young-driver categories, they wanted to make the big jump, and they wanted to do it in the best possible way, using a car of their own construction, a 12 cylinder “boxer” engine, very similar to the one used by the great Ferrari. The chosen drivers were the Italian Nanni Galli and the Englishman Derek Bell.

In August 1973, the Formula I chapter came temporarily to an close, and the famous dark blue, light blue and red stripes went back to adorning the flanks of the Porsche cars headed for the World Endurance Championship. But rather than the two-seater, 3 litre vehicles competing for the world title, the car in question was a 911 Carrera RSR, converted from the Granturismo series and equipped with a turbo engine. This was a total novelty in endurance racing and was received with a certain amount of scepticism by opponents and experts in the field. Everyone was forced to change their mind; however, when, in the same year, a 911 RSR driven by Herbert Müller and Gijs Van Lennep triumphed on the tortuous roads of the legendary Targa Florio race in Sicily. It was a prelude to a series of successes which would culminate in the following years with the victories of the Martini Racing-Porsche duo in the World Endurance Championship and the 24 Hour Le Mans challenge. Those responsible for these results were the two-seater sport 936 and the 935 “silhouette”, and Belgian driver Jacky Ickx, one of the best drivers of all time in this speciality.

The achievements in Endurance racing did not, however, extinguish the team’s passion for Formula I which, from 1975, saw Martini Racing alongside Bernie Ecclestone’s Brabham. In the debut year the single-seater Ford-powered English cars won the Grand Prix competitions in Brazil with Carlos Pace, and in Germany with the Argentinian Carlos Reutemann. As for the world title, there was nothing to be done against the all-prevailing Niki Lauda and his Ferrari 312 T, equipped with a 12 cylinder “boxer” engine, decidedly more powerful than the V8 Ford Cosworth. It was then that the decision was taken to make the move to Alfa Romeo which also possessed an excellent 12 cylinder “boxer”. On paper it was a winning partnership, but problems of reliability and the complicated integration between an Italian engine and an English body prevented Martini Racing from reaping the fruits hoped for in 1976-77.

Following a sabbatical year, in 1979 the famous stripes were back in full force in the Formula I category, adorning the flanks of the reigning world champion Lotus. Colin Chapman, the eclectic patron and engineer of the Lotus, the man who had shaken the Formula I technical scene in previous seasons with his “ground effect” single-seater, was ready to amaze the world again. Not content with the technical superiority of the “79” model, he went further to produce the “80” model, extending the ground effect to the whole single-seater, equipping it with integrated “miniskirts” which started at the nose and extended to the back of the vehicle, getting rid of the conventional wings. If everything had functioned to plan and if the results from the wind tunnel had corresponded with the performance on the track, the Lotus 80 might have outclassed the other single-seaters. Instead, exactly the opposite happened: those like Ferrari, Ligier and Williams who had opted for less inflated types of construction dominated the season, while the revolutionary 1979 Lotus was shelved after just a few races and even replaced with the old model. Despite the great disappointment, the enthusiasm of the Martini Racing team was not in the least bit damaged.
On the contrary, the defeat only gave rise to a desire to go back to dominating the **Endurance** series where the team had always played a major role. This time, though, **instead of Porsche, the union was with all-Italian Lancia, born, like Martini, in Turin**.

The announcement of the new partnership was made in the autumn of 1980, and just a few weeks later came the first great victory in the Giro Automobilistico d'Italia, with the Beta Montecarlo Turbo, driven by Riccardo Patrese, Markku Alén and Ilkka Kivimaki. It was the prelude to the triumphal **1981 season** which saw the Turin berlinaetta cars take the world title in the speciality. The achievements of the subsequent Lancia Group B in 1982 and the Group “C” in 1983-86 were just as good. Although the Martini Racing cars gained numerous victories, the struggle for the world title was confined to the Porsche team.

The team’s exit from the Endurance competitions was made less traumatic by the results achieved in another leading motorsport category: the **World Rally Championship**. Following its first timid appearance alongside Porsche in the 1978 Safari Rally, **from 1983 Martini Racing, partnered with Lancia, experienced some of its most glorious years**.

For about a decade the Turin cars ruled rally racing worldwide, beginning with the “**037**”, a compact rear-wheel drive two-seater which, against all the odds, defeated its four-wheel drive opponents and won the **1983 world title**. It was Martini Racing’s first world title in this category, achieved with drivers Walter Röhrl, Makku Alen, Attilio Bettega and Adartico Vudafieri. In 1985, when the Lancia Rally 037 was retired, the baton was passed to the all-wheel drive **Delta S4** which, with its 500 CV and a system of twincharging (turbo + supercharger) made its first appearance at the RAC Rally and won. It repeated the victory at the beginning of the 1986 season in Montecarlo. However, just as the second world title seemed to be within reach, the team’s leading driver Henry Toivonen lost his life in a tragic accident in Corsica. It was goodbye to the world title, and goodbye to the monstrous Group B vehicles which were replaced the following year, by regulation, by Group A modified touring cars. Once again, Lancia was the fastest to react, dominating the world championship uninterruptedly from 1987 to 1992 with the Delta. And that’s not all: Miki Biasion and Juha Kankunnen won the Safari Rally in Kenya three times, in 1988, 1989 and 1991, as well as winning the driver’s title at the end of the season. All good things come to an end, however, and Lancia and Martini went their separate ways in 1992 when the Turin automaker announced its retirement from competition racing, after winning the sixth consecutive world title.

It was a hard blow for fans, but Martini Racing was not to be put off. Two years later it was once again the protagonist in the rally category, alongside **Ford**. For three years, from **1994 to 1996 Franco Cunico** won the Italian title at the wheel of the Escort: it was the run-up to a grand return to the world racing scene in 1999, still with Ford. In four seasons of world rally championships, the new Martini Racing Ford Focus WRC cars triumphed eleven times, with expert drivers Carlos Sainz and Colin McRae. The Scottish driver also won the gruelling Safari Rally three times.

**Meanwhile, the list of Martini Racing achievements was enriched with other prestigious victories in the Gran Turismo series. The team made their debut in this category in 1992, with Alfa Romeo racing two **155 GTA cars** driven by Nicola Larini and Alessandro Nannini, two well-known drivers with a brilliant Formula 1 history. Arese’s red berlinetta cars dominated the season and at the end of the year Nicola Larini became the Italian touring car champion. What better way to debut at the German DTM, an event generally considered to be a kind of absolute championship in the speciality.**

Here too the Alfa Romeo team lived up to its name, but victory was unattainable against the German cars which monopolised the grid line-ups. A similar situation to the one Martini Racing had already experienced with Lancia in the Endurance series happened again: the Alfa Romeo 155 vehicles were probably the best cars in the competition, but they were defeated by the law of numbers, by Mercedes and Opel which entered far more cars into each race than the 2-3 entered by Alfa Romeo.

**After pulling out of the DTM in 1996, another ten years went by before the Martini logo was seen again on the most prestigious racing circuits. In fact, it was not until 2006 that the Martini Racing stripes appeared unexpectedly on the nose of the most famous racing car on the planet: the Formula 1 Ferrari. And once again this partnership led to victories and world titles.**

The first of these was nearly won by Michael Schumacher in 2006 but vanished just a few laps from the end of the decisive Japanese Grand Prix when the engine of the number five single-seater driven by the German seven-times-world-champion, went up in smoke. But bad luck cannot go on forever against the technical superiority of the cars and drivers from the Maranello team and in the **2007/2008 season Ferrari won two constructor’s titles and the world driver’s title with Kimi Raikkonen in 2007. These triumphs fully paid Martini back for the disappointments experienced in the 70s with Tecno, Brabham, and Lotus, when the results never lived up to expectations. Martini Racing, the brand inseparably tied to the world of motor racing, was back on top.**
And as if any more proof were needed, this was shown again in 2013, when the Martini Racing colours returned to the flanks of the Porsche 911 GT3 used by Sebastian Loeb in the Porsche Cup, in Montecarlo and Barcelona where the Formula 1 Grand Prix was taking place. In addition, the famous dark blue, light blue and red stripes decorated the nose and flanks of the hyper-technological Porsche 918, the first high performance hybrid to come out of the Stuttgart firm.

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