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Lancia Stratos Turbo Gr 5 Silhouette Racer

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The Stratos was conceived by Lancia as a platform for its aspirations to dominate the world of rallying in the 1970s. The mid-engined sports car design (based loosely on a Bertone concept car displayed at the Turin Motor Show in 1970) fitted with the powerful and robust Ferrari Dino V6 engine would be a perfect foil for the Porsche 911s and Alpine-Renaults of the period.

The Stratos was certainly never intended as a seriously practical or saleable road car and only around 400 to 500 production cars were ever built (the precise number remaining a mystery). This number was just enough to fulfill the prevailing Group 4 homologation requirements of the time.

Stratos lived up to the ambitions of its creators, the Lancia marque and stylists from Bertone. It was one of the most successful and celebrated rally cars of all time, although Lancia would score more success later with the Delta Integrale.



At the height of its success in the middle of the decade, Lancia put forward plans to build a racing version of the car for the 1976 season, convinced it would be able to win in the newly created Group 5 Silhouette formula. Development took place under the guidance of Stratos chief engineer Mike Parkes.

A turbocharged version of the V6 engine had already been tried in the rally car and this was adopted for the racer. The engine was further developed in collaboration with Carlo Facetti's tuning outfit. The maximum power output was raised to 560 bhp.

More astonishing was the chassis and new aerodynamic bodywork created by Bertone. The

wheelbase was lengthened by some 150mm from the road car and it featured a dramatically extended rear tail section. Every piece of the car was unique and it carried the fuel tanks in the door sills!

Although two of the Marlboro-liveried Silhouette cars were produced, only one example was entered for the first two races of the World Championship in 1976. At Mugello in March the Facetti/Brambilla car (no. 21) failed to start the race after catching fire in practice. With it's small dimensions and tight-fitting bodywork, overheating had been a familiar problem with the Stratos rally car and it was no suprise the turbocharged Stratos Gr 5 racer would suffer similar problems.

In April, the same car ran again in the 6 hours race at Vallelunga but retired after gearbox problems.



ABOVE: The short-tailed no. 21 cars that raced at Mugello and Vallelunga in 1976
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Despite the problems, the lap times at Mugello and Vallelunga had showed showed that the Stratos was competitive. Two cars (no. 598 and 599) - now sporting a modified longer tail configuration - were entered in the non-championship Giro D'Italia event later in the year. The Facetti/Sodano car went on to score a popular home victory



ABOVE & BELOW: Scenes from the Giro D'Italia in 1976
(Carlo Facetti and Mikes Parkes in bottom left picture)
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