

THE INSIDE STORY OF THE 1934 MILLE MIGLIA

M.G. MAGNETTE BEATS LAST YEAR'S RECORD BY ONE HOUR IN WORST WEATHER EVER EXPERIENCED IN THE RACE



Left: Count Lurani takes over the wheel of Magnette No. 3 on leaving the M.G. pit at Bologna.
Above: The crowd under their umbrellas at Lojana, on the Futa Pass.

LAST year, in favourable weather, the victorious M.G. Magnettes set up a new class record over the course of the classic Italian 1000 miles race. In the VIIIth "Mille Miglia," which took place this year on 8th April, an M.G. Magnette broke this record by a whole hour, in spite of the torrential rain which fell from start to finish.

Count G. Lurani and C. Penn Hughes, driving a supercharged K3 M.G. Magnette, averaged 58.98 m.p.h., including all stops, for the entire distance. They had wet roads all the way, to say nothing of severe fog in many places, which did not help matters when it came to crossing the Apennines. Although the conditions were very much against them, they had an absolutely no-trouble run throughout.

The 1100 c.c. class consisted this year of eighteen of the new super-sports Ballila Fiats, one Maserati and four M.G. Magnettes. Three of the latter composed the official team, and were driven respectively by Earl Howe and his mechanic Thomas, Count Lurani and C. Penn Hughes, and Mr. and Mrs. E. R. Hall. The fourth, entered by Herr Fork, the German driver, was the identical car with which Nuvolari won the R.A.C. Tourist Trophy in Ulster last year.

While the Fiats had to be reckoned with because of the sheer weight of their numbers, the most deadly adversary of the M.G. team was Taruffi in the last word in Maserati racers. A magnificent driver, he had, it was whispered, a car with a phenomenal performance. Weighing only 15 cwt., and fitted with the same brakes as the three-litre model, it was tuned to give the last ounce of power. All around the course spares were waiting for him should anything go wrong, whereas the M.G. cars had to carry with them all the spares and tools they were likely to require. The question was, could the Maserati stay the course?

A plan of campaign was decided upon. Lurani and Penn Hughes, in the first M.G. to start, were to keep going steadily but fast, taking no chances, waiting to take up the gage should either of their team-mates fall by the wayside. By allowing Taruffi to overtake them after a short struggle it was hoped to give him a false impression of their capabilities, lulling him into a sense of false security, so that he might be tempted to take things easily. E. R. Hall, with Mrs. Hall acting as mechanic, was to keep going at speed, having started two minutes ahead of his rival, while Lord Howe, who started eight minutes later,

endeavoured to overhaul the Maserati.

At four o'clock on the morning of Sunday, 8th April, the race started in pitch darkness and pouring rain. One after another the cars went off into the darkness, the road showing black and slippery in the rays of the headlamps. At intervals banks of fog drifted across the course, obscuring all landmarks. The plot worked famously. The leading M.G. maintained its steady, high speed with a lot of power in hand. Hall overtook it, feeling quite at home in weather reminiscent of the North of England. At Bologna, 150 miles from the start (the course was longer this year), he had gained three minutes on the Maserati. Lord Howe put up an epic performance, making up eight whole minutes on the Italian, so that he roared into Bologna on his heels and overtook him directly afterwards. This, I think, proves pretty conclusively that the M.G. Magnettes were the faster cars.

I was an eye-witness of the next stage in the fight. I had spent the night in a little inn high up on the Futa Pass; all night long I had seen the flicker of headlights on the wall and heard the swish of tyres on the rain-soaked road as spectators went up to their vantage-points

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