



CONTENTS

Author's introduction	5
Acknowledgements	7
Images	7
Forewords	9
Jacques Cheinisse	9
Jean Vinatier	10
Richard Bouleau	12
André Désaubry	13
1 1000 miles ... and more	14
2 A car is born	25
3 Time to go racing	31
4 A long way from home ... and a new car	44
5 Difficult times	64
6 Comeback – The 1966 season	84
7 1967: The V8 arrives – eventually	111
8 The dream and the risks	141
9 The end of an era	172
10 Summary	196
Index	207

Giuseppe Albarea was a young engineer who had joined Gordini and continued into the Renault Sport era right through to the F1 period of recent times. Now retired for several years, he recalls throughout both volumes of our story what he remembers of those times. Giuseppe Albarea: "I began at Gordini in January 1963, working in the design office as a draughtsman. I was young but I had completed my training and joined two older men – Igor Bourimoff and Marc Bande. Gordini was making small engines derived from Renault production units for René Bonnet. The Gordini factory was at 69 boulevard Victor, near the Porte de Versailles, opposite the Parc des Expositions. There is a Mercure Hotel there now, but at the time there was a café on the site, and the factory wrapped around the café in an L-shape. Gordini's factory was quite old even then, dating from before World War II. In those days and in the days just after the war they didn't have much money, so they were used to making

things simple – whether things always worked or not was another question! I remember Mr Gordini tried to spend as little money as possible.

"The design office was a glass building within the workshop and there were five drawing boards. In the workshop there were also the assembly areas, with test benches in the middle; it was an open area, so when the engines were running it was very noisy in the factory and the neighbours living above and in the nearby building used to complain a lot. In the other part of the L-shape were the machining workshop and the parts store. Soon after I got there I heard about the new arrangement: we were going to supply some engines to the Alpine company."

The first car was finished in the Dieppe works on 5 April 1963, one day before the scheduled Le Mans trials. They had had little time to check the car and resolve any major problems when Bernard Boyer took to the track, the car being fitted with a



Checks during testing. (Photo HMW/R)



Rosinski about to leave the pits. (Photo HMW/R)



Masson and Zeccoli. (Photo CD)

55 cars started the race on a cold but dry day – a mixture of the technologies of recent years and one or two startling new ones, the foremost being those early GT40s.

Chassis 1708, the M63B of Masson and Zeccoli, ran well for the whole 24 hours, finishing 20th overall, fifth in the performance index and second in the thermal efficiency index. Having lost 30 minutes due to an ignition problem right after the start, the climb-back from near last to 20th was some achievement.

The first M64 chassis 1709, entrusted to Vidal and Grandsire and fitted with the 1001cc engine (car 54), unfortunately went out with transmission failure on lap 133, after having been in the pits for an hour for attention to the gear dogs.

No. 47, allocated to Bianchi/Vinatier, the second new M64 chassis 1710, was also powered by the twin-cam 1001cc engine.

This car weighed in at just 604kg (1331.6lb). Mauro Bianchi: "I remember it was quick but a bit scary. We could get 240kph flat out, but at that speed and in fact anything over 200 it lacked stability and wandered across the road, just as José (Rosinski) had reported on the Hunaudières the year before. It was a relief to reach the end of the straight and get the brakes on; then it became much more stable. Aerodynamically it was a very

slippery body, but it just lacked downforce. Another thing: at any speed above 200kph if it was raining we got soaking wet as the water forced its way in!"

They finished with 230 laps completed but were not classified after gearbox problems, again relating to the fourth and fifth speed dogs, which necessitated over an hour in the pits. Jean Rédélé was concerned after two gearbox failures and got his mechanics to remove the gearboxes from two of the display single seaters that were on the Alpine stand in the "village."

It was Henry Morrogh and Roger de Lageneste who were to bring celebration to Alpine and many of the 350,000 spectators with the first class win for the team in the 24 Hours, in only its second year.

Roger de Lageneste: "Before I agreed to drive at Le Mans for Alpine, I was asked by Peugeot and Charles Deutsch to do Le Mans in the CD car with big vertical wings he had designed. Before the war he and Mr Riffard were specialists in making wings for racing aeroplanes. My friend Alain Bertaut, a great racing man (I did the Liège-Rome-Liège with him), asked me to test it. When I saw that car in the Paris garage I said, 'No, it's too big. The front is very good but there is nothing to keep the car on the road.' Well, they asked me to go with the car one night to do



The start. (Photo LAT)

Alpine entered chassis 1711, an M64, for Roger de Lageneste and Henry Morrogh, fresh from their class win at Le Mans, along with José Rosinski and Henri Grandsire in M64 chassis 1709, and Mauro Bianchi and Jean Vinatier in the M64

chassis 1710. Philippe Vidal and Jacques Maglia were in the 1708 M63B.

It was warm and dry throughout the race and the pace set by the leading Ferrari 250s was astounding. After 12 hours, at



COMEBACK - THE 1966 SEASON

Jean Rédélé's aim had always been success in the Le Mans 24 Hours. The other races that were entered, although important, carried nothing like the kudos of winning a category at Le Mans and the ensuing publicity that could enhance the sales of road cars.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Bernard Boyer, who had been in at the beginning, decided to leave to go to Matra during 1965, so chassis design was now 100 per cent Richard Bouleau's responsibility, and the department had again been busy over the winter creating the new A210 which would see the light of day during 1966. Although it looked pretty much the same as the M65, it was in several small mechanical details



Aerodynamic know-how is developing. (Photo CD)

that things had changed. While the chassis itself remained as before, the shock absorbers and the suspension had undergone an upgrade.

Marcel Hubert, who had been responsible from the beginning for the aerodynamics, and, by default, the cooling of the oil and water (and also of the drivers!), found new ways to move the air around the cars. The brakes, for instance, now had a cooling duct on the front wings. The long tails had curved ends to aid airflow. (This had been used with the M64 the year before.)

Monthléry had been the scene of a lot of winter testing, and Hubert had found that, by increasing the air pressure inside the engine compartment, he could assist the engine to 'breathe better' and produce more power: a gain in speed of 3kph was achieved. Not much, one might think, but his calculations indicated that this could be translated to 5kph on the Hunaudières straight (Mulsanne) at Le Mans, which, over 24 hours, could be significant.

The regulations saw a change, too: the official GT category was now for cars built in numbers of 500 instead of 100, and the previous Sports Prototype category was now a trophy for constructors. A new category was introduced, to be known as Group 6 Sports Cars, of which at least 50 examples had to be built and homologated; these were in two classes, for cars up to 2 litres and over 2 litres, and primarily featuring the races at Sebring, Nürburgring and Le Mans. For Alpine, the new GT class rules brought into play the Berlinette models. There were no minimum production requirements for pure prototype cars.

Things were certainly moving on. Jean Vinatier: "Back in 1963 I drove the M63 briefly at the April testing because all the drivers did a bit. For the time, I remember it was better than similar small cars built by the other constructors. It was very fast, with good top speed – a bit light if I remember rightly. But in my opinion, by the time I drove again in 1965 with Roger (de Lageneste), both the M64 and, of course, the later M65 had developed a great deal and the cars now behaved very agreeably – still a bit light, of course, because they didn't have a lot of downforce and were intended to go very fast on the straight. We must not forget that in those days the straight



Bianchi. (Photo P3)

the following cars were bunched up and challenging each other. In the mist, braking points were hard to see and Grandsire went off the road on lap three, whilst trying to avoid a collision with the two Abarths.

Three more laps and still Bianchi was in the lead. As the fog lifted, Ortner began to have gearbox problems in his Abarth and dropped out, leaving Vinatier to move into second place, although this was not to last long as Vinatier had to retire on the next lap with a broken chassis.

Bianchi also had problems during a pit-stop for refuelling, and the Abarth of Schütz went into the lead, only to lose it on the next lap with transmission failure, whereupon Bianchi re-took the lead. Furtmayer in the Abarth was now second, with the Alpine of de Lageneste moving up into third place. Then came

Damn it! A disconsolate Grandsire. (Photo MF)

