

Sheehan Speaks

by Michael Sheehan

The Best Ferrari Vintage Racer

“What’s the best way to race in the Ferrari Historic Challenge?” the caller asked. The American version of the very successful European Ferrari Historic challenge is sponsored in part by Ferrari of North America and features the best of America’s vintage Ferrari racecars and their drivers in a “Ferrari only” series. “Best way to race” always translates into “What is the most competitive Ferrari eligible for the series and, of course, what has the lowest price?”

The most competitive car at the lowest price is a seemingly mundane Michelotto 308. This 308 is a purebred race car literally built around a serial number, by Michelotto, for professional road and rally racing.

These 308s feature an all-new and much lighter frame than a production 308; removal of all accessories that add weight to a street car; a highly modified 308 engine and gearbox; and Michelotto’s highly modified Ferrari-based suspension. The bodies are fiberglass or metal and much lighter than a nor-

mal 308 body. The 2-valve carbureted cars produce about 325 hp, mechanically injected 2-valves about 350 hp, and the 4-valve about 350 hp with much more torque. Net result is a 308 with an extra 100 “real” horsepower in a car that is 1,000 pounds lighter than a stock 308, with the brakes, suspension and safety features to match its new-found performance.

Only a year ago these cars were available for well under \$100,000. Now a good car will easily bring \$150,000, an inexpensive seat for what has to be the best ride in a Ferrari vintage racer in the US.

If you must have a V12, the logical choice is one of the many imitation competition Daytona “hot-rods” that have been built in the last 15 years. While these cars must be approved on an individual basis, and are accepted in the Ferrari Historic Challenge only

on a year-to-year basis, they still provide massive bang for the buck.

The best of the competition Daytona lookalikes were built by Garage Roelofs in Holland. They feature engines putting out an honest 450 hp with massive torque curves; much improved brakes; a modified rear suspension geometry giving compatible roll centers both fore and aft; a re-manufactured transaxle case with much thicker walls; steel side plates on the transaxle; close-ratio gears; a “short ratio” ring and pinion; and far too many other features to list.

By using modern technology, they offer performance that will easily surpass any of the factory-built competition Daytonas. They are available in the secondary market for about \$150,000, basically the cost of the construction, body work, wheels, and parts. A bargain in today’s Ferrari world.

Yes, you can buy a SWB for \$800,000 and have a far more desirable car, but after awhile you may get tired of watching the Michelotto 308s and “continuation” Daytona comp cars lap you. ♦



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