

## **Phil Hill was back in the lead**

*Ernst Schlogelhofer*

The heat was starting to take its toll and the concentration of the drivers was beginning to be affected from sitting in a furnace. Even the tarmac started to get soft in places and the heat was shimmering over the circuit like a Fata Morgana. Phil Hill was now motoring around the circuit seemingly untouchable.

But at lap 38 Phil Hill suddenly spun on the approach to the hairpin "Thillois", most likely due to melting tarmac. The Ferrari faced the wrong way. Stirling Moss, right behind, had nowhere to go and his Lotus hit the Sharknose front to front. Stirling Moss' fragile car sustained suspension damage and was out of the race. Phil Hill's car had stalled, but due to Stirling Moss's shove, the Ferrari was again facing in the right direction. The Sharknose battery was dead as a consequence of the heat and would not start, so Phil Hill began pushing the car down the long straight "D27" to build up momentum and to attempt a jump-start. He did succeed, but while he was pushing, the race had gone on around him, and he had dropped back 2 laps.

Towards the end of the race, Baghetti in the privately entered Ferrari was having a tremendous battle for the lead with the two works Porsches of Dan Gurney and Jo Bonnier. With two laps to go, the Porsche of Jo Bonnier dropped out with engine trouble. As a consequence the two leading cars were now Gurney's Porsche and Giancarlo Baghetti's Sharknose Ferrari.

With the two cars just inches apart, and the lead constantly changing, Gurney out-braked Baghetti on the last corner of the last lap, taking the lead. With the checkered flag in sight, the Porsche led the Ferrari, but at the last moment Giancarlo Baghetti swerved out of the slipstream of Dan Gurney's Porsche and won the race by inches. The Italian newcomer making history as the only driver ever to win his first race and for many years the race was considered as the closest finish in F1 history.

We are now in September 2019 and all this is in the distant past.

Around us are the remains of the Reims circuit. There are the grandstands and the pit straight with faded advertising of companies long vanished. The place has character and a romantic aura steeped in history. But what is this? Two red and one green car come blasting down the pit straight - visitors from a distant past. The cars look tiny, but they command attention, not least due to their visceral sound, last heard in 1963. Their shapes are slender and animal like, single seaters built for speed, a sleek form that follows function.

We are looking at two scarlet red Sharknose V6 Ferraris and a British racing green Lotus.

In the wake of the cars came a jolly crew of mechanics, drivers, and a film crew, including Phil Hill's son Derek Hill and the historic racing driver Jason Wright.

Please enjoy the photos and remember a time when "racing was dangerous and sex was safe".