



## The 6C 2500 “Competizione”: the swan song of the racing versions

The 6C 2500 “Competizione” was an important car of the late 1940s, conceived in Alfa, and it was a project that dated back a few years.

In fact, immediately after the war it was realised that the heavy 6C 2500 SS was close to its end.

In 1946, the 2500 models were struggling to keep pace with the light and nimble Lancia Aprilia and the good performing Fiat 1100, although they were cars with a much smaller engine capacity.

Renato Balestrero, a very fast driver at the wheel of the 6C 2500 SS changed to the old Fiat 2800 Stanguellini that belonged to Luigi Filippone.

Certain pilots, who were fanatical Alfa fans, got their old supercharged 8C 2300 Monza cars out of the garage, which were usable thanks to a change in the sports rulebook; but it was a powerful and light thoroughbred, even though it was 15 years old, still equipped with mechanical brakes control and with a styling that made it anachronistic on starting grids, with the long, high bonnet and mudguards detached from the body.

The 6C 2500 was, as well as being chronically plagued with overweight, not very agile because of the too long wheelbase.

The often stylistically impeccable bodywork changes carried out in the postwar period removed a few pounds, but it was not enough.

The heavy weight defect was inherent in the mechanics and the chassis, originally certainly not designed for racing but for cars for the fast and comfortable tourism market.

The new car they were thinking about (the future 1900) was not even completely defined in terms of layout. There was still talk about front traction (project 1356). All that remained was to once again resort to Jano's old project from 1934.

The design team, headed by Gioacchino Colombo until the end of 1947, already has several “fish to fry”: the development of the 158 GP, the new car to be produced shortly in large quantities, the really new racing cars for the new decade round the corner.

In this climate, it was decided as early as 1946 to use the box section steel frame chassis of the SS, but with a shorter wheelbase of 2,500 mm (compared to the 2,700 mm of the SS) and the adoption of a rear transverse leaf spring, like that of the 8C 2900, in place of the two lateral torsion bars, eliminating the encumbrance in order to lower the chassis.

The aluminium bodywork, designed in Alfa Romeo, was to be manufactured in Alfa Romeo. Even the engine was modified:

the camshafts had a new and more stringent listing, the bushings were of a different material, compression ratio raised up to the high value of 9,2:1 for the use of gasoline with an octane number greater than 100, larger valves (both intake and exhaust), the lubrication was now of the dry sump type in order to lower the car's centre of gravity, the radiator for the lubricant had delivery and recovery pumps, 4-speed all synchromesh gearbox.

The dry weight was down to the interesting value of 850 kg which, combined with the power of 145-147 hp at 5,500 rpm and the lower body, which was compact and hemmed (made by Colli according to Busso, who perhaps confuses them, in his memoirs, with that of the 6C 3000 CM) made in Alfa by a certain Boschetti, allowed the car to easily exceed 200 km/hr.

Three chassis were produced in 1947, with different numbers compared with those of the 6C 2500, which began with no. 92, confirming that it was a different version, exclusively designed for racing: 920.001, 920.002 and 920.003.

The first sedan, whose official name was the 6C 2500 C46, “Competizione” or even “Sperimentale”, was ready in 1947 and was quite intensively used to conduct tests and gain experience.

At the beginning of 1948 it was sold to an Alfa Romeo dealer in Rome, Franco Venturi, a fairly well-known amateur pilot.

The 920.001 was therefore prepared for the Mille Miglia in 1948 but without precise plans about the pilot who was meant to race it, because of the unavailability due to an accident of the owner, who offered it to Alfa Romeo for the race.

At the last moment the fifty year old Tazio Nuvolari was considered. At that time he was in a convent near Lake Garda, to cure his lungs which had been damaged by the continuous gasoline fumes he inhaled in so many years of racing, and trying to overcome the pain of the loss of his two children.

A few days before the race, Alfa sent two officials to make this offer but Enzo Ferrari, who someone had warned, anticipated this move by Alfa Romeo and invited Nuvolari to pilot his new car, the 166 SC. Nuvolari accepted the offer two days before the race and was teamed with the young mechanic Sergio Scapinelli.

Alfa Romeo decided to assign the “Competizione” 920.001 to Sanesi, in a crew with his good friend and mechanic Augusto Zanardi.

The other berlinetta, chassis no. 920.002, with basically the same body except for a few details, but with better finishing, is sold on

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Fabio Morlacchi - Stefano Salvetti

**Alfa Romeo**  
**6C 2300 - 6C 2500**  
a cura del Registro Internazionale 6C 2300



Sopra, Fangio sulla berlinetta Competizione n° 730 alla Mille Miglia del 1950  
Above, Fangio in "Competizione" berlinetta no. 730 at the 1950 Mille Miglia

April 5 to Franco Rol from Turin, owner of Rol Oil, a manufacturer of lubricants, also great amateur pilot and a frequent visitor of racing sports cars aimed at.

Rol participated in the Mille Miglia with the Alfa mechanic Alessandro Gaboardi.

The seemingly strange decision to sell such important cars to private pilots, being cars that were to be specifically used for the most prestigious races, can be explained by the need not to force their consent to participate in races by the IRI management, and to recover the costs for their design and construction at a time when all the financial resources for the sports sector were absorbed by the development and maintenance of the single-seater 158.

The decision to sell to amateur pilots who were not particularly skilled was strange, but perhaps dictated by the haste to sell the cars,

certainly in significant numbers, since it seems that the bare chassis with mechanics of the 920.003, equipped with a 3,000 cc engine, was sold in 1952 for 8,500,000 lire!

The 15th Mille Miglia started in May, Sanesi swerved off the road with the 6C 2500, causing a lot of damage and, such is fate, the Rol also swerved off the road with the other berlinetta: the end of the Mille Miglia of 1948 for the two 6C 2500 "Competizione" cars.

After the Sanesi's accident, a new body was fitted onto chassis 920.001 at Alfa Romeo, during the summer, with using a body that was identical in detail to that of the 920.002 and given back to Venturi who then sold it to the Bornigia brothers, to then be sold to Mario Casaro from Turin. Fangio, who was paired with Augusto Zanardi, drove

it at the 1950 MM, coming in third place on his own.

In 1953, the car was sold to Mr. William Burke, a former U.S. military man who was living in Bagnoli (Naples), who had the original body disassembled and replaced with a cabriolet. Subsequently, even this body was disassembled and apparently reassembled on a modified 1900 C), and chassis 920.001 disappeared.

The original body that crashed in 1948 and was disassembled, was recovered to be mounted, it seems, on a normal SS chassis, which was modified to accommodate it.

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*Even the 920.002, with Rol paired with the young mechanic Gaboardi, as we have seen, swerved off the road before Rome, again at the 1948 MM. Rol and Vincenzo Richiero participated in the 1949 MM, coming 3rd overall and 1st in their class. We see it here in a challenging overtaking manoeuvre. The owner continued to use the 920.002 in various national races with mixed results throughout 1948 and 1949. Franco Rol entered his 6C 2500 "Competizione" in the 24 hours Le Mans race held on 25 and 26 June 1949. After having left Turin in the workshop truck on which the "Competizione" had been loaded, he was stopped at the French customs, where he remained for many hours due to bureaucratic problems regarding the workshop truck, which for its use characteristics should have been declared for temporary export.*



Rol obtained a declaration by the customs to justify the delay, but the race French organisers were inflexible and the pilot from Turin was not admitted to the race's three day tests of the race and a few hours after the closing of entries.

On 14 and 15 August, the eighteenth Pescara race was run on roads open to traffic, without even the certainty of finding the level crossings open. Rol was driving the only car in a race held under constant heavy rain that have made it difficult even for such experienced drivers as Biondetti and Vallone in an open Ferrari.

The "Competizione" berlinetta easily caught up with the Ferraris and already took the lead in the early laps, with its calm pilot who looked as elegant as usual in a white silk shirt that stood out behind the windscreen kept clean by the windscreen wipers, as noted by Lurani, who was forced to retire along the route.

But it is not just a matter of having the advantage of driving a hardtop vehicle under the rain, since the "Competizione" proved to be very stable even in these extreme conditions, and it won.

To be sure, on dry asphalt it might not have been possible to beat the nimble Ferraris, but so be it.

In 1950, Franco Rol passed alternately to driving GP cars, but he still raced in the 1950 MM, where he had to retire due to trouble with the brakes.

The 920.002, with its grille modified, was sold in Switzerland and is still there, with a rebuilt grille similar to the original one.

The third chassis, the 920.003 was instead a unique car; in fact, it is not the same as a 6C 2500, because it never had this engine mounted on it, but in any case the chassis was originally in any case thought of as the 6C 2500 Competizione/Sperimentale.

A berlinetta with bodywork shape vaguely similar to those of the other two later built by Touring, probably in 1950.

The chassis was immediately fitted with a 3000 engine, equipped with several attachments to the chassis compared to the 2500, and originally intended for the large type 6C 3000 sedan, in this case with three double-choke horizontal carburettors and a compression ratio that was further raised, with about 190 hp in the version built specifically for the MM.

According to Luigi Fusi and Giuseppe Busso, a 5-speed gearbox was used (perhaps originally produced for the 6C 3000 but whose prototype apparently had a 4-speed gearbox) or in view of the new sports cars they were working on.

Officially called the 6C 3000 C 50, it participated in the 1950 MM with Sanesi and Bianchi swerving off the road near Ferrara.

Returned to Alfa Romeo with the body seriously damaged, the car for left for some time forgotten in a shed.

Subsequently, the body was dismantled and destroyed, while the chassis was sold with its mechanics on 23 April 1952 to Mr.

Bernardo Vanni from Milan, who sold it on the 28th of the same month to Eugenio Remigio Nosenzo from Sesto San Giovanni (Milan) who wanted to participate in the MM that would take place a few days

later and he contacted Zagato, Touring and Colli.

Colli was assigned to build the bodywork (perhaps Busso's memoirs about the bodywork relate to this episode), and the company accepted to build it in time.

The "new" berlinetta, with number plate MI 190844, was ready but did not take part in the Mille Miglia.

Nosenzo uses the car quite intensively on the motorway between Lombardy and Veneto for work purposes and in 1956 he sold it to Mr. Tampieri, who also drove it around.

In the early 1960s this car, which was parked in a garage, was moved into a yard because of the need for indoor space to house the equipment used for the business activities of the owner's family.

It was left to rot, surrounded by weeds, until it was sold to a demolition yard.

According to other sources, the chassis that the 3,000 engine was installed in was the 920.001, a private body destroyed by Sanesi in the 1948 MM.

But this is unlikely because, as recorded in a document found recently at the Alfa Romeo Documentation Centre in Arese, in March 1950 the 920.001 was owned by "Commendatore" Mario Casaro from Turin, the owner of the coachbuilder Casaro, famous for its bus bodies, often for Alfa Romeo, who lent it, still equipped with the original engine no. 921.001, to Alfa so it could be raced in the second Inter Europa Cup with Sanesi, with its original Rome number plate.

Out of curiosity and to understand how the tests were conducted, we will follow the story of one of them.

The 6C 2500 C 46 "Competizione" (chassis 920.001) was sent back to Alfa Romeo again for servicing and fine tuning.

Equipped with 6.00 by 18 tyres, a standard rear axle ratio of 11/67, three double-choke horizontal 35 DCO Weber carburettors and

Marelli CW 280 spark plugs that were rather cold in terms of their heat range, the C 46 was ready on 24 March, two days before the race, Sanesi and the previous owner, Bornigia, were at Alfa Romeo, in the courtyard located behind the Alfa Racing building.

The mechanics filled the 80 octane petrol tank provided by the organisers of the race, even though the C 46 was set up to take gasoline of about 100 n.o., while normal petrol has a value of 65. Sanesi noted that the engine "will beat on the head".

Having inflated the rear tyres to 2.7 bar and the front ones to 2.5, Sanesi, who had to twist into position despite the fact that he was only 168 cm tall, with a lean and fit physique, got into the driving seat through the small doors, with Bornigia which taking his place to his left.

Consalvo knew the "001" well. It was the car he swerved off the road with during the Mille Miglia two years earlier, although he was miraculously unharmed.

He was so touched by his good fortune that he gave his second daughter, Marinella, the same name as the place where the accident happened: Santa Marinella, located between Rome and Civitavecchia.

*Stagnoli's Ferrari, despite the fact that the hardtop bodywork does not allow the pilots to jump into the driver's compartment and the tiny doors do not facilitate access.*

*At the end of the first lap, Sanesi was already in the lead and stayed there undisturbed for two hours of the race, and then the C 46 crossed the finish line, despite the strong rattling of the engine with pressure losses of the cylinders probably because of the thicker head gasket resulting from extemporaneous modification in order to reduce the compression ratio.*

*The fuel consumption was about 27 litres per 100 km.*

*But in group A, which raced in the morning, there were other 6C 2500 cars, like Franco Macchi's Pinin Farina cabriolet, which started well and had a good race, although during the seventh lap in Lesmo, it overtook Malberti's Fiat 500 from the outside and, closing in to complete the bend, got in the way of the elegant convertible in front of the Topolino it has just overtaken that did not have time to brake and collided with the 2500 it had crossed, which began a series of spins to end up off the track with its wheels in the air, while the Topolino was projected towards the inside and its pilot, thrown through the canvas roof, fell into the woods, without getting badly hurt.*

*Even Macchi was unharmed. Their race was over and the cars were destroyed. It was certainly a shame about the Topolino, but the 2500 Pinin Farina Cabriolet...*

*After 1950, while the "Competizione" berlinetta was promising, no more were produced and there were no developments based on it, perhaps because of the haste to get rid of an out of date suspension, that was also heavy and not appreciated by the Alfa technical team, which aimed to improve the new deformable transversal wishbone format for the front and the rear a "De Dion" for racing cars, and a rigid axle for new series cars.*

*Even for the chassis of racing cars, the new "tubular" type was now in vogue. Meanwhile, in the place of Colombo, who had left Alfa, car design management had temporarily been assigned to Luigi Fusi until 7 January 1948, when Giuseppe Busso returned to Alfa after nearly two years at Ferrari.*

*One of the first tasks he was assigned as the engine design manager, was to design the engine that would be the new and umpteenth replacement for the 6C 2500, already designed towards the end of the war.*

*Busso's starting point was a project that was already in Alfa, that of an in-line 6-cylinders 3000 cc engine, originally equipped with single overhead camshaft and rocker arm finger distribution, designed by Ricart before leaving Alfa in March 1945.*

*The result of the Busso revisitation was a 6-cylinder in-line engine that was similar, but of course with DOHC type distribution on the head. The base was made of cast iron, the head of aluminium, with a 82.55 by 92 mm bore and stroke, for a displacement of 2,955 cc. The unusual value of the bore (3 and 1/4 inches) comes from the fact that new pistons and tools for manufacturing cylinders were not*

*available in Italy immediately after the war.*

*They had to be found in England.*

*The system for adjusting the play of the adjustable tappet and plates, so disliked by Busso, was probably designed by Gioacchino Colombo, who returned to Alfa Romeo in November 1945.*

*Progress was also being made on the bodywork and chassis project, no longer made with longitudinal and transverse steel components, but with boxed sheet steel to integrate with the body, as was already the case for the SS sports the short wheelbase versions of the 6C 2500.*

*A model of the body was made that looked like an impressive and modern American-style sedan (the 1950 type), which we see in a rare drawing on the right, and a scale model with similar settings.*

*A few engines (project 1305), originally equipped with 120 hp at 4,800 rpm and 21 kgm of torque at 3,000 rpm, were produced, one of which was mounted on the unique boxed chassis planned to be used for the sedan, and it was tested by Consalvo Sanesi.*

*The chassis had already been tested in February with an omnipresent 6C 2500 engine.*

*The road tests of the only full-scale completed prototype (according to Busso, while according to Luigi Fusi there were three), of which no pictures are available, were carried out at the beginning of 1950.*

*The project was stopped in February; the car was too costly for the particular situation Italy was going through at the time, and there were many 6C 2500 models still unsold at Alfa Romeo...*

*Moreover, in 1948, Finmeccanica (a newly formed state-owned company that acquired Alfa Romeo) decided that Alfa Romeo should dedicate itself to the production of cars that were more affordable by the Italians, less expensive to produce and maintain and therefore with 4-cylinder engines, because the number of cylinders counted for the calculation of taxable fiscal power.*

*There was no wish to directly compete with Fiat, and moreover, Alfa Romeo had never produced normal cars.*

*Alfa in any case wanted to maintain a certain image and develop a car for the medium-high market, with more sporty displacement and tuning than the Fiat 1400, which was then being manufactured. Ironically, 1950 coincided with a car, the sedan 1900, which resulted in the new production strategy of Alfa Romeo, while the new big car, project number 1950, fell into oblivion at the very beginning of that year. But not all was lost.*

*Of the few 6-cylinder 3000 engines made, one of them, as we seen, with 3 horizontal double-choke carburetors and the power increased to about 170 hp at 6,000 rpm, subsequently further enhanced by races, was used to equip the third chassis Alfa built (no. 920.003) of the 6C 2500 Competizione berlinetta.*

*In 1952, another with the same setup and sporty look of the one mounted on the "Competizione", was installed in the engine compartment of the long wheelbase Touring (now preserved in the Turin National Automobile Museum).*