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2000 FERRARI 550 MARANELLO PRODRIVE

- Chassis CRD01, the first of the 10 550 Maranello Prodrives built and the development and test car driven by Peter Kox.
- The first 550 Prodrive to go racing, to score a pole position and win a race
- Spiritual successor to the legendary Ferrari 250 GTO and the first front-engined Ferrari GT racing car since the Daytona Gr. IV.
- Built jointly by Care Racing Developments and Prodrive in a bid to revive GT racing as a whole.
- 5 years of consecutive racing in the FIA GT and LMES, achieving 3rd place overall in 2003 and 2004 seasons.

After the demise of the BPR racing series and the quick rise and fall of the awe-inspiring 1990s GT1 category, the future of GT racing as a whole was looking sombre. Stephane Ratel's FIA GT series, born from the ashes of the BPR, was initially dominated by the ravenously funded works Mercedes and Porsche teams. With the FIA axing the GT1 category in 1998, most works teams chose to leave endurance racing altogether, leaving FIA GT entries in tatters. Ratel, fearing the end of GT racing, set out to attract new colours to the grid, and decided that colour needed to be red.

Ferrari had long been tempted by the return of a V12 Ferrari to GT racing and had instigated a programme to turn their limited edition F50 model into a GT1 class racer in 1996 in hopes of taking on the McLaren F1 GTR and Porsche GT1. That summer Luca di Montezemolo, President of Ferrari had said "I want to find a way to do something in GT races but with our clients, not directly the factory" so despite the F50 project being shelved, the writing was on the wall.

The new GT1 rules for 2000, drawn up largely with Ratel's advice and thoughts on how to make them attractive, included one game-changing caveat. Not only would manufacturers be able to apply for homologation, but reputable tuners would also be able to apply for a technical passbook and cost of development was constrained so private teams could afford to compete. In an unprecedentedly authoritarian move, the FIA would now make a list of desirable cars and give the manufacturer 15 days to respond with a reason why the car should not be used.

Ratel had his eyes set on Ferrari and thus the first project under the new rules was the development of the 550 Maranello with Italtecnica in Turin. In just under 3 months, Italtecnica performed miracles to get to the 550 Millennio completed for presentation in Paris on the 13th of February 2000. Four or five cars were to be built but sadly the resulting car was a false start with too many reliability and performance issues detected during testing. Enter Frédéric Dor, ex-Prodrive Subaru driver, and one of the disappointed new owners of a 550 Millennio who still had an insatiable appetite for a Ferrari GT race car.

Frédéric and his newly created company Care Racing Development brought his new car to his old friends at Prodrive for their analysis. They determined that there were fundamental design flaws so if Frédéric wanted a successful 550 racing car they would have to start from scratch. The Millennio was returned and replaced with a suitable 550 Maranello road car from a dealer in the UK, chassis CRD01 (107617) which would become the prototype development car.

Peter Stevens was the design consultant on the project and recalled "Everybody agreed that we wanted to create a car that was aesthetically pleasing – we didn't want fussy aero bits and pieces that were lazily stuck on and ungainly. If Ferrari takes a car racing the purpose is to sell Ferraris. But here the aim was to sell Prodrive's ability to develop a track focused GT competition car. In that respect it was more important that it looked convincing, professional and, most importantly, beautiful."

The 550 Prodrive was to be a modern iteration in a long line of successful Ferrari-born, tuner-influenced GT racers which most notably included two other front engined, 12 cylinder, rear-transaxel models - the 250 GTO and the Daytona. Links to the 250 GTO may seem tenuous but the Ferrari 550 shared the "Gran Turismo Omologato" nomenclature when it was released and both dominated their respective golden eras of GT racing. It was therefore destined that like the 250 GTO before it, the 550 went on

to win its class at Le Mans. Parallels could also be drawn with the next V12 to receive competition treatment - the Daytona. The idea to modify one for racing, much like Dor with the 550, came from Luigi Chinetti who wanted one to compete at Le Mans.

From 1999 to 2009, the ensuing "GT1 era" is now regarded as a golden age in which the 550 Maranello Prodrive featured top, front and centre. Between 2001 and 2008, the 550s garnered 69 victories, 151 podiums, and 60 pole positions, a GTS class victory at Le Mans in 2003 and an outright win in the 2004 Spa 24 hours, solidifying its place alongside the greats in Ferrari's GT racing lineage.

CRD01 was therefore the first 550 GT1 to be completed by the Prodrive team, first turning a wheel at the IDIADA test track in Spain on the 27th April 2001. A few days later, CRD01 became the first 550 Prodrive to enter a race, at the Hungaroring FIA GT round. The 600hp V12, mated to an X-Trac built 6-speed sequential gearbox powered the car to an impressive 5th position in qualifying, although an electrical issue translated into a DNF for the race. More testing was needed.

CRD01 subsequently wrapped up hundreds of hours of testing throughout the summer of 2001, including a 12-hour test at Spa. Come August, CRD01 was once again entered in an FIA GT race, at the A1 Ring in Austria, with development driver Peter Kox and Rickard Rydell recording the program's first pole position, and to top off a perfect weekend, a first class win. A further overall win came CRD01's way in Jarama a couple of months later.

The news that a Ferrari GT racing car was back on the top step of an international endurance race obviously turned a few heads, including that of Ferrari. High in Prodrive's ambitions was to get Ferrari's seal of approval for the program. A further test session was therefore organised on Ferrari's very own stomping ground at Fiorano, with CRD01 driven by the Scuderia's Formula 1 test driver Luca Badoer. "Everything seemed very promising" according to Prodrive marketing and sales director Hugh Chambers, but Jean Todt eventually pulled the plug. A second chance came in 2002 when Care Racing offered to share their manufacturing file with Michelotto but by then Ferrari's own 550/575 GTC race car with N.Technology was on the horizon. As the history books subsequently demonstrated, this was very much their loss...

While Prodrive had officially been running the car on behalf of Care Racing Developments for the races CRD01 took part in in 2001, Dor's Care Racing Development took over operations from 2002 onwards. The first half the 2002 FIA GT season was littered with accidents and reliability issues, however matters were much improved after the summer, with the team scoring a podium and a pole position. For 2003 and 2004, Care Racing once again entered CRD01 for the FIA GT seasons with drivers Lilian Bryner, Enzo Calderari and Stefano Livio. The lineup's consistency over the two years paid off hugely, earning the team 5 podiums in 2003 and 4 podiums in 2004, enough to secure 3rd place in the championship on both occasions.

For 2005, CRD01 was entered in the Le Mans Endurance Series and run by the MenX Racing Team with Tomas Enge and Robert Pergl at the wheel. Painted in MenX's full black livery, CRD01 managed 4th in a hotly contested GT1 class, also achieving the car's last win at a chaotic Silverstone round of the championship.

After 5 consecutive years of racing, CRD01 was retired and kept by Care Racing Development right up until 2022 when the car was purchased by her current owner. She was brought over to Venture Engineering for a ground-up restoration which was spearheaded by the very same people who built CRD01 in the early 2000s, including Ex-Engine Development Engineer at the time, Stuart Gale, along with many other ex-Prodrive staff.

Now back in the livery she wore in 2001 for her first season, CRD01 raced for the first time since 2005 at Le Mans Classic in 2023, driven by the current owner and Prodrive Development Driver Peter Kox who was fittingly reunited with chassis 01, the car he so extensively tested 22 years prior.

This Ferrari 550 Maranello GT1 is the car of many firsts: the first 550 Prodrive to come out of the factory, the first to race, the first to take a pole position and a race win. With 42 race participations under its belt over 5 seasons, this is your chance to own

one of the spiritual successors to the fabled 250 GTO and the first front-engined Ferrari GT racing car since the Daytona Competizione.

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