

1923 Maserati in a 2 litre Diatto



At the beginning of the Twenties, Alfieri and Ernesto Maserati were highly sought after for their skills, both as drivers and designers. Diatto believed in their talent and brought them in to direct the Race Team in 1922, winning against numerous other offers, thus launching a long period of fruitful collaboration in automotive design and race victories. Alfieri Maserati, with a Diatto 3000, took first place in November 1922 at the Monza Autodrome, winning the Gran Premio d'Autunno - 400 km, at an average speed of 125 kph, with the renowned Ugo Sivocci in his Alfa Romeo 3000 bringing up the rear.

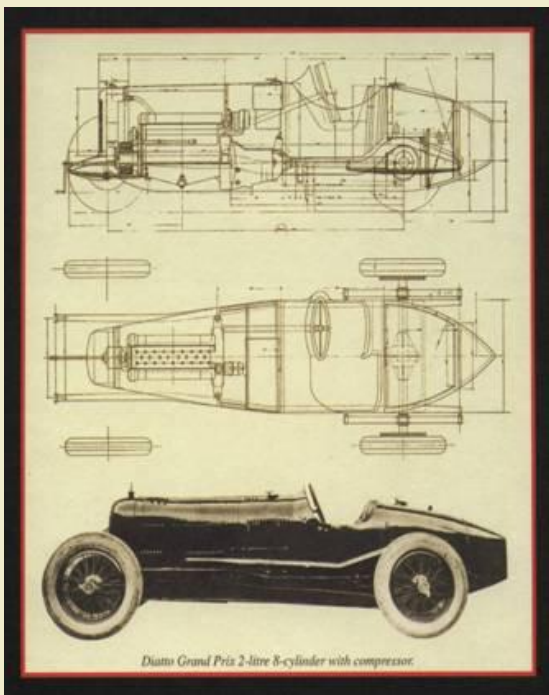
1924 - Maserati/Parenti in a Diatto 3 litri

This was the first of a series of important wins, on track and road, like the very challenging Parma - Poggio di Berceto and Aosta - Gran San Bernardo uphill time trials, victories which were repeated for two years in a row.

Between 1924 and 1925, Alfieri Maserati, under the guidance of Coda, whom he called "my master", developed the prototypes into a new Diatto engine with total displacement reduced to 1995 cc.



Supercharged 8-cylinder Diatto Grand Prix



The Maserati brothers, absorbed in their prestigious work for Diatto, were by now living in Turin to design, test and race their Diatto race cars.

In 1923, Coda, the Diatto director and designer, made two experimental 8 cylinder, 4 litre, inline engines, by coupling together two Diatto Tipo 20 series production engine blocks.

This was the first 8C Diatto engine built by Maserati, with inline single block aluminium engine, with two shafts, two Memini carburetors and Roots compressor; a design which was so successful that when Maserati founded his own company, he used it and achieved victories in it for many years.

Thus the legendary 8C Diatto Grand Prix compressor - 160 HP- with Schieppati bodywork was born. The car was unveiled by Maserati at Monza on 14 June 1925, at the foundation of the famous "100 kph club" founded by Diatto supporters.



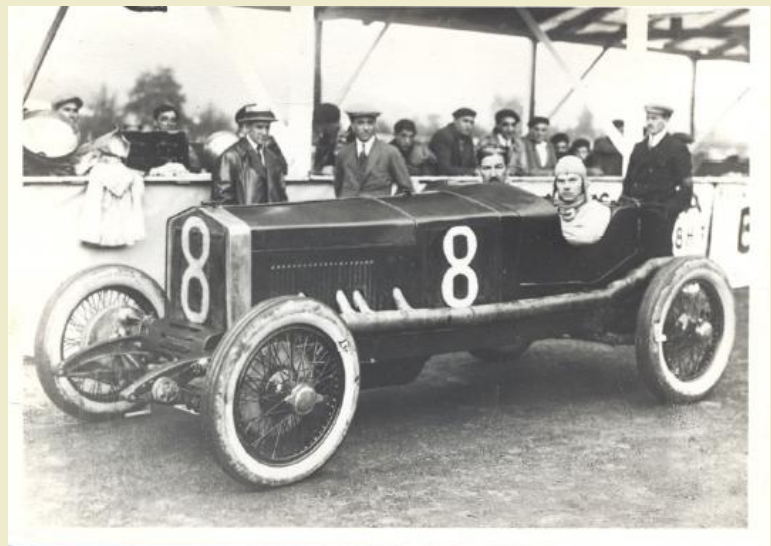
Maserati drove a number of demonstration laps and reached 180 km/h to the enthusiasm of the crowd.

Subsequently, he delivered a second 8 cylinder engine to Diatto and, with the mediation of Coda, kept the prototype as payment for the work done over the years without payment – just like Coda himself.

1922 Monza – 1° G.P: Maserati in a 3 litre Diatto, wins race class

Despite the fact that Diatto was winning races and selling cars, and had a prosperous portfolio of orders, the company finances were in a sorry state due to the failure of the Kingdom of Italy to pay for its wartime supplies.

For Maserati, there was no lack of success, admiration and temptations. The champion Franz Conelli, who was a friend of Bugatti, convinced Maserati to install the Diatto 8C engine on his victorious Diatto-Bugatti racing car.



1924 G.P. San Sebastian (Spagna) - Maserati/Parenti in a 3 litre Diatto



The Marquis driver Diego De Sterlich offered a new body, painted light blue for the occasion (the typical Bugatti colour), to promote the idea of a collaboration with Bugatti, the attempt was in vain.

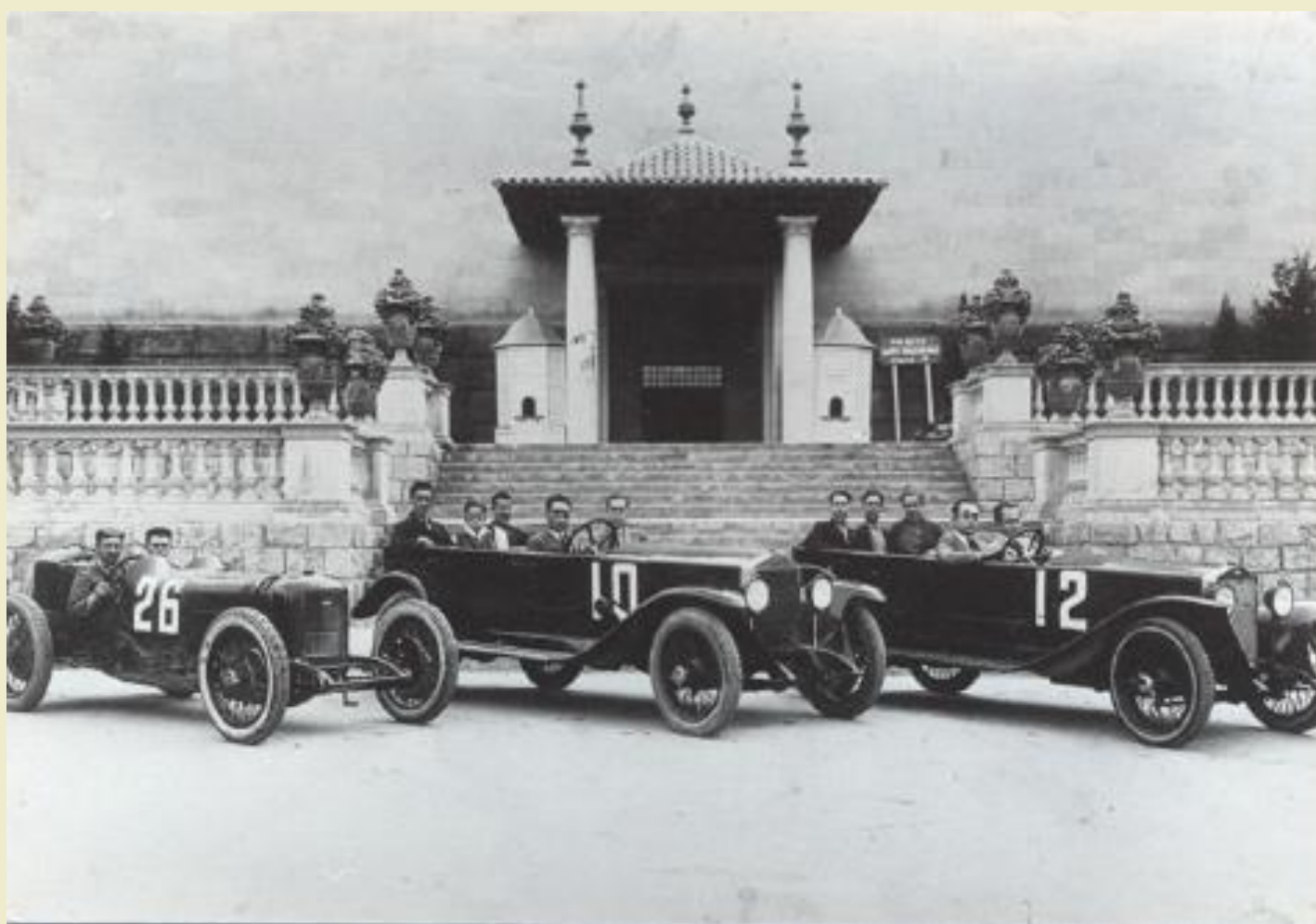
Maserati remained with Diatto, crowning his glorious racing career on the podium of the Targa e Coppa Florio, at the Cremona racetrack, at the Coppa della Consuma, the Susa - Moncenisio, in the Pistoia hills, at Limonest (Lione) and Schabenberg in France, at Gothenbourg and Bollans in Swiss, at the Rebassada (Barcellona) and Valencia in Spain.

1923 - Parma-Poggio di Berceto - Maserati in a Diatto 20 S



Maserati's brothers in the supercharged 8-cylinder Diatto Gran Prix, the forerunner to the Maserati Type 26

The Diatto racing team, led by Maserati, competes in Rebassada (Spain)





At the beginning of 1926, when Diatto officially withdrew from competition, Diego De Sterlich, an admirer of the Maserati brothers, bought ten Tipo 30 sports chassis from Diatto, along with their gearboxes and numerous mechanical parts. He had them delivered to Alfieri Maserati, and convinced him to start his own racing car company, partly financing the new venture.

1926 - Maserati lives Diatto and opens his Trident company

With these Diatto Tipo 30 fully equipped sport chassis, with the enormous technical and sporting inheritance of the Diatto Race Team, Alfieri and Ernesto Maserati founded the new company with the Trident logo: Maserati. The first Maserati cars, with their Diatto engines, are numbered from 011 onwards.

This was the eleventh of the engines previously designed and manufactured by Alfieri Maserati for Diatto race cars, engines implanted on request by either Diatto or directly by Maserati:



DIATTO 4 Cylinders:
20S/2000; 20H-S/6000;
23S/2300; 26S/2600;
30S/300; 35SS/3500;

DIATTO 8 Cylinders :
20SSMB/2000;
40MM/4000;
40BTS/4000;
40BTF/4000;

MASERATI 8 Cylinders:
TIPO 26: MB/1500.

(see "Le Fanatique de l'Automobile", under - Press in French language -)

FROM RAILWAY ENGINES TO RACING CARS

The Diatto is probably best remembered as the forerunner of the modern-day Maserati. However, this is not a completely fair image as Diatto themselves made some interesting cars

The Maserati brothers, however, had more success: the GP straight-eight Diatto was reborn as the 1500 cc Maserati.

So as Diatto died, Maserati was in the ascendant. Had the 2-litre GP car been more successful and had Diatto been adequately financed, the course of motoring history might have been different, who knows! Maybe Diatto would now be a luxury marque and Maserati still a workshop in Bologna. DBW

The Type 26 Maserati, a direct development of the GP Diatto, winning the 1½-litre class of the 1926 Targa Florio.



The Automobile

Cyril Posthumus used to speculate on where the money came from for the Maserati brothers to purchase the Diatto racing team. They had little money of their own at that time. He thought it possible that it came from the Marquis de Sterlich or the Baroness de Avanzo. Recently an Italian, who knew Ernesto Maserati and de Sterlich, said that it would seem that it was the latter who put up the money. In fact, he supported both Diatto and Maserati to such an extent that he expended his entire family fortune. ©

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*(see the original articles
- Press in English language)*

At the 1926 "Targa Florio", Maserati was registered with a Diatto 2 litre 8C Grand Prix compressor. But he actually competed with his first Maserati "Tipo 26", a modified Diatto Grand Prix, with engine reduced from 2000 to 1500 cc, to meet the restrictions of the new international regulations. The Diatto Grand Prix cars, further developed under the auspices of the Maserati trident, were winners for many years to come, thus attesting their design and technological superiority (see the original Diatto-Maserati documents).

Many gentleman drivers, when Diatto ceased production in the early Thirties, brought their Diatto race cars, still excellent competitors, to the Maserati brothers.



**1924 TORINO
STABILIMENTO DIATTO**
Alfieri Maserati e l'ing. Coda
si accingono a provare la
DIATTO - MASERATI quattro
cilindri 2000 che Ernesto
piloterà nella gara delle
Colline Pistoiesi, sua prima
corsa.

Dalla Diatto - Bugatti 1500 alla Maserati "Tipo 26": genesi di un mito

1921-22 - *Accordo Diatto-Bugatti per la costruzione su commessa di una piccola serie di auto da corsa con motori EB 1500 (69x100) e telai Diatto tipo 25 HP Sport (Passo 2550, carreggiata ant. e post. 1400) modificati con assale tubolare tipo B.C.C. portante agli estremi fusi a snodo ad attacchi detti a "forcella invertita" e "piatti inchiodati" (sic! Coda), senza freni anteriori: sterzo a 26°, tiranteria e barra di accoppiamento adattati dal tipo 25 HP; freni posteriori azionati con tiranti dall'asse portante il pedale e/o con leva collegata anche ad un freno sulla trasmissione; ruote Rudge Whitworth Straight side e gomme 820x120. L'italo-francese Franz Conelli richiede a Coda ulteriori modifiche al suo esemplare: alleggerimento del telaio da 840 a 750 kg e di tutta la vettura eliminando anche il baquet per il meccanico; radiatore dell'acqua della tipo 25 HP più grande di quello previsto da Coda per il tipo sport-tubo di scarico all'altezza dei collettori - 4 in 2 - e non in basso come nel progetto, ed altro. Con questa "speciale" F, Conelli partecipa ad alcune competizioni tra cui la Susa-Moncenisio 1921.*

1922-23 - *L'ing. Coda progetta e costruisce un motore 8 C in linea con due blocchi Diatto tipo 20 (79,7x100) ispirandosi al motore Bugatti Avio 8C che la Diatto aveva prodotto su licenza sotto la sua direzione tecnica. Coda entra in contatto con Alfieri Maserati per una collaborazione con la DIATTO ed insieme realizzano varie migliorie a quel motore: nuove teste senza interposizione di guarnizione con i blocchi, nuovi carburatori - Zenith da Ø 36 - in sostituzione dei Feroldi avio modificati da Coda ed altro, si costruisce un secondo motore a teste fisse e vengono assemblati due prototipi utilizzando due telai tipo 20 di serie (passo 3.10; carreggiata ant. e post. 1,40). È da notare che l'ing. Coda pensa di costruire anche una vettura di lusso ed uno spider con un motore del genere oltre che una da competizione. Le prove sul Moncenisio, con una carrozzeria spartana, effettuate da Coda, Maserati e De Sterlich sono del tutto insoddisfacenti. De Sterlich fa sostituire le gomme 820x120 con altre 820x135 e modificare le balestre posteriori zavorrando il retrotreno con quattro ruote - non per scorta! - e, cambiate le otto candele, riprova sullo stesso percorso ma il prototipo prende fuoco - viene spento con il concorso di alcuni montanari presenti lungo la strada.*

1923-24 - *Coda e Maserati sviluppano i due motori costruiti ed assemblano due nuovi prototipi con telai Diatto tipo 20 sport (passo 2650, carreggiata ant. e post. 1350), ruote Rudge Whitworth Stright side e gomme 820x120. Il motore a testa fissa viene dotato di due carburatori Zenith da Ø 36 e compressore a palette ideato da Coda collocato al posto del magnete, quindi con la girante a 90° rispetto all'albero motore, il magnete trasferito in coda al secondo albero di distribuzione. Le prove su strada, pur soddisfacenti anche con il motore a teste fisse, evidenziano ancora problemi. Si abbandona definitivamente l'idea del motore biblocco, quello a teste fisse viene acquistato da Conelli, l'altro riutilizzato per alcune componenti. Coda e Maserati realizzano allora un 8C monoblocco in linea (7,9x100) monoalbero con testa smontabile senza guarnizione interposta con il blocco. L'alimentazione è aspirata con due e poi quattro carburatori Zenith da Ø 36; La lubrificazione è a carter secco con radiatore dell'olio posto davanti a quello dell'acqua, pompa "a palette mobile" (sic! Coda) e serbatoio di recupero collocato sotto il cruscotto anteriormente al posto del meccanico. Le prove sono finalmente molto soddisfacenti.*

1926-1927 - L'entusiasmo per la nascita della prima Maserati è alle stelle e subito si lavora alla costruzione della prima vettura, sarà chiamata "Tipo 26". In realtà si tratta di un rifacimento dell'auto di Conelli con le seguenti modifiche: al telaio tipo 20 Sport con assale B.C.C. vengono aggiunti freni anteriori Diatto - senza servofreno Perrot che sarà applicato dal telaio 30012 - motore, cambio e tutti gli accessori totalmente prelevati dal prototipo Diatto 8C trattenuti da Alfieri nel 1925, cilindrata ridotta a 1592 (60x66) ed altre modifiche: trasmissione e ponte di nuovo tipo; lamierino tra i due longheroni anteriori sostituito con altro più lungo per un migliore invito all'aria verso il convogliatore del radiatore; lamiera parasassi al di sotto del motore, cambio, trasmissione chiusa sul davanti con una spessa rete; ruote Rudge Withworth a canale e gomme 820x120. Velocità oltre 180 km/h. La numerazione del telaio è 30011 - dove il 300 indica la provenienza del telaio medesimo DIATTO e l'11, l'undicesimo dei motori precedentemente elaborati e/o costruiti da Alfieri Maserati per le auto da corsa alcuni dei quali montati poi su richiesta sia dalla Diatto a Torino che direttamente dai Maserati: DIATTO 4 cilindri: 20 S/2000; 20 H-S/6000; 23 S/2300; 26 S/2600; 30 S/3000; 35 SS/3500. DIATTO 8 cilindri: 40 B.T.S./4000; 40 B.T.F./4000; 40 M.M./4000; 20 SS M.B./2000; 8 CMASERATI: "TIPO 26" M.B./1500

1925-26 - Alla fine di giugno 1925 Alfieri Maserati consegna alla Diatto il secondo motore 8C costruito ma, con la mediazione di Coda, trattiene il prototipo a saldo per l'opera svolta negli ultimi tempi senza retribuzione, al pari dello stesso Coda; Finita questa collaborazione Alfieri ne cerca un'altra ma non riesce a trovarla. Conelli si offre di contattare Bugatti e per questo fa montare da Alfieri il motore a teste fisse biblocco da lui acquistato nel 1923 dalla Diatto su di un telaio tipo 20 sport modificato con l'assale tipo B.C.C. prelevato dalla sua Diatto-Bugatti del 1921. De Sterlich offre la carrozzeria che aveva commissionato a Schieppati per la Diatto 8C da lui prenotata che non verrà più prodotta e la vettura così assemblata, verniciata in azzurro chiaro viene mostrata da Conelli a Bugatti, in occasione di una sua visita a Milano, insieme alla rossa Diatto 8C di Alfieri. Ma l'accordo di collaborazione Bugatti-Maserati non si fa. De Sterlich rileva allora dalla Diatto una decina di telai tipo 30 - che saranno modificati in sport - e li fa consegnare ad Alfieri convincendolo, insieme ad altri estimatori, anche con varie elargizioni, a mettersi in proprio nella costruzione di auto da corsa. Il battesimo avviene nella primavera del 1926 suggellato da una bella fotografia di gruppo intorno alla vettura voluta da Conelli e sulla quale per la prima volta appare il "tridente" disegnato da Mario Maserati, l'unico dei fratelli non interessato alle automobili ma alla figurazione artistica.

From the Diatto – Bugatti 1500 to the Maserati Tipo 26: the birth of a legend

1921-22 – An agreement between Diatto and Bugatti to build to order a small number of racing cars with the EB 1500 (69x100) engine and Diatto Tipo 25 HP Sport chassis (wheelbase 2550, front and rear track 1400), modified with tubular BCC axle and stub axles with “inverted fork” and “riveted plate” (so-called by Coda) couplings, without front brakes: steering 26°, linkages and coupling bar adapted from the Tipo 25 HP; rear brakes actuated with linkages from the pedal shaft mounting axle or with lever also connected to a transmission brake; Rudge Whitworth Straight Side wheels and 820x120 tyres. Italian-French driver Franz Conelli asks for further modifications to his car: chassis lightened from 840 to 750 kg and removal of the mechanic’s sports seat (“baquet”); water radiator of the Tipo 25 HP, larger than that installed on sports cars by Coda, exhaust pipe at the height of the manifolds (4 in 2) and not low down as provided by the design, along with other changes. With this special “F”, Conelli participates in a number of races including the 1921 Susa-Moncenisio.

1922-23 Engineer Coda designs and builds an inline 8 cylinder engine with two Diatto Tipo 20 engine blocks (79.7x100) based on the Bugatti Avio 8C engine licensed to Diatto under his technical direction.

Coda contacts Alfieri Maserati to collaborate with Diatto and together they improve the engine: new heads without block gaskets, new carburettors (Zenith diameter 36) in place of the Feroldi aviation units modified by Coda and others, as well as a second fixed head engine, resulting in the assembly of two prototypes using 2 Tipo 20 series production chassis (wheelbase 3.10, front and rear track 1.40). Note that Coda was thinking of building a luxury car and a spider with this type of engine, as well as a race car.

The tests at Moncenisio, with a Spartan body, run by Coda, Maserati and De Sterlich, are very disappointing. De Sterlich replaces the 820x120 tyres with 820x135 tyres and modifies the rear leaf springs by ballasting the rear axle with four wheels (that are not meant as spare wheels) and, after changing the eight spark plugs, tries again along the same route, but the prototype catches fire and is put out by the local people.

1023-24 Coda and Maserati further develop the two engines and assemble two new prototypes with Diatto Tipo 20 Sport chassis (wheelbase 2650, front and rear track 1350), Rudge Whitworth straight side wheels and 820x120 tyres. The fixed head engine is equipped with two Zenith 36 diameter carburettors and a vane supercharger designed by Coda located in place of the magneto, so that the rotor is positioned at 90° with respect to the crankshaft, and the magneto is placed at the end of the second camshaft. The road tests are still problematic, although even the fixed head engine gives good results.

The two-block engine is finally abandoned and the fixed head engine is acquired by Conelli, the other used for parts. Coda and Maserati now build a single block inline 8 cylinder engine (7.9x100) single crankshaft with removable head and without block gasket. The fuel supply is of the aspirated type, first with two and then four Zenith 36 diameter carburettors, lubrication is of the dry-sump type, with oil radiator located in front of the

water radiator, with mobile vane pump (so-called by Coda) and scavenge tank under the dashboard, in front of the mechanic's seat. The tests are finally very satisfactory.

1925-26 – At the end of June 1925, Alfieri Maserati delivered the second 8C engine but, in agreement with Coda, kept the prototype as payment for his unpaid work (even Coda had gone unpaid for some time).

Alfieri attempted to find a new collaborative project, but without success. Conelli suggested contacting Bugatti himself and, for this reason asked Alfieri to install the double-block fixed head engine purchased from Diatto in 1923 to a modified type 20 sports chassis, with BCC axle taken from his 1921 Diatto-Bugatti.

De Sterlich offered him the body he had commissioned from Schieppati a Diatto 8C which, in the event, was never built, and this car, in light blue livery, was shown to Bugatti by Conelli during the former's visit to Milan, along with Alfieri's red Diatto 8C.

But no collaboration between Bugatti and Maserati was ever established. De Sterlich then bought ten type 30 chassis from Diatto for modification into sports chassis, and delivered them to Alfieri as part of his effort, along with other admirers who even financed the new company, to convince him to set up his own racing car company.

The new company was launched in 1926, as attested by a group photo around Conelli's car, on which the Trident symbol designed by Mario Maserati – the only brother not interested in cars but rather in painting – appears for the first time.

1926-27 Enthusiasm for the first Maserati is sky high and work starts immediately on the first car, to be called the Tipo 26.

Actually, this is a remake of Conelli's car, modified as follows: the Tipo 20 Sport chassis with BCC axle is equipped with Diatto front brakes (without the Perrot servobrake, which will be used from the 30012 onwards), with engine, gearbox and all accessories taken from the Diatto 8C prototype kept by Alfieri in 1925, and displacement reduced to 1592 cc. (60x66) and other modifications: new transmission and axle; metal sheet between the two front side members replaced with a longer one for enhanced air flow to the radiator; gravel guard metal sheet under the engine, gearbox and transmission closed at the front with a thick net; Rudge Whitworth treaded wheels with 820x120 tyres. Speed over 180 kph.

The chassis is numbered 30011 – 300 indicates the Diatto origin of the chassis and 11 the eleventh of the engines previously built by Alfieri Maserati for the race cars, some of which were then requested by Diatto in Turin and by Maserati themselves.

Diatto 4 cylinders: 20S/2000; 20H-S/6000; 23S/2300; 26S/2600; 30S/3000; 35SS/3500

Diatto 8 cylinders: 40 B.T.S./4000; 40 B.T.F./4000; 40 M.M../4000; 20SS M.B./2000; 8C MASERATI: "TIPO 26" M.B./1500

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1923 SUSA MONCENISIO
Alfieri ed Ernesto Maserati
su DIATTO - HISPANO SUIZA
quattro cilindri 6000 -
progetto CODA MASERATI.



1924 TORINO
STABILIMENTO DIATTO
Lotto cilindri 2000 DIATTO -
MASERATI fotografato il
giorno della sua
presentazione alla S.A.A.
DIATTO - progetto MASERATI



1924 TORINO
STABILIMENTO DIATTO
Alfieri Maserati e l'ing. Coda
si accingono a provare la
DIATTO - MASERATI quattro
cilindri 2000 che Ernesto
piloterà nella gara delle
Colline Pistoiesi, sua prima
corsa.

25 GIUGNO 1921

57

La XVI Corsa in salita Coppa della Consuma.

VISIONI DI GARA!

1. L'arrivo di un concorrente della categoria Turismo, 2. Damiano Regal Passo motociclistico e recordman della Consuma, ha debuttato come automobilista ed ha incontrato un nuovotriciovin-



cendo con la "Diatto", in sua categoria; 2. Maserati su "Itala", ha ottenuto un nuovo ambizioso trionfo; 4. Fra gli altri su "Alfa Romeo" che ha vinto la categoria turismo; 5. Damiano Regal in velocità in curva. (Fot. Locchi).

TAVOLINA 29 APRILE 1921

Nelle
COPPA AUTOMOBILISTICA
.. FIERA DI MILANO ..

LA NUOVA
DIATTO

Tipo 30

Gomme DUNLOP - Freni DIATTO PERRY
Carburante ZENITH - Magneto IUSCO

dimostra le sue doti di
velocità e poco consumo,
raggiungendo la maggiore velocità
fra tutti i concorrenti
(Km. 107,376 in 1 ora)
e compiendo Km. 102
con una sola latta di
benzina

CLASSIFICANDOSI

PRIMA
per la velocità

PRIMA
per la media velocità-consumo

Soc. An. Autocostruzioni DIATTO
- Strada della Venaria, 73 - TORINO

Page 22 The Australian Automobile Trade Journal August 1921

DIATTO

The New Two Liters. Type "20"

DESCRIPTION:

ENGINE—Four cylinders monobloc, detachable cylinder head four strokes, 75° cast iron, 160 mm. stroke, overhead valves.

CARBURETTOR—Multiple jets, hand and foot control, automatic forcing device.

IGNITION—High tension magnets with control on steering wheel.

LUBRICATION—Automatic forced feed by gear pump.

STARTING—Little electric magnet.

LIGHTING and change of accelerators by means of a dynamo.

CLUTCH—Single dry steel disc. Automatic forcing.

GEAR BOX—Driving four speed and reverse, fourth speed in direct drive, central change speed lever.

REAR AXLE—Framed steel casting connected to the gear box by a reaction tube and spherical bearing. Single joint central shaft and spiral bevel gear (optional).

"DIATTO" wheels have resolved the problem of vibration, shock and maximum speed by the creation of a very suitable self-balancing perfect, shock and practical.

The new "TWO LITERS DIATTO" allows the fitting of any "Maserati" type, speed or clutch in very suitable for town and country and produced by experience on several of the great speed and powerful, reliable of the engine.

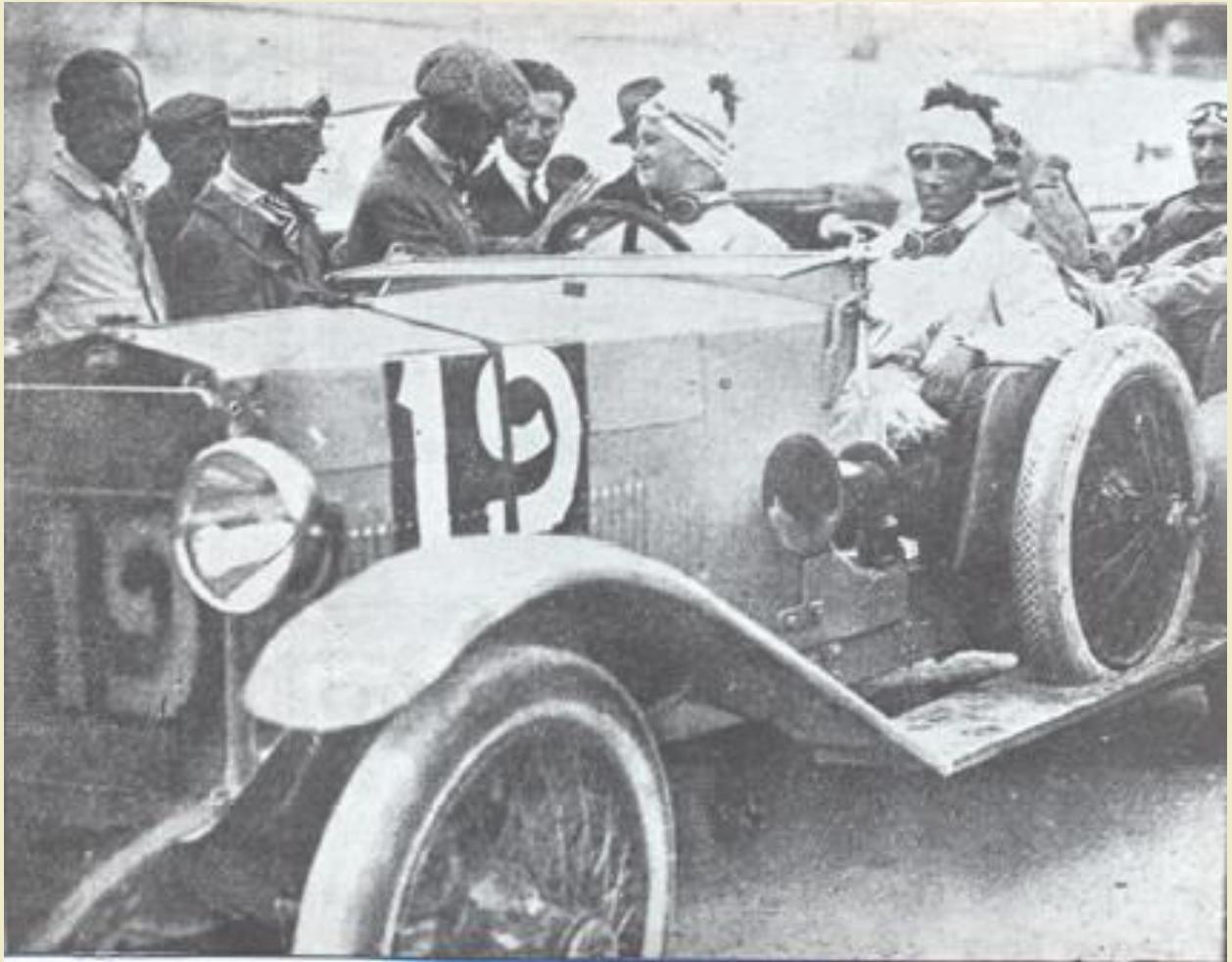
Cost, consumption, top speed are actually above those of a 2000 cc.

Ongarelli Agencies Pty. Ltd. 12 McKillop St., Melbourne

Photo: G. C. 1921

EN AUTO

SPORTS — TRAVEL — ACTUALITIES



Guido Meregalli, vincitore per la seconda volta della difficile gara gardesana, su *Diatto*.