For Your Bookshelf: Alfa Romeo T33/TT33 – The Remarkable Story of 115.72.002

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Reviewed by Kieron Fennelly.

Title: Alfa Romeo T33/TT33 – The Remarkable Story of 115.72.002

Author: Ian Wagstaff

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The tenth volume of Porter Press's much admired 'Exceptional Cars' series deals with another Italian sports racer, but for once this is not a Ferrari, but an Alfa Romeo. Following the established format, the book follows the development and history of perhaps Alfa's best-known post-war sports race car, the Tipo 33. The account concentrates on chassis number 115.72.002, a car with a remarkably long history. After three years as a works car, this Alfa was sold to a Greek team before beginning a career in historic competition in South Africa and Japan before finally returning to Europe.

Ian Wagstaff has researched the competition record of this T33 and his story makes compelling reading: after several years in development, in the absence of the 5 litre Porsches and Ferraris, banned after 1971, the 3 litre Alfa seemed destined to repeat something of the company's pre-war success. It was not to be: As the author shows, the Tipo 33 initially was not fast enough, but when, finally it was, it lacked reliability. After three disappointing seasons Alfa engaged former Porsche driver Willi Kauhsen to manage the team. With Kauhsen's organisation Alfa Romeo enjoyed a clean sweep in 1975, but in a sadly depleted championship. Particularly interesting is the next chapter of 115.72.002's life which offers a rare view of the motor racing scene in Greece and where the still remarkably original T33 was dominant in hill climb championships.

Ian Wagstaff is a seasoned motor racing historian and this is apparent in the depth of research that he has compiled, the text making frequent reference to contemporary race reports by Michael Cotton and comments from some of the Alfa Romeo driving cohort: Vic Elford for example describing that how after Porsche's withdrawal, Piëch advised him to go the Alfa Romeo rather than Ferrari, a bad mistake Elford reflected a year later. A nice

vignette of the period is the sight of Helmut Marko after yet another premature T33 retirement “seen wandering in the pitlane still wearing his Marlboro BRM overalls from the previous weekend’s GP”, so unimaginable in today’s motor racing that the author does not even need to comment.

Biographies of some of the main characters add breadth to this outstanding work as does the photographic gallery of today’s 115.72.002. The text is well supported by contemporary photography although for this reviewer it is a pity there are not more pitlane and ‘people’ shots.

VERDICT

A fine work on a racing effort which never achieved its potential and a useful contribution to the history of 1970s motorsport.