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9 JUNE 2009

## THE RONDE DU VENTOUX OPTIC 2000: A THUNDERING MEETING!

On 5, 6 and 7 June, the Mont Ventoux had a new meeting with its rich automobile history. Once again, engines revved on the slopes of the Provence Giant during the Ronde du Ventoux Optic 2000, retrospective of the famous hill climb born in 1902, and organised this time by Peter Auto and the ASAC Vauclusien. Nearly eighty classic cars, from prewar Bugattis to Porsche 911 RSRs, got together on Friday in the village of Bédoin, before starting the five climbs to the summit of Mont Chauve, driving back down through Malaucène.

As at Le Mans or Monaco, the Ventoux undoubtedly evokes one of the greatest cars races of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Invited all weekend to visit the Parc Fermé, the public enthusiastically welcomed the old but fine pieces of engineering come to pay tribute to the memory of this high place of automobile sport. The grid was a delight for experts with many exceptional cars. Amongst them, Hubert Fabri's Bugatti 59 King of Belgium was the centre of attention with its black livery, as was Christian Traber's Maserati WRE, the ex-Le Mans Ford GT40 belonging to the Mason Styrrons, without forgetting Brandon Wang's Ferrari 250 GTO. A few curiosities and rarities such as the oldest participant, a 3 wheeled Darmont of 1930 driven by Henri Doux and the formidable 1935 ERA R4A which opened the race at an incredible speed. Partner of the event, Ford France took advantage of the occasion to organise test drives of their new, impressive Focus RS – 305 hp of talent.

The event also welcomed French celebrities come to enjoy the route: impersonator Laurent Gerra accepted an invitation from Yves Guénin, Executive Manager of Optic 2000, to drive a Ford Mustang; whereas, Guy Marchand, living in the neighbourhood came to "do a climb", proving over the 16 kilometres between the St Estève bend and the Col des Tempêtes that the actor, singer had lost none of his talents as a driver.

In the Competition Category, Porsche 906s and 911 RSRs fought Ford Mustangs and GT40s for the lead of the classification. Once again, the Mont Ventoux wanting to remain in control, sent a violent hail storm to interrupt the battles during the second special stage on Saturday. Only 24 competitors were able to cross, with much courage, the well named Col des Tempêtes, covered by 5 centimetres of snow from the hail in a few instants and enveloped in very thick fog! Sunday, the sun took over and the competition was able to follow a normal course with two loops programmed in the morning. Finally, the fastest car this week-end was Romain Rocher's Porsche 906, a fitting reward for the car that won the Ventoux Hill Climb Ladies' Cup with Annie Soisbault in 1967. Just behind, came Stephan Meyers' Porsche 911 RSR and the Demachys' Ford Mustang. 5<sup>th</sup> time in the scratch, Armand Adriaans and his Mustang Shelby won the VHC classification of pre 1966 cars. As for the Index of Performance, Gareth Burnett imposed its stunning Talbot 105 (another ex-Le Mans) and in the Regularity section, Daniel Paulet & Marc Chantraine invest the highest podium step thanks to their Porsche 356.

Thanks to its partners, and particularly Optic 2000, to the experience of the ASAC Vauclusien team and of course the enthusiasm of the competitors, the Ronde du Ventoux Optic 2000 fulfilled its mission to give to the Mont Ventoux an event in keeping with its fabulous history. All the participants are ready for the next edition, in two years time.

