



Mercedes-Benz Classic

Press Information

25 March 2021

Outstanding successes for Mercedes at Nice Week in 1901

- **Premiere of the Mercedes 35 hp designed by Wilhelm Maybach**
- **Mercédès Jellinek gave the new car brand its name 120 years ago**
- **Race victories and records at Nice Week from 25 to 29 March 1901**
- **“We have entered the Mercédès era.”**

Stuttgart. No less than two milestones in the history of Mercedes-Benz were achieved by the important “Nice Week” racing event from 25 to 29 March 1901: 120 years ago, the era of the modern car began with the victory in Nice of the Mercedes 35 hp made by Daimler-Motoren-Gesellschaft and, at the same time, the Mercedes brand name was born. Emil Jellinek, at that time the most important dealer for Daimler-Motoren-Gesellschaft (DMG), named the high-performance car he commissioned after his favourite daughter Mercédès, who was born in 1889. In the years leading up to this, the motorsport enthusiast and businessman had already competed in a number of races under the pseudonym “Monsieur Mercédès”.

On 23 June 1902, DMG had applied to register the brand name Mercedes as a trademark, and on 26 September 1902 that brand name was registered and legally protected. In 1909, DMG also had the three-pointed Mercedes star registered with the Imperial Patent Office. The merger of DMG with Benz & Cie. in 1926 to form what was then Daimler-Benz AG resulted in the new Mercedes-Benz brand. Its tremendous global appeal since then was also reflected in the international brand report “Interbrand 2020”: Mercedes-Benz is the only German brand amongst the top ten “Best Global Brands” and the most valuable luxury automotive brand in the world.

The brand family of today’s Mercedes-Benz AG, as a globally recognised manufacturer of luxury vehicles, includes the car brands Mercedes-Benz, Mercedes-AMG, Mercedes-Maybach, Mercedes-EQ, G-Class and smart. This is supplemented by Mercedes me as the brand for digital services provided by Mercedes-Benz.

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* Further information on the official fuel consumption and the official, specific CO₂ emissions for new passenger cars can be found in the publication entitled “Leitfaden über den Kraftstoffverbrauch, die CO₂-Emissionen und den Stromverbrauch neuer Personenkraftwagen” [“Guidelines on the fuel consumption, CO₂ emissions and electricity consumption of new passenger cars”], available free of charge from all showrooms and from Deutsche Automobil Treuhand GmbH at www.dat.de

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Crucial successes of the Mercedes 35 hp at Nice Week 120 years ago

Nice Week included a whole series of races and was a major motorsport event.

- Nice-Salon-Nice endurance race over 392 kilometres on 25 March 1901: Wilhelm Werner won the event at an average speed of 58.1 km/h. This went down in history as the first ever racing victory by a Mercedes car.
- Nice-La Turbie hill climb on 29 March 1901. Wilhelm Werner won in the two-seater racing car class in the Mercedes 35 hp owned by Henri de Rothschild ("Dr Pascal") in a new record time at an average speed of 51.4 km/h ahead of Albert "Georges" Lemaître, also in a Mercedes 35 hp. The category of six-seater cars was won by driver Thorn at an average speed of 42.7 km/h, also in a Mercedes 35 hp.
- A further milestone success was in the record-breaking achievement by Claude Lorraine-Barrow in a Mercedes 35 hp, who set a new world record for one mile from a standing start, averaging 79.7 km/h on 28 March 1901 in a series of runs, which was also part of the five-day Nice Week event.

Luxurious automotive lifestyle

At the turn of the 20th century, Nice on the Côte d'Azur was an international centre of motoring culture. Especially in the winter months, the sophisticated upper class from all over Europe and also from overseas met here. Motorsport was one of the highlights of the luxury motoring lifestyle. The Nice-La Turbie hill climb had been staged since 1897. It is considered to be the first hill-climb race in the world to be officially held as a competition.

From 1899, the hill climb was the highlight of Nice Week. It was organised by the Automobile Club de Nice and the magazine "La France Automobile". Emil Jellinek, whose family spent the winter periods in Nice, entered a Daimler 12 hp racing car with a "Phoenix" engine in 1899. The car, driven by racing driver Wilhelm Bauer, won the Nice-Colomars-Tourettes-Magagnosc-Nice race over a distance of 85 kilometres at an average speed of 34.7 km/h. In the prestigious Nice-La Turbie hill climb, Arthur de Rothschild took second place in the category of four-seater cars at the wheel of a Daimler 12 hp "Phoenix" at an average speed of 41.1 km/h.

Jellinek insisted on even more powerful cars from DMG for Nice Week in the 1900 season. In this way, the ambitious businessman became an innovation driver of automotive technology, which was still in an early stage of development. DMG responded by producing the 23 hp "Phoenix" car. However, Emil Jellinek's involvement with two of these cars during Nice Week from 26 to 30 March

1900 came to a tragic end. The car driven by Hermann Braun overturned during the Nice–Draguignan–Nice endurance race – fortunately without any major consequences. During the Nice–La Turbie hill climb, however, experienced works driver Wilhelm Bauer had an accident in the Mercedes II just after the start and died a short time later as a result of the accident. Private entrant E. T. Stead won the tourist class in the Nice–Draguignan–Nice endurance race and the Nice–La Turbie over 296 kilometres in his own 23 hp “Phoenix” at an average speed of 48.4 km/h.

For DMG, it was an open question after these accidents as to whether the company should still participate in motorsport at all. Once again, it was Emil Jellinek who saved the day: instead of giving up, he urged the development of an innovative, safe and even more efficient car. Wilhelm Maybach, the company’s chief designer at the time, accepted the challenge and it was this that resulted in the Mercedes 35 hp, that is rightly regarded as being the first real modern motorcar. The first of these was completed at the Cannstatt plant on 22 November 1900, after which DMG test-drove it and improved it still further. On 22 December 1900, the company sent the car to Emil Jellinek in Nice. No less than seven of these super sports cars of their time, which were intended both for racing and for use as sporty private cars, were entered for the race week event.

The first modern car

The characteristic features of the Mercedes 35 hp were the long wheelbase, the light, powerful engine fitted low in the frame and the honeycomb radiator integrated organically into the front end, which was to become a hallmark of the brand. This car, which was highly innovative 120 years ago, marked the final departure from the horseless carriage style that was prevalent throughout the industry at the time. The innovations extended to the frame construction and the clutch technology. The sum total of the innovations – which were perfectly coordinated as a holistic system – made this vehicle the first modern motorcar.

Wilhelm Maybach’s great achievement demonstrated once again why he was given the honorary title of “roi des constructeurs” (king of the designers) in France, a country that had fully embraced motoring. The Mercedes 35 hp thoroughly impressed the experts during Nice Week 120 years ago. Paul Meyan, Secretary General of the Automobile Club of France, commented in a review of the five-day motorsport event: “We have entered the Mercedes era” (“Nous sommes entrés dans l’ère Mercedes”).

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Captions

21C0089_001

Nice Week, 25 to 29 March 1901. The Mercedes 35 hp entered by Baron de Rothschild at the finishing line of the “Nice-Salon-Nice” race on 25 March 1901. Wilhelm Werner won the race over a distance of 392 kilometres. (Photo signature in the Mercedes-Benz Classic archives: 12463)

21C0089_002

Mercedes-Simplex 40 hp from 1903, photographed by the harbour in Nice. Photo from Mercedes-Benz Classic Insight “The Mercedes Era” in April 2017. (Photo signature in the Mercedes-Benz Classic archives: D368751)

21C0089_003

Nice Week, 25 to 29 March 1901. Competition for the coupe Henri de Rothschild on 28 March 1901. Dr Richard Ritter von Stern at the wheel of a Mercedes 35 hp touring car took third place in the category of cars weighing over 400 kilograms with a load of more than two people. (Photo signature in the Mercedes-Benz Classic archives: R10387)

21C0089_004

Nice Week, 25 to 29 March 1901. Nice-La Turbie hill climb on 29 March 1901. Wilhelm Werner, who subsequently won the race, at the wheel of the Mercedes 35 hp owned by Baron Henri de Rothschild. Photo taken in La Turbie. (Photo signature in the Mercedes-Benz Classic archives: 71255)

21C0089_005

Mercedes-Simplex 40 hp from 1903 at the place in La Turbie where the photo of Wilhelm Werner in the Mercedes 35 hp was taken in 1901. Photo from Mercedes-Benz Classic Insight "The Mercedes Era" in April 2017. (Photo signature in the Mercedes-Benz Classic archives: D368813)

21C0089_006

Mercedes-Simplex cars from the early 1900s at the place in La Turbie where the photo of Wilhelm Werner in the Mercedes 35 hp was taken in 1901. Comparison of the historical photograph with the situation as it is today. Photo taken at the Mercedes-Benz Classic Insight "The Mercedes Era" in April 2017. (Photo signature in the Mercedes-Benz Classic archives: D369394)

21C0089_007

Nice Week, 25 to 29 March 1901. Nice-La Turbie hill climb on 29 March 1901. Several two-seater racing cars in La Turbie. The second car from the left is the Mercedes 35 hp of Albert "Georges" Lemaître (2nd place), to the right is the Mercedes 35 hp driven by the winner, Wilhelm Werner (starting number 5). (Photo signature in the Mercedes-Benz Classic archives: R10386)

21C0089_008

Mercedes-Simplex cars from the early 1900s on their way from Nice to La Turbie. Photo from Mercedes-Benz Classic Insight "The Mercedes Era" in April 2017. (Photo signature in the Mercedes-Benz Classic archives: D369388)

21C0089_009

Nice Week, 25 to 29 March 1901. Photo of Baron de Rothschild's Mercedes 35 hp, driven by Wilhelm Werner, on the Promenade des Anglais in Nice. Emil Jellinek (with sideburns) is standing on the right behind the vehicle inside the barriers. (Photo signature in the Mercedes-Benz Classic archives: 1972M283)

21C0089_010

Nice Week, 25 to 29 March 1901. Baron de Rothschild's Mercedes 35 hp, driven by Wilhelm Werner, during a race. Drawing by Hans Liska dated 1960. (Photo signature in the Mercedes-Benz Classic archives: 97777)

21C0089_011

Mercedes 35 hp from 1900, with a four-seater body. On 22 December 1900, Daimler-Motoren-Gesellschaft delivered the first car of this model to Emil Jellinek. (Photo signature in the Mercedes-Benz Classic archives: 2000M386)

21C0089_012

Mercedes 35 hp from 1901, with a two-seater body as a racing car. (Photo signature in the Mercedes-Benz Classic archives: 25074)

21C0089_013

High-performance engine of the Mercedes 35 hp from 1901. (Photo signature in the Mercedes-Benz Classic archives: 1989M1376)

21C0089_014

Mercédès Jellinek (16 September 1889 to 23 February 1929). Portrait photo at the age of eleven. (Photo signature in the Mercedes-Benz Classic archives: U84056)

21C0089_015

Mercédès Jellinek (16 September 1889 to 23 February 1929). Photographed on a Mercedes racing car, taken around 1906. (Photo signature in the Mercedes-Benz Classic archives: 2008DIG2541)

21C0089_016

Emil Jellinek (6 April 1853 to 21 January 1918). Photographed with a bicycle. (Photo signature in the Mercedes-Benz Classic archives: 50122)

21C0089_017

Emil Jellinek (6 April 1853 to 21 January 1918). Photographed around 1895 with his daughter Mercédès (16 September 1889 to 23 February 1929). (Photo signature in the Mercedes-Benz Classic archives: 2005DIG820)

21C0089_018

Emil Jellinek (6 April 1853 to 21 January 1918). Portrait photo in uniform. (Photo signature in the Mercedes-Benz Classic archives: Z2962)

21C0089_019

Wilhelm Maybach (9 February 1846 to 29 December 1929). Portrait photo. (Photo signature in the Mercedes-Benz Classic archives: 30898)