

## Una Nuova Sfida!: The 2012 Cuervo y Sobrinos Summer Marathon



Just 21 hundredths of a second stood between the top four competitors going into the final day of a brand-new rally for classic cars, the Summer Marathon presented by Swiss watch brand Cuervo y Sobrinos.

Staged between June 14 and 17 in the Italian Alps, this nuova sfida (new challenge) is the latest addition to a European calendar already bursting with “old-timer” events. Like the iconic Mille Miglia Storica held just three weeks prior, the Summer Marathon is a “regularity” or TSD (time-speed-distance) rally.

Three days of challenging routes through the gorgeous Lombardy region of the Alps—originating and ending in Bormio—gave participants (mostly Italian) the chance to stretch the legs of their pre-1971 classics over a 550 kilometers (341 miles). The first-time event drew a modest 50 entries, but the quality of competitors was first-rate, including the 2011 winners of the Mille Miglia Storica, Giordano Mozzi and Stefania Biacca.

“There were really some good, tough surprises in this rally,” said Mozzi who piloted the one and only Colli-bodied 1938 Lancia Astura MM, a car built for Lancia factory driver Luigi “Gigi” Villoresi to drive in the 1940 Mille Miglia.

“You know the main tracks like the roads to the Stevio Pass, but they found roads off that main route that you’ve never driven,” he continued. “They had timing areas on uphill and downhill slopes, in the middle of corners and immediately after corners. You don’t see where they are as you enter a corner, so it’s very difficult but very beautiful.”

Organized jointly by rally experts Scuderia Autostoriche 3T of Cremona and Cuervo y Sobrinos (longtime Mille Miglia supporter and sponsor of the defunct rally Tour de Espana), participants agreed that the Summer Marathon was at once challenging and breathtaking.

“This was my first rally and I’m absolutely hooked,” said American driver Skip Ernst. He and fellow American copilot Bernie Abello testified to the difficulty of scoring well on the rally’s 70 special stages or “tests” and the enjoyment of driving some of the best roads/passes the Alps have to offer including Gavia, Tonale, Bernina, Forcola, Foscagno and the famed Stelvio Pass (9,055 feet).

"It was unforgettable," said Abello. "Pushing the Giulia [1971 Alfa Romeo Giulia GT 1300] up the mountains over the Stelvio and Gavia Passes, the car started missing and blowing a lot of black smoke because it didn't have enough oxygen. We said, 'Are we gonna make it?' We did!"

After the final day's stages, Mozzi and Biacca won the debut Summer Marathon, narrowly beating Gianmario Fontanello and Annamaria Covelli in their 1952 Siata Motto Sport.

"It's a new challenge, but like the best of these rallies, it's battle down to the last centimeter," Mozzi said. "With just half a turn of a wheel mistake, you lose 15 hundredths of a second immediately. You must be perfect at all times."

Organizers are already at work planning the 2013 Summer Marathon, hoping to attract more international entries. For more information visit [www.summermarathon.it/en/](http://www.summermarathon.it/en/)

By: Jan Tegler on 9/21/2012