



Tazio Nuvolari, Racing Legend

When you think of race car drivers, who comes to mind? Jeff Gordon? Richard Petty? Michael Andretti? Michael Schumacher? How about *Tazio Nuvolari*? (TA-zee-o New-vo-LAR-ee) Never heard of him? Tazio Nuvolari is considered by many to be the finest race car driver that ever got behind the wheel of a car. He was truly a “legend in his own time.”

Tazio was born in 1892 near Mantua, Italy. He began racing Bianchi motorcycles when he was about 28. While he was the Italian motorcycle champion, he had a bad crash and broke both of his legs, but he still wanted to race. They put old-fashioned heavy plaster casts on both legs and told him he couldn't walk for at least a month. But Tazio would not listen. He got his mechanics to tie him onto his bike so that he couldn't put his feet on the ground. Then two mechanics stood, one on each side of him, during the start of the race and promised to catch him at the end. The legend of Tazio began when he won that race.

In 1924 Tazio bought a car called a *Bugatti* (Boo-GA-ti) and turned to car racing. For years, he raced particularly hard against his ex-partner and greatest rival, *Achille Varzi*, (A-KEEL VAR-zee), who had much more money, better equipment, more helpers, and much faster cars. In 1930 the two racers were both in a famous Italian race called the Mille Miglia (which means “one-thousand mile” race). Because the race is so long, they actually drive all through the night. Tazio knew that Varzi was much

faster and would win for sure. Luckily it was a full moon. Tazio turned off his headlights and raced his Alfa P2 through the winding mountain roads in the gray moonlit night. Varzi, seeing no one in his rear-view mirror, assumed that he was winning the race by a long way, so he slowed down. About a mile from the end of the race, Tazio laughed, flicked on his headlights, and powered right past the surprised Varzi to win the race. The legend continued!

Once Tazio was in Ireland to drive in a race, and they asked him how he liked the brakes on his MG. He replied that he didn't know. He hadn't used them during the race. (Remember that these were races over winding dirt roads in the mountains!!)

During practice for a race, Tazio had a serious accident and was sent to the hospital to recover. When no one was looking, he escaped from the hospital and took a taxi to the racetrack. He won again.

Tazio's unbelievable feats on the track never seemed to stop. One time when he was 53, he was racing a car and the steering wheel came off in his hand. Tazio continued to race holding the steering wheel in one hand and the steering column (the part that goes down under the dashboard) in the other.

When Tazio died in 1953, thousands of people attended his funeral and the racing community around the world mourned his death. It was said of Tazio Nuvolari, “A man like that won't be born again.” He made himself a legend.

By Mary Rose



Dear Parents

Who can help being fascinated by race-car drivers who zoom around tracks at 200 miles per hour for 500 miles! What many of us fail to realize is that car racing has been around for a very long time: from the first moment that more than one car sputtered to life, people have been trying to see which could go faster. This article is about a race-car driver from the 1920s who made marks in the sport that will probably never be eclipsed. I hope you enjoy reading about Tazio Nuvolari.



TIP OF THE WEEK

Separating Fact and Opinion
 Fact and opinion seem obvious to adults, but the line between the two can be easily blurred for students. Standardized tests frequently ask students to identify the author's opinion and back it up with examples from the story that show how the author felt.

- * A fact is something real that can be verified
- * An opinion is a personal idea about the value of something
- * Determine the author's opinion, not your own

The Questions



1. Use your own words (do not copy sentences from the text) to write two facts about Tazio Nuvolari:

1. _____
2. _____

2. Use your own words (do not copy sentences from the text) to write two of the author's opinions about Tazio Nuvolari:

1. _____
2. _____

3. What was the author's purpose in writing this piece? _____

We have completed this assignment together.

Child's Signature

Parent's Signature