

## 121 Years Later: The Paris - Amsterdam Rally

Text by Dirk de Groen (Team 20) and Timo Rietbergen (Classic Events)



The Paris – Amsterdam Rally, commemorated the first rally that crossed international borders in 1898. Organized by the Dutch company Classic Events, the 1,000 kilometers rally went from Chantilly (almost Paris) to Chateau St.Gerlach in Houthem near Maastricht (not quite Amsterdam). Participants had a choice, just as they had in 1898; to tour or to compete. Twelve of the forty registered teams, including us in our recently acquired and rebuilt 1934 BMW 315/1, registered in the Competition category, testing speed accuracy and navigational skills, and competitive it was!

On Wednesday April 24<sup>th</sup>, we departed from Chantilly on the first leg to the historic street track *Circuit de Reims-Gueux*. This track is no





longer in use but the grand stand and the pits are still standing. The old buildings are gradually being restored by *Les Amis du Circuit* (Friends of the Track), who are collecting money for the restoration through the organization of various events. Classic Events contributed to this effort by including the track as a lunch stop. Hundreds of local enthusiasts came to see this rolling museum of pre-war cars. By the time we were about to leave the track, the sky was getting dark and the winds had picked up. We closed the top just in time

before the downpour and never opened it again during the rally. That first day ended at *Chateau Fort de Sedan* in northern France. A hotel built in a medieval fortress where the cars were parked overnight in the old courtyard.

Day two took us on a beautiful route through the French Ardennes where we competed in two regularities in the morning, the last of which, *Loup de Loupy*, proved to be the most difficult one for everybody. We had to pass multiple times through the same small village while never going through the same of multiple check points in the same direction. The locals must have been wondering why everyone kept on circling around, like we were lost. Well, we were lost! After an apology from a participant to a resident, the comment was: "Pas de problème Monsieur, c'est magnifique cette spectacle!" (*No problem Sir, this is a beautiful show.*) The afternoon was not less challenging.



On day three, we drove a loop through Luxembourg, to the north along the Belgian side and to the south along the German side. A delicious lunch was enjoyed at Chateau d'Ursfelt. That was necessary because there were no less than four regularities. The top three finishers were formed on this day and competitors became increasingly fanatic. Also in the Touring class, which had to go through all passage controls, there was a fight not to incur any time penalties. Team Göttgens was the only one to maintain this up to the last day in their beautiful 1939 BMW 327/28 Sports-Coupe.

With two regularities to go on the last day towards Houthem, everyone thought that final ranking had been decided, but not so! No seconds but minutes were lost on that final day. There was no podium finish for us; we ended 4<sup>th</sup> overall and 1<sup>st</sup> in class, but more importantly we had great fun driving the 315/1 and spending time with our rally friends. It was a wonderful four days. Next year the rally will start again in (the vicinity of) Paris and take us to Nice on the French Riviera. We have already put our name down. Who else is game?

*For more information about Classic Events, visit [www.thetrial.nl](http://www.thetrial.nl)*

