

Although the Delta S4 used some styling cues from the series production Delta HF 4WD which was to follow, as this side-on study shows, it was technically an entirely different car.

cars, such as the Fiat 131 Abarth, had been so outstanding), in favour of new-style Groups N, A and B, which were due to come into force on 1 January 1982. The FIA's strategy was that Group B would be the flagship category of rallying, for which only two hundred cars would have to be produced to secure homologation. To meet these requirements, Lancia's first Group B machine was the elegant, mid-engined, rear-drive Rally 037 (homologated in 1982), followed by the fire-breathing, four-wheel-drive Delta S4 of 1985. Tragically, it was a Delta S4 crash in Corsica that killed its crew (Henri Toivonen and Sergio Cresto), and shattered the morale of the team, and brought about the immediate cancellation of Group B. This was a tragedy in so many ways, not only personal but corporate, too. That distinguished ex-Abarth design engineer Sergio Limone recalls that the S4's career, the developments envisaged, and the way to achieve them,

was already mapped out over a three- or even four-year period.

For 1987, therefore, Lancia would no longer be able to use the S4 (nor the more advanced, even more powerful, Group S evolution of it which Abarth was already developing), and immediately had to look around for a new Lancia road car which could speedily be turned into a Group A rally machine. Crucially, because of the regulations surrounding Group A, this must be a car of which 5000 identical units could be produced by the end of 1986 – less than eight months ahead!

Here, then, we come to the word 'inspiration.' The rally cars which I describe in such detail in this Rally Giants book were not inspired by dramatic 'blue sky thinking' several years before the first HF 4WD started the Monte Carlo rally of 1987, but by a simple need. Because rallying at world



Sergio Limone took this picture at the Fiat-Lancia test track at La Mandria, close to Turin, during 1987, when the first Integrale was being developed. TO 66487F had started life as Bruno Saby's car in the 1987 Monte Carlo Rally, but soon became the 'mule' for Integrale development. By this time Integrale front wheelarch shapes and front-end air intakes were being studied, but the rear end was still pure HF 4WD. All that would change, however ...

Interestingly, Lancia stated that it would be able to use 16in.wheels on the Integrale (not technically advisable on the original HF 4WD because of limitations in its wheel travel), and estimated using 15,000-20,000 competition Michelins throughout the season!

When the Group A (as opposed to the 'showroom') Integrale was shown in October 1987, the work done by Claudio Lombardi's team at Abarth became clear. Three major areas of improvement were highlighted: to the engine and (larger) turbocharger cooling installation; the fitment of

a smaller, but more ideally placed intercooler (by Behr, to the same dimensions as the production car's component – the same dimensions henceforth being compulsory due to new homologation regulations); and the wheelarches, which had been flared to allow larger wheels and tyres to be fitted for rallying. Air flow through the cooler, and in the engine bay, was much improved by a positive battery of extra cooling holes in the nose.

Once again, Lancia was modest with its power claims, for although Lombardi alleged 260bhp, it now seems that



First time out; the new Delta HF 4WD was homologated just days before the 1987 Monte Carlo Rally, but Miki Biasion swept to a comfortable victory in this car, with team-mate Juha Kankkunen – subjected to team orders – taking second place.

which must have been very encouraging for the Turin-based team. Interim? Maybe, but definitely effective, even so.

More than that, the factory team made this look so easy, so routine, and somehow so inevitable. There was, of course, the usual amount of Italian emotion, arm-waving and sheer vitality on show at some rushed service points, but Fiorio's team always gave the impression that everything was always foreseen, and that victory would inevitably follow.

In Monte Carlo, the sheer level of competence with

which a debut victory was achieved was staggering. Three brand new Martini-liveried cars – TO66483F, TO66487F and TO66488F – turned up. Miki Biasion, Juha Kankkunen and Bruno Saby did the honours and duly took first place (Biasion), second (Kankkunen), along with 19 fastest stage times out of the total of 25 stages.

At one point, on a long special stage which was clear of snow over the first few kilometres, Lancia demonstrated a typical piece of Italian brio and bravado. Starting the cars on

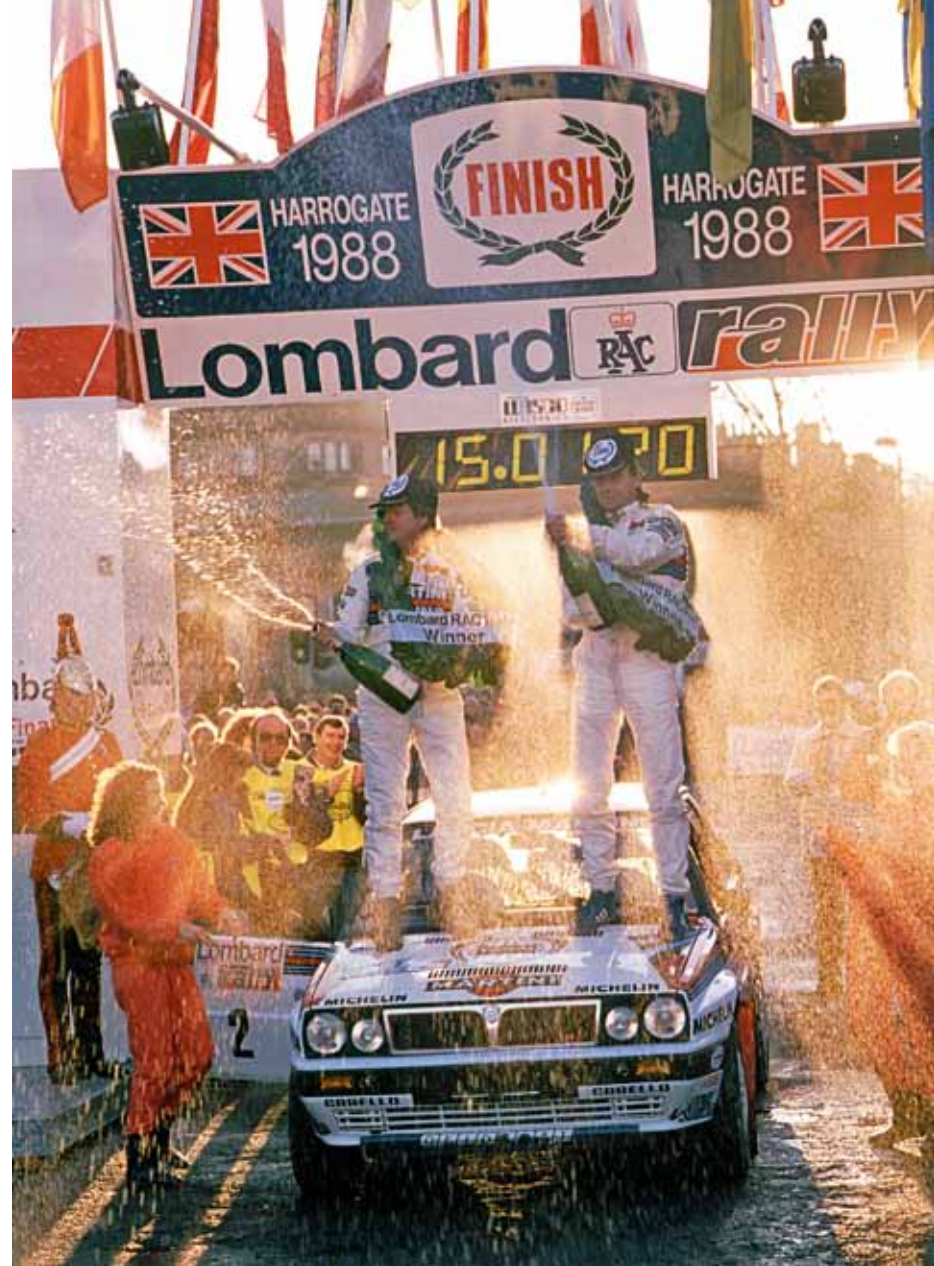
fastest cars, though Auriol's Sierra was fastest on several occasions, and looked impressively reliable. Saby's weekend was soon spoiled by a puncture (in fairness to the car, this had been caused when he went off the road briefly!) then, on the second day, Loubet's car had an eight minute delay when part of the car's gear linkage failed; it later suffered a detached turbocharger feed pipe.

This was not, it seemed, likely to be Lancia's weekend, so Auriol (who also put the Sierra briefly off the road) eased up, and eventually won by just three minutes, though the Integrales took second and third places.

Three brand new cars then appeared on the Acropolis Rally (Lancia did not seem to be at all short of money at this time!) for the A-Team – Alen, Biasion and Ericsson – to drive, these effectively being rough-road machines like the Safari vehicles. Because Lancia was now so experienced on rough events, and the opposition still quite weak (the Toyota Celica GT-Four had arrived, but was still too new to be effective), the result was surely never in doubt.

Although all the cars endured minor troubles, the latest Michelin tyres, complete with 'mousse' inserts which meant that drivers need not fear punctures, performed well, there was no battle between them as team chief Cesare Fiorio would not allow it! In the end, Biasion (who was already being 'groomed' for the World Drivers' Championship) won the event by 1min 43sec from Mikael Ericsson, with Alex Fiorio's Jolly Club Integrale in third place, and Markku Alen fourth.

The next two events tackled by the factory team were complete walkovers, as no other teams bothered to turn up. In the Olympus (USA) event, Miki Biasion's Martini car and



Markku Alen and Ilkka Kivimäki thoroughly enjoyed their victory celebrations after the 1988 RAC Rally. It was Alen's second RAC victory, which he relished adding to his CV ...



In 1993, the Delta Integrale was in the autumn of its career. This was Gustavo Trelles' Jolly Club car on the Rallye Catalunya event, where he finished sixth overall.

where Carlos Sainz had tens of thousands of supporters? The Jolly Club, short of money, with a fleet of worn out, or damaged cars, thought not and did not go. Sainz, in any case, had decided to duck out of this programme, making it clear that he would drive for Subaru in 1994.

This, then, brought a great car's top-line career to an unfortunate end, as in 1993 Lancia could only finish fourth in the Makes Championship.

What could succeed the Delta Integrale?

With no more material or financial support from Lancia, nor from a major oil company sponsor (Repsol moved on to Subaru with Carlos Sainz), the Jolly Club found itself in an impossible position and dropped out of the World Rally Championship scene. The decline was so steep that no Integrale finished higher than fourth (Alex Fiorio/Astra team