

CLASSIC DRIVER

Mercedes-Benz 540K Special Roadster wins “Best of Show” at Pebble Beach Concours d’Elegance

Lead
Owned by King Shah of Afghanistan and hidden in the Afghan embassy in Paris during World War II, there are few cars with a more adventurous story than this 1937 Mercedes-Benz 540K Special Roadster. Now it was awarded “Best of Show” at the Pebble Beach Concours d’Elegance 2023.



With special classes celebrating the 60th anniversary of Porsche and McLaren, this year’s Pebble Beach Concours d’Elegance felt younger than ever before when we watched the contenders drive down 17-Mile-Drive and Highway Number One on the Tour d’Elegance – we even spotted a roaring McLaren F1 GTR among the impeccable Delahayes and Talbot Lagos for which Pebble Beach is so famous for. Still, the jury did not think it was time for a generational change at the world’s most prestigious classic car concours when it presented this year’s top award to Jim Patterson from Louisville, Kentucky for his outstanding 1937 Mercedes-Benz 540K Special Roadster.





Back in the 1930s, the flamboyant Mercedes was owned by Mohammad Zahir Shah, the last king of Afghanistan. To keep it safe during World War II, the king hid the Roadster in the Afghanistan embassy in Paris. This is where the car stayed until 1948, when King Shaw gave it to his son-in-law, who drove it around London for a few years, before selling it. The Mercedes-Benz 540K Special Roadster is one of just three similar cars surviving in the world today. "This 540K balances strength with sweeping lines and style, and its history is unique," said Concours Chairman Sandra Button. "In talking with Jim about this car, I was impressed by the time and thought invested in this restoration. Every piece of this beautiful Mercedes-Benz was researched so carefully to honor its history."



In a tight race, the Shah's Mercedes-Benz 540K Special Roadster beat a 1930 Mercedes-Benz 710 SS Special Roadster from the Auriga Collection in Germany, a bright blue 1932 Alfa Romeo 8C 2300 Corto Figoni Cabriolet from a British private collection brought to California by Gregor Fisker and a 1939 Delahaye 165 Figoni et Falaschi Cabriolet from the Peter Mullin Automotive Museum Foundation in Oxnard, California. Prior to this win, the marques of Bugatti and Mercedes-Benz were tied with the most Best of Show wins at Pebble Beach. This win puts Mercedes-Benz in the lead, with 10 wins in total.



"In Kentucky, you know, we talk about winning the Derby. Well, there's such a thing as winning the Triple Crown," said Jim Patterson. "And so I've won this Concours twice before today. This is a Triple Crown for me."

Photos: Rémi Dargegen for Classic Driver © 2023

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