

= Henri Toivonen =

Henri Pauli Toivonen ( 25 August 1956 ? 2 May 1986 ) was a Finnish rally driver born in Jyväskylä , the home of Rally Finland . His father , Pauli , was the 1968 European Rally Champion for Porsche and his brother , Harri , became a professional circuit racer .

Toivonen 's first World Rally Championship victory came with a Talbot Sunbeam Lotus at the 1980 Lombard RAC Rally in Great Britain , just after his 24th birthday . He had the record of being the youngest driver ever to win a world rally until his countryman Jari @-@ Matti Latvala won the 2008 Swedish Rally at the age of 22 . After driving for Opel and Porsche , Toivonen was signed by Lancia . Despite nearly ending up paralysed at the Rally Costa Smeralda early in 1985 , he returned to rallying later that year . He won the last event of the season , the RAC Rally , as well as the 1986 season opener , the Monte Carlo Rally , which his father had won exactly 20 years earlier .

Toivonen , driving a Lancia Delta S4 , died in an accident on 2 May 1986 while leading the Tour de Corse rally in Corsica . His American co @-@ driver , Sergio Cresto , also died when the Lancia plunged down a ravine and exploded . The fatal accident had no close witnesses and the only remains of the car were the blackened spaceframe , making it impossible to determine the cause of the accident . Within hours of the accident , Jean @-@ Marie Balestre , then President of the FISA , had banned the powerful Group B rally cars from competing the following season , ending rallying 's popular supercar era .

Toivonen started his career in circuit racing and was also very competitive on tarmac . He raced successfully in two World Sportscar Championship events , achieved praise from Eddie Jordan , in whose Formula Three team Toivonen made a few guest appearances , and impressed in his Formula One test for March Grand Prix . The annual Race of Champions , originally organised in Toivonen 's memory , awards the winning individual driver the Henri Toivonen Memorial Trophy .

= = Early career = =

Toivonen had strong ties to rallying at an early age . He was born in Jyväskylä , the city which has hosted the Rally Finland since 1951 . His father , Pauli Toivonen , was a successful international rally driver who would go on to win the Monte Carlo , 1000 Lakes and Acropolis rallies and become the 1968 European Rally Champion . Henri Toivonen learned to drive when he was five years old , but despite his rallying connections , started competition in circuit racing . He began with karts and won the Finnish Cup in touring cars before switching to Formula Vee , winning one round of the Scandinavian Championship in his first year . Toivonen graduated to Formula Super Vee the following year and won a round of the European Championship , as well as becoming the 1977 Finnish Champion in the Formula Vee class . Due to his family 's concerns about the safety of circuit racing , he switched to rallying full @-@ time . Toivonen 's kart was purchased by the parents of a 6 @-@ year @-@ old Mika Häkkinen , who would later be a two @-@ time Formula One World Drivers ' Champion .

Due to Finnish legislation , which at that time limited new drivers to a top speed of 80 kilometres per hour ( 50 mph ) on open roads , Toivonen was unable to compete in rallying until he was 19 years old . With Antero Lindqvist as his co @-@ driver , he made his World Rally Championship debut at the 1975 1000 Lakes Rally ( now the Neste Oil Rally Finland ) , driving a privately entered Simca Rallye 2 . He retired from the rally during the 36th special stage due to a broken sump . While still focusing on his circuit racing career , he competed in his second world rally two years later and finished fifth in the 1977 1000 Lakes in a Chrysler Avenger .

Toivonen started his 1978 season at the Arctic Rally , the second round of both the European Rally Championship and World Rally Championship 's " FIA Cup for Drivers " , the predecessor to the official drivers ' world championship which was established in 1979 . He finished second , 3 : 41 minutes behind Ari Vatanen , and over seven minutes ahead of Markku Alén , who would go on to win the Cup . Toivonen went on to compete in two world championship rallies for Citroën . Although he did not finish either event , his driving attracted attention ; a private Porsche team offered Toivonen a car for the 1000 Lakes Rally , as did Chrysler for the Lombard RAC Rally . At his home

event , Toivonen had to retire due to an engine failure , but he finished ninth at the RAC Rally . That same year , Toivonen captured his first rally win at the Nordic Rally , an event in the Finnish Rally Championship . In the 1979 season , he gathered rallying experience by competing in 15 rallies in the British , Finnish and European championships . Toivonen also competed in two WRC events : the 1000 Lakes with a Fiat 131 Abarth and the RAC with a Ford Escort RS . He retired from both , but at his home event he had been matching the pace of the leaders before leaving the road . These performances led to a contract with the factory Talbot Competition team for the 1980 season .

= = Works career = =

= = = Talbot ( 1980 ? 81 ) = = =

Toivonen 's first season driving for a major car manufacturer 's ' works ' team was largely a trial year . He started the season by winning the Arctic Rally in January , but only drove his Talbot Sunbeam Lotus in four selected World Rally Championship events . His exuberant driving style often led to crashes , and his results were often not representative of his pace . In hopes of better results , the team partnered Toivonen with three different co @-@ drivers during the season : Antero Lindqvist , Paul White and Neil Wilson . At the 1000 Lakes Rally , Toivonen retired due to an accident during the 11th special stage . At the next rally in Sanremo with Lindqvist , Toivonen finished fifth . In late November , Toivonen , this time partnered by White , surprised both experts and spectators by winning the Lombard RAC Rally , over four minutes ahead of runner @-@ up Hannu Mikkola . Neither Toivonen nor Talbot were expected to be competitive in the rally . In an interview published in Autosport three days before the rally started , Toivonen himself had not expected to challenge for the win :

" I don 't think that I have done enough events to win the rally just by driving skill , for instance . If I win , it will be because I have a little bit of luck and some of the others have trouble . I mean , Hannu Mikkola knows the forests like the back of his hand so there is no use trying to drive to beat him . You have to wait for him to have trouble . Then you are in with a chance . "

At 24 years and 86 days , he remained the youngest driver to win a WRC event until his countryman Jari @-@ Matti Latvala won the 2008 Swedish Rally at the age of 22 . Latvala stated that " It 's a super feeling , it 's almost unbelievable . Henri ( Toivonen ) was one of my idols and secretly I 've always wanted to beat his record as the youngest winner . " Over 20 years after the 1980 RAC , Paul White ( nicknamed " Chalkie " by Toivonen ) commented that he still receives questions about the rally and Henri Toivonen . He noted that the Talbot team , run by Des O 'Dell and 15 full @-@ time personnel , was much smaller than other works teams and " had to draft in ' mercenary ' mechanics to help . " Toivonen 's results led to another year in the Talbot squad . In the 1981 season , he was signed up for a larger WRC programme and had a new co @-@ driver , Fred Gallagher , who would later partner Juha Kankkunen and Björn Waldegård in a Toyota Celica Twincam Turbo . Toivonen 's rear @-@ wheel drive Group 2 Sunbeam Lotus was now less competitive against the Group 4 cars and the all @-@ wheel @-@ drive Audi Quattro , but despite four retirements , the second places at Rally Portugal and Sanremo , as well as a fifth place at the Monte Carlo Rally , resulted in a seventh place overall in the drivers ' world championship . Together with more consistent team mate Guy Fréquelin , he brought Talbot a surprise manufacturers ' title . He also competed in the last round of the British Open Rally Championship , the Audi Sport International Rally , and won the event .

= = = Opel ( 1982 ? 83 ) = = =

For the 1982 season , Toivonen switched to the Rothmans @-@ sponsored Opel team , which was co @-@ managed by David Richards . Toivonen 's team mates were Ari Vatanen , who had won the previous year 's championship ( with Richards as his co @-@ driver ) , the 1980 and 1982 world champion Walter Röhrl and Jimmy McRae , the previous year 's British Rally Champion and father

of future rally star Colin McRae . In his Ascona 400 debut in Portugal , Toivonen surprised the event favourites by leading the rally before retiring five stages from the finish . He competed in only four more WRC events , but finished on the podium twice , at the Acropolis Rally and at the RAC Rally . In the European Rally Championship , he participated in four rallies , registering three podiums and one retirement . He also made a guest appearance in one round of the British Formula Three circuit racing championship , where he finished tenth driving a Ralt RT3 . In his Formula One test for March Grand Prix at the Silverstone Circuit , Toivonen was 1 @. @ 4 seconds faster than the team 's regular driver Raul Boesel .

Toivonen continued with Opel into the 1983 season , now driving the Manta 400 , which took advantage of the new Group B regulations . Although the Manta was a Group B car , it was underpowered against the likes of the Audi Quattro A2 and Lancia 037 , which were controlling the world rally scene at the time . Toivonen achieved a win at the Manx International Rally , a round of the British Open Rally Championship and the European Rally Championship , in the Isle of Man , at his first attempt . He also finished first at the Mille Pistes rally in France , but the organisers decided to ban the Group B cars halfway through the event . Toivonen and his co @- @ driver , Ian Grindrod , received only a consolation trophy . In the World Rally Championship , he retired in three rallies , finished sixth at the Monte Carlo Rally and fourth at the Rallye Sanremo . He also drove a Ferrari 308 GTB at the San Marino Rally , where he was co @- @ driven by Juha Piironen for the first time . The pair retired from the event , but Piironen would become his main co @- @ driver for the next two seasons , and later have a long and successful partnership with four @- @ time world champion Juha Kankkunen . In late October , Toivonen again competed on the circuits . This time he entered two sportscar races , driving a Porsche 956 for Richard Lloyd Racing in the World Sportscar Championship . Partnered with Derek Bell and Jonathan Palmer , he finished fourth at Imola and third in the next race at Mugello .

= = = Porsche ( 1984 ) = = =

After a score of ten starts , two podiums , three other top six finishes and five retirements , Toivonen left Opel Team Europe for the 1984 season . He was linked to the lead drive at the Peugeot Talbot Sport , Peugeot 's new factory World Rally Championship team , but eventually signed to drive a Porsche 911 SC RS for the Rothmans @- @ sponsored Porsche factory team in the European Rally Championship . The team was run by Prodrive , a new motorsport group set up by David Richards , Toivonen 's former boss at Opel . His European season with Porsche turned out to be a success . He started with two retirements , a third and a second place , but went on to win five rallies in a row and led the championship from Italian Lancia driver Carlo Capone . As Toivonen had a contract with Lancia for the World Rally Championship , and Lancia boss Cesare Fiorio wanted Capone to win the European title , it was suggested that Fiorio might enter Toivonen in WRC events to keep him away from important ERC rounds . However , Toivonen 's title campaign ended in a back injury and a resulting enforced rest that was expected to take up to two months . He missed several events and finished second in the championship behind Capone .

Toivonen 's WRC contract with Lancia Martini consisted of five events . Fiorio stated that the team needed another top driver as " Audi will have four top drivers next year so it would be very difficult competing with only two . " Toivonen had his Lancia 037 debut in Portugal with very limited testing experience : " It has been snowing in Italy every time I have been to try this car , so I don 't know its limits . " However , similarly to his Opel Ascona 400 debut at the same event two years ago , Toivonen immediately took the lead and set several fastest stage times before retiring . This time the retirement was not caused by a broken clutch , but a mistake and a crash by Toivonen . After a retirement also in Greece , he finished third in his home event , the 1000 Lakes Rally . These three remained Toivonen 's only WRC events of the season as his back injury forced him to miss the Sanremo and RAC rallies . Before Sanremo , Markku Alén re @- @ signed with Lancia and Fiorio stated he wanted to sign Toivonen with a similar two @- @ year contract , depending on the condition of his back and his contractual situation with Rothmans Porsche , who had claimed Toivonen had already re @- @ signed with them . Toivonen chose to become a full @- @ fledged

Lancia driver for the 1985 season .

== Lancia ( 1985 ? 86 ) ==

The 1985 season started badly when Toivonen crashed his Lancia 037 into a brick wall at the Rally Costa Smeralda , in the European Championship , seriously injuring his back and breaking three vertebrae in his neck . At the beginning of May , Lancia drivers Toivonen and Alén lost a friend and team @-@ mate , when Italian driver Attilio Bettega crashed fatally during the fourth special stage at the Tour de Corse . Toivonen made his comeback from his injuries at the 1000 Lakes Rally in August and finished fourth . He finished third at the next rally in Sanremo , his final event with the car . The 037 did not suit Toivonen 's driving style and had fallen well behind Audi and Peugeot in terms of performance , as it was rear @-@ wheel drive and had only 325 horsepower ( 242 kW ) compared to the 440 of Peugeot and 500 of Audi . It was replaced by the Lancia Delta S4 for the final event of the season : the RAC Rally . The Delta S4 had all @-@ wheel drive and was both supercharged and turbocharged , the former increasing power in the middle of the engine 's speed range and the latter boosting power at higher engine speeds . The car could reportedly accelerate from 0 to 60 miles per hour ( 97 km / h ) in 2 @.@ 3 seconds , on a gravel road . The Delta S4 turned out to be a success . Toivonen won the rally and Alén finished second only 56 seconds behind . Although Toivonen competed in only four world rallies in 1985 , his results placed him career @-@ best sixth overall in the championship .

The 1986 season started with a dominant win for Toivonen at the Monte Carlo Rally with new co @-@ driver Sergio Cresto . Fellow " Flying Finns " Timo Salonen and Hannu Mikkola finished second and third . Toivonen 's father , Pauli Toivonen , had won the event 20 years earlier after ten cars , including the first four to cross the finishing line , were disqualified due to having non @-@ standard headlights . The disqualification had caused an uproar and Prince Rainier of Monaco refused to attend the prize @-@ giving ceremony . Henri Toivonen 's victory caused his father to comment " now the name of Toivonen has been cleared " . The Monte Carlo win made Toivonen the favourite for the title . However , at the Swedish Rally he retired from the lead due to an engine failure . At the next rally in Portugal , Joaquim Santos lost control of his Ford RS200 on a special stage and plunged into the crowd . The accident killed three spectators and injured more than 30 . Toivonen along with all the other factory team drivers decided to withdraw from the event , but Lancia disapproved of the retirement . Toivonen stated that " the Lancia team will not accept anything but a win . " During the Portuguese rally , Toivonen is often reported to have tested his Delta S4 at the Estoril circuit and to have set a fastest lap time that would have qualified him in sixth position at the 1986 Portuguese Grand Prix . MTV3 and ESPN , citing Kankkunen and Fiorio , respectively , looked into the claim a few decades later and came to a skeptical conclusion . Red Bull explored the story further by interviewing former Lancia manager Ninni Russo , whose connections stated that Toivonen had made a time on the full circuit that " was in the first ten of the F1 cars from their test at Estoril two or three weeks before . " Despite the setbacks , Toivonen remained the title favourite with no driver seeming able to match his pace .

== Death ==

The 1986 Tour de Corse , a world rally around the island of Corsica , began on Thursday , 1 May . Toivonen had a sore throat and was suffering from the flu , but he insisted on driving after having lost his championship lead in the last two rallies . According to several sources , he was also taking medicine to treat fever . Despite his ill health , he was taking stage win after stage win and leading the rally by a large margin . After the first leg , Toivonen commented :

" This rally is insane , even though everything is going well at the moment . If there is trouble , I 'm as good as dead . "

Toivonen was complaining about the car being too powerful for a rally like the Tour de Corse . He found it very hard to keep the car balanced on the road and admitted it was very exhausting . In a short interview before he steered his Lancia into the 18th stage , Toivonen made a comment which

would remain his last words in public :

" Today , we have driven the equivalent of a full Jyskälä ( Finnish Rally ) . It 's hard to keep up with the speed . "

During the second leg , on Friday , 2 May , at the seventh kilometre of the 18th stage , Corte ? Taverna , Toivonen 's Lancia went off the side of the road at a tight left corner with no guardrail . The car plunged down a ravine and landed on its roof . The aluminium fuel tank underneath the driver 's seat was ruptured by the trees and exploded . The fuel tank was not protected by a skid plate , an item used mainly on gravel rallies , which was not fitted for the all @-@ asphalt Tour de Corse . The explosion happened within seconds of the crash , and Toivonen and his co @-@ driver , Sergio Cresto would not have time to get out had they still been alive . The fire caused by the explosion was so intense that the Delta S4 , built of fast @-@ burning kevlar @-@ reinforced plastic composite , was unidentifiable as a car afterwards . Both Toivonen and Cresto died in their seats . Toivonen left behind wife Erja ( married in 1982 ) and two young children , son Markus and daughter Arla , while Cresto was single with no children .

Toivonen 's accident remains a mystery because it had no close witnesses . Although it was caught on tape by a spectator further down the stage , it proved to be impossible to determine the cause of the crash from the footage . No race marshalls were close to the scene to notice the black smoke and no @-@ one at the race finish knew about the accident . Toivonen 's team only started to fear something might have happened after he failed to arrive from the stage on schedule . The next rally crew through the stage then mentioned they had seen some black smoke . By the time the emergency vehicles arrived on the accident scene , they could only put down the flames , which had been fanned by breezes . Lancia engineers and technicians could not determine the cause of the accident because the remains of the car were so charred .

Walter Röhrl later confirmed that Toivonen was taking medicine for his flu . In a later interview with Motorsport News , fellow driver Malcolm Wilson claimed that since the neck injuries sustained in his 1985 Costa Smeralda crash , Toivonen had suffered from random blackouts but did not tell his team because he did not want to lose his place at Lancia . At least one person who attended the aftermath of the accident reported that there were no skid marks on the tarmac , fuelling speculation that Toivonen could have suddenly lost consciousness at the wheel , but the cause of the accident is still unknown .

= = = Aftermath = = =

Within hours of Toivonen 's accident , Jean @-@ Marie Balestre and the FISA decided to ban Group B cars from competing in the 1987 season . The planned Group S was also cancelled and manufacturers were stuck with cars they could not race . Audi and Ford withdrew from Group B racing immediately , but other teams competed until the end of the season . The Tour de Corse continued the next day and Bruno Saby won with his Peugeot 205 Turbo 16 E2 . Prior to Santos ' and Toivonen 's crashes , many commentators and drivers had warned of accidents resulting from drivers simply being unable to control their powerful cars . FISA was criticised for recognising the problem too late . A FISA investigation later proved that drivers ' reactions were too slow to keep up with the speed of the Group B cars , and drivers ' eyes could not adjust their focus between the fast corners , resulting in tunnel vision . However , due to the high speed of the cars , rallying was more popular among spectators than ever . FISA had to face criticism also for overreacting to Toivonen 's accident . John Davenport , author and former rally co @-@ driver , stated in 2004 that " Group B could have been tamed . They were only unsafe in so much as the fuel system , which caused Toivonen 's death , and the crowd control needed changing ? it wasn 't the actual cars . " Group B cars have been described as " too fast to race . "

= = Legacy = =

Toivonen was known as a competitive driver both on gravel and tarmac surfaces , and he found it difficult to choose between circuit racing and rallying . After becoming a rally driver , he still

competed in some circuit racing events , successfully in two World Sportscar Championship events and also in a few races for Eddie Jordan 's British Formula Three Championship team . Jordan called Toivonen 's performances " incredible " and compared him to Ayrton Senna . After Toivonen 's death , Jordan weighed in on his chances in Formula One :

" I don 't know if he would have become a champion in Formula One . It always takes a lot of luck , and now [ after the accident ] one can doubt if he would have been granted that . But he would have won Grands Prix ? of that I 'm absolutely sure . "

During his World Rally Championship career , Toivonen competed in 40 world rallies , gathering three wins , nine podium places , 185 stage wins and retiring 22 times . With only wins and retirements in the last five of his rallies , he was at the peak of his career in the Lancia Delta S4 , after finally finding a car that was both competitive and suitable for his driving style . However , Toivonen admitted having problems with the car : " I may have won the RAC Rally with Lancia , but I just did not know how to drive it . It seemed to have a mind of its own . " Lancia team boss Cesare Fiorio later claimed that Toivonen was the only driver who could really control the Delta S4 .

In a Henri Toivonen obituary , titled Rebel With a Cause , published in Motor five days after Toivonen 's fatal accident , rally author Martin Holmes named him a " rebel driver " , and proof that young drivers can be successful in rallying , a sport which had previously been dominated by older , more experienced drivers . However , Toivonen could not achieve the necessary level of consistency to avoid a number of high speed accidents . Prior to the introduction of the Delta S4 , he was known for his ability to make up large amounts of time in single stages . This led to a number of stage wins but also to several bad accidents resulting from driving mistakes . Toivonen 's career almost ended in early 1985 , when he was nearly paralysed in the Rally Costa Smeralda accident ? 1985 would have been his first full WRC season , excluding the endurance events Safari Rally and Rallye Côte d 'Ivoire for which he was never entered in his career . The World Rally Archive 's Hall of Fame now names him an " icon for the one of the most controversial periods of rallying . "

Toivonen was buried in Espoo , where his family moved from Jyväskylä when Toivonen was still very young . In Corsica , a marble slab dedicated to him and Sergio Cresto was placed at the curve where Toivonen drove out . The memorial place always has an unopened bottle of Martini , which is a reference to Toivonen 's Martini @-@ sponsored Lancia factory team . A local resident puts new flowers by the slab every day . In July , the Rally Marca Trevigiana in Italy was titled " Memorial Henri Toivonen " in honour of Toivonen . The rally was stopped after a fatal accident on the fourth stage . In 1988 , former rally driver and arguably the most successful female race car driver in history , Michèle Mouton , organised the first Race of Champions to commemorate Toivonen 's death . The Race of Champions was originally restricted to rally drivers , but became even more popular with the introduction of Formula One and NASCAR stars . The Henri Toivonen Memorial Trophy is still awarded to the winner of the individual event every year .

Another trophy bearing Toivonen 's name was the Henri Toivonen Grand Attack Trophy , which was awarded by Peugeot 's Rally Challenge , organised by Des O 'Dell , " to the driver who most embodied the spirit shown by the young Finn . " In 2006 , Toivonen was honoured at the Neste Oil Rally Finland . An exhibition in memory of him was opened on 17 August in the Rally HQ Jyväskylä Paviljonki . The interviewing event was attended by his former team mate Markku Alén , former co @-@ driver Juha Piironen , current Ford factory team boss Malcolm Wilson and his brother Harri Toivonen . Harri Toivonen quit his racing career in 2002 , ending the 40 @-@ year racing history of the Toivonen family .

= = Complete WRC results = =