



A TRUNCATED TALE OF THE TRUNCATED TAIL

To understand the Corvette Codatronca, you have to understand the original *codatronca* concept, which in turn means understanding the Alfa Romeo Giulietta—the car that was Italy's equivalent of the '55 Chevy.

Like the groundbreaking Chevrolet, the Giulietta debuted in '54 and was the first truly modern car made in its country. Both were light, efficiently built coupes, sedans, and convertibles that mixed humble-car pricing with premium-car performance, and both almost instantly dominated its country's racetracks.

A half-decade later, when journeyman stylist Ercole Spada came to work for bodymaker Carrozzeria Zagato, Giuliettas were at last losing their competitive edge, a situation that set up a big business in developing faster variants: Suddenly, both Alfa and private owners were desperate for a sleeker Giulietta body. Bertone created a long, tapering, but ultimately overweight coupe called the Sprint Speciale—"SS" for short. Zagato instead chose a tiny, super-light short-wheelbase coupe called the Sprint Zagato, or "SZ." Blunter and stubbier than the swoopy SS, the SZ was also a lot faster; enough

so to beat big-bore Ferraris and Corvettes on short tracks despite having only a tiny 1.3-liter, four-banger twincam.

When Spada arrived at Zagato, he asked himself whether SS-style aerodynamics and SZ-style weight might not be combined into one single body—a design equally competent for short sprints and high-speed endurance events. Basic math showed the need to lengthen the SZ body for added top speed; the question was how to do that without extra weight.

Among other cars, Spada studied a design by Frank Costin on a Maserati 5000 Sport run by Moss at Le Mans '57. Downsizing Costin's basic ideas to the scale of a Giulietta, Spada was soon testing his plan by screwing a light wire frame hastily skinned in aluminum right onto a stock Giulietta, extending the nose and tail. Carrozzeria scion Elio Zagato took the wheel and Spada slid into the passenger's seat, working the stopwatch over a flying kilometer on the public Milan-Bergamo highway. After

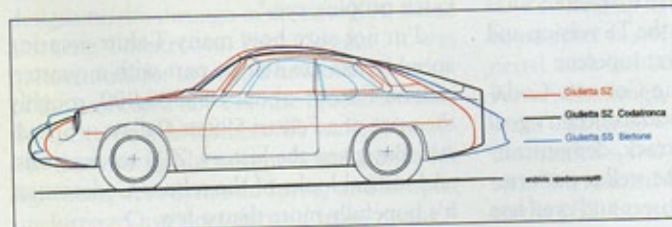
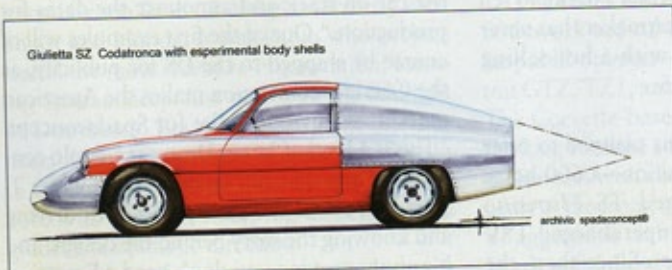
Left: Thin panels over tubing created modified SZ test car; period custom bodies are contrasted at bottom.

Right: Alfa wanted its *tubolare* racecar as a hardtop roadster; testing showed *codatronca*'s superiority.

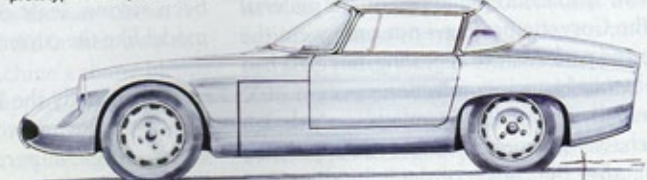
Clockwise from top: First "production" Codatronca Alfa; the TZ1 successor; Spada and TZ2, the ultimate evolution of the *codatronca* body—until now.

the first tests Spada significantly lengthened and reshaped the rear, guided by Wunibald Kamm's prewar finding that cutting a long, tapering tail off midway can save weight without greatly altering drag. The new tail shaved some 16 seconds off the car's previous best flying kilometer, raising the 1.3-liter Alfa's top speed to an amazing 135+ mph. (At about the same time in America, Pete Brock was building on Kamm's thinking with the same shocking success in the Cobra Daytona Coupe.) As Spada and Zagato developed the new body-style, the shape took on several unique details and a new designation—*codatronca*, meaning "truncated tail."

By the time Alfa was ready for its next batch of *codatronca*-based racers, the 1.3-liter Giulietta had been superseded by the 1.6-liter Giulia, making the resulting Alfa Romeo TZ (for *Tubolare Zagato*, referring to its internal tube frame) even faster. The second-gen TZ2 took the *codatronca* styling even further, almost to the level of a full breadvan.—JG



prototype TZ Spider version 1962



aerodynamic body shells on Spider

