

**PRESS KIT**  
24 HOURS OF LE MANS 2018

**THE LEGEND**

- The 24 Hours of Le Mans milestones
- The drivers who made Le Mans a legend
- Le Mans: where legends are made

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**THE LEGEND – A BEAUTIFUL STORY**

**The 24 Hours of Le Mans milestones**

The Le Mans 24-hour race was created with the aim of testing the quality of production cars and their equipment in race conditions. Over its 93-year long history, the well-known endurance test has more than fulfilled that promise, while writing some of the most glorious pages in motoring history.

**1923 - A legend is born**

The first Le Mans 24 Hours was a relatively low-key affair. The media were more interested in speed and racing cars and paid little attention to this new event where passenger cars were pitted against one another in an endurance race. The start was given at 16:00 and the 33 competitors set off around the 17.26-km Le Mans circuit. The track was actually more like a mud bath due to the atrocious weather conditions. The next day, the weather improved so the drivers were able to pick up some speed and even broke several international road records. The Chenard & Walcker driven by André Lagache and René Léonard beat the 24-hour distance record as well as the record for the time taken to cover 2,000 km. They also clinched victory at this first 24 Hours of Le Mans. Only three competitors were forced to retire – the lowest proportion in the race's history!

**1955 - The terrible accident**

The 23<sup>rd</sup> running of the race was set to go down in history. The world endurance championship, founded in 1953, was starting to interest the big carmakers. Alongside regulars Jaguar and Ferrari, that year's race saw the arrival of Mercedes with a car derived from its Formula One racers and a legendary duo: Moss and Fangio. The race got off to a flying start, with Castellotti's Ferrari keeping Hawthorn's #6 Jaguar at arm's length. Behind, Fangio really had to push his Mercedes hard to make up for a poor start. As he was coming in for his first pit stop, he made an unexpected manoeuvre cutting up Macklin's Austin Healey, just after overtaking him. Macklin hit the brakes and swerved to avoid him, but Levegh's Mercedes appeared from behind, slammed into the Austin Healey and flew into the air. According to official sources, the accident caused 82 deaths and many more injuries.



### 1967 - The race of the century



The grandstands were absolutely packed: more than 300,000 people had come to watch the ongoing battle between Ferrari and Ford reach its peak in June 1967. McLaren in the Ford Mk IV bagged pole, ahead of Hill's Chaparral and its oversized rear wing that could be tilted using a pedal inside the car. The race would exceed all expectations for those there to see Ford and Ferrari. The Mark IVs held their own against the P4s, with Gurney and Foyt clinching victory at the end of the 24 hours, having covered more than 5,000 km for the first time in the race's history. Another record was broken: Andretti's Ford was clocked at 343 kph and beat the lap record with an average speed of 238 kph.



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### 1970 - First win for Porsche

1970 was a milestone year for Le Mans 24 Hours: firstly, on the sporting front with the battle between Porsche and Ferrari, and also in terms of publicity with the filming of Steve McQueen's *Le Mans* during the race. The clash between Porsche and Ferrari was soon cut short, despite the impressive number of cars fielded: seven 917s and eleven 512 Ss! Floored by technical issues and collisions, the Scuderia lost four of its fastest cars, leaving the way clear for the Porsches, which went on to take overall victory, group and class victories, topping the indexes after starting from pole and beating the lap record! Elsewhere, the presence of Steve McQueen during shooting of the race scenes for the film *Le Mans* caused quite a stir. Legend has it that the American actor secretly drove a night-time stint even though his insurers had forbidden it.

### 1971 - The rolling start

In the 1920s, cars at the Le Mans 24 Hours were fitted with a removable soft-top. To check that it was secure and could be fitted quickly, the regulations required drivers to fit it at the start of the race and keep it there for the first 20 laps. To prevent drivers from starting to fit the soft-top while they were waiting for the flag to go down, the ACO introduced what is now known as the Le Mans-style run-and-jump start in 1925. However, this was deemed dangerous because many drivers chose not to fasten their harnesses to gain valuable seconds at the start. In protest, Jacky Ickx walked slowly to his car at the 1969 race. He set off from the back of the field but still clinched victory in his GT40! The Le Mans start was modified in 1970: instead of running to their cars, the drivers were already strapped in as they waited for the race to begin. In 1971, there was another change: this time a starting grid was formed along the pit wall, ready for a rolling start, marking a new era in the history of the Le Mans 24 Hours.

### 1991 - Mazda's triumph

Between the improvement works done at the circuit and hesitations over the FIA regulations, the 1991 race looked somewhat different to previous runnings of the Le Mans 24 Hours. The Sauber-Mercedes were expected to dominate although many spectators had their eye on the Peugeot 905's debut. The race lived up to expectations: the Sauber-Mercedes ruled the roost and the #1 car looked well on its way to victory until disaster struck with just three hours to go to the finish. At 12:54, the car came into the pits with a mechanical problem and retired shortly afterwards. The Mazda driven by Gachot/Herbert/Weidler had put in a reliable performance with its rotary engine. This remains the only victory for a Japanese constructor at Le Mans to this day.



### 1999 - The Mercedes take flight

Early on Thursday evening, Mark Webber was notching up laps at the wheel of the #4 Mercedes CLR during qualifying. At the end of the Mulsanne Straight, one of the fastest sections of the circuit, his Mercedes took off, flying into the air at more than 300 kph, coming to land by the crash barrier. The car was inspected and repaired, then authorised to race. However, during the first warm-up lap, as it was approaching Mulsanne, the #4 CLR took off again, spun in the air and landed on its roof. Webber went off to hospital for a second time but fortunately escaped with minor injuries. They always say that these things come in threes and, five hours into the race, it was the #5 CLR's turn to take flight. It made a series of impressive loops then crashed into the trees several metres from the track. Miraculously, the driver came out unscathed, but Mercedes made a quiet exit from the race, its ambitions struck down by faulty aerodynamics.

### 2009 - Peugeot's comeback

Audi had been collecting the trophies since 2000, with eight consecutive wins. The manufacturer was back to defend its title in 2009, but this time, the Peugeot 908s were looking to shake things up. Right from qualifying, it was clear they had strong potential. The Lion brand had returned to the race in 2007 and now seemed to have gained the necessary experience. The cars performed well, making the most of Audi's recurrent issues to demonstrate their own rock-solid reliability. The 908s ran a perfect race, placing two cars on the top two steps of the podium. The winning 905s from 1992 and 1993 had finally found a successor.

### 2012 - First win for a hybrid

The Le Mans 24 Hours is all about innovation and the regulations permit manufacturers to use hybrid technology to reduce fuel consumption. However, Peugeot's money issues meant they were unable to field a car that year, leaving Audi and Toyota to battle it out for victory. The German constructor combined a V6 diesel engine powering the rear wheels with an electric engine driving the front wheels. Its Japanese rival opted for a V8 petrol engine with two electric engines as back-up. At the end of a race where performance and reliability were the watchwords, three R18s swept the podium with two hybrids taking the first two places.



### 2017 - Porsche's 19<sup>th</sup> win

It was to be Toyota's turn. Never had the Japanese factory team been in such a strong position to triumph. The TS050 Hybrids dominated the world endurance championship and the manufacturer decided to field not two, but three cars to fend off the Porsche attack. On paper, they were firm favourites. But the 24 Hours of Le Mans is no ordinary race and has seen many an upset, including a last-minute catastrophe for Toyota in 2016. True to form, the #7 and #8 Toyotas ruled the roost in the early stages, but the Sarthois night-time did them no favours. The #8 fell foul of a mechanical problem and lost precious time in the garage, dropping 50 places. In the dead of night, the #7, which was out in front, succumbed to a gearbox fault and retired. Then the #9 had a scuffle with an opponent and was out too. It was not all plain sailing for Porsche either. The #1, having taken over the lead, suffered damage and was forced to retire. In the end, the Porsche #2 in the hands of Bernhard/Bamber/Hartley won the 85<sup>th</sup> running of Le Mans 24 Hours, having clawed back from 55<sup>th</sup> place in the fifth hour when it was struck with a breakdown on its hybrid system. The #8 Toyota made a valiant effort and was classed in the top 10. Admirable, but a long way off the target. Meanwhile, Porsche now holds the record for the number of victories for a constructor, with 19 in all.



**THE LEGEND – DRIVERS**

**The drivers who made Le Mans a legend**

Meet the heroes of the 24 Hours of Le Mans. These distinguished drivers who took on the unforgiving *Circuit des 24 Heures du Mans* in all weathers and conquered, helping to build the legend that is Le Mans.

**WOOLF BARNATO** (winner in 1928, 1929 and 1930)

**The Bentley Boy**

Young, rich, talented and, above all, an admirer of Bentleys, Woolf Barnato bailed out the firm in the 1920s. After becoming the main shareholder, he entered the Le Mans 24 Hours in 1928. Despite having no experience at all, he won the race – not once, but three times in succession! He not only saved Bentley, he also gave it the prestigious reputation that has remained to this day.

**LOUIS ROSIER** (winner in 1950)

**Lone ranger**

For his third attempt at the Le Mans marathon, Louis Rosier remained loyal to the Talbot marque, sharing the wheel of his Lago T26 GS with his son, Jean-Louis. “Sharing” is probably not the right word, as Rosier Senior hogged the wheel for more than 23 hours, handing over to his offspring for just two laps! Louis Rosier went down in history for this (almost) solo victory.

**JACKY ICKX** (winner in 1969, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1981 and 1982)

**The man behind the new start**

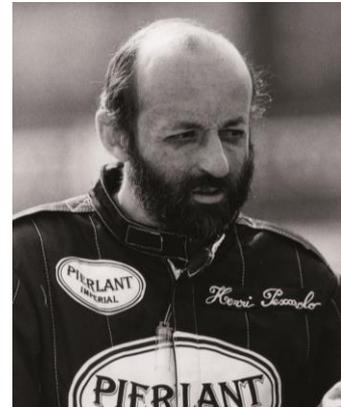
Until 1969, the drivers starting the Le Mans 24 Hours dashed across the track and jumped in behind the wheel of their car lined up in front of the pits. In their attempt to get a flying start, some didn't even bother to fasten their seat belt! Considering this practice far too dangerous, Jacky Ickx strolled over to his car, strapped himself in and set away right at the back of the pack. Twenty-four hours later, in a breathtaking finish, the Ford GT40 he shared with Jackie Oliver eclipsed the Porsche of Larrousse and Herrmann to claim victory. Ickx's rebellion marked the end of the so-called Le Mans start. He went on to win the iconic race five more times – a record at the time.



**HENRI PESCAROLO** (winner in 1972, 1973, 1974 and 1984)

### Vive la France!

The French crowd cheered, glad to witness a triumph for which they had waited 22 years – the 1972 Le Mans 24 Hours had been won by a French car, Matra, driven by a Frenchman, Henri Pescarolo, partnered by Graham Hill. The gritty attitude displayed by the French driver and his team added to the joy. It was just the start of a purple patch for French motorsport as the team went on to retain the Le Mans crown in 1973 and 1974. Pescarolo won the title a fourth time in 1984, in a Porsche, and drove in the race a total of 33 times.



**JEAN RONDEAU** (winner in 1980)

### Driver and constructor

For Le Mans-born Jean Rondeau, racing cars for a living was a given. Not just driving them but, from 1975, building them too. After an encouraging start, his career reached its climax in 1980 when he won the 24 Hours of Le Mans with Jean-Pierre Jaussaud, at the wheel of a car that bore his name. A unique feat in the entire history of the legendary race.

**TOM KRISTENSEN** (winner in 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2008 and 2013)



### Mr Le Mans

Nine wins including six on the bounce! Tom Kristensen holds a record that is likely to stand for some time earning him the nickname of “Mr Le Mans”, replacing the original master of the race, Jacky Ickx. Although now retired from the sport, the Dane still has close ties with the Audi marque with which he won seven of his nine Le Mans trophies.

**THE LEGEND – CONSTRUCTORS**

Le Mans: where legends are made.

As the ideal testing ground for innovation or the place to show off superior technology, the 24 Hours of Le Mans has always attracted the world's most prestigious carmakers. The scene of many a stunning feat and impressive technique, the Circuit des 24 Heures du Mans is a springboard for brand image.

**19 VICTORIES FOR PORSCHE**

A record!



Porsche is arguably the brand most frequently associated with the 24 Hours of Le Mans. The figures speak for themselves: 19 outright victories (the record). And that's not all. Fielded by the factory itself, or by private teams, Porsches have been racing at Le Mans since 1951, making a total 67 years at the top of the endurance game. That longevity is unequalled.

The first Porsche to line up for the start of the 24 Hours of Le Mans was a 356/4 SL. The car driven by Edmond Mouchet and Auguste Veuillet finished 20<sup>th</sup> overall but won the 1100 cc class.

An auspicious start that kept its promises. In 1958, Porsche won its first overall podium place with a Spyder 718 RSK, which finished third with its flat-4 1.6-litre engine and drivers Behra and Herrmann. In 1968, the Porsche 907L fitted with a flat-8 2.2 litre engine took the runner-up spot ahead of a 908. That year, a Ford GT40 clinched victory.

Porsche's first triumph was just around the corner: in 1970, up against the Ferrari 512, the 917K, a car shaped like an aircraft wing, won the race thanks to talented drivers Richard Attwood and Hans Herrman. The following year, the extraordinary 917K set a record average pace of 222.3kph, which was only beaten in 2010!

By 1998, when the factory withdrew from competition, Porsche had banked 16 outright wins at the 24 Hours of Le Mans.

But the story does not end there. After a 16-year hiatus, the constructor made a comeback in 2014 with a 919 fitted with hybrid technology. The car claimed victory in 2015, 2016 and 2017, making a total 19 wins for the marque, which withdrew from the LMP1 class in late 2017.

### 13 WINS FOR AUDI

#### A triumph for technology

Look closely, and it becomes apparent that the history of the 24 Hours of Le Mans is a succession of periods, each dominated by a different make. In the twenties, Bentley ruled the roost, in the thirties Alfa Romeo, Jaguar in the fifties, Ferrari then Ford in the sixties, Matra in the early seventies and Porsche in the eighties. Without a doubt, Audi dominated the noughties. Having entered the endurance ring in 1999, Audi took its first of thirteen wins in the following year, and went on to triumph 13 times between 2000 and 2014! True to the company philosophy – progress through technology – the team owes its success to an innovative approach to racing. The Ingolstadt-based firm won with a petrol engine (the R8 in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004 and 2005), then a diesel engine (R10, R15 then R18 TDI in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010 and 2011), before introducing the hybrid R18 e-tron quattro for wins in 2012, 2013 and 2014. Not content with revolutionising the engine, Audi also introduced LED and then laser technology for headlights. The German constructor, which like Porsche is part of the VW Group, withdrew from endurance racing in 2016.



### 9 WINS FOR FERRARI

A glorious reign in the 1960s



Ferrari would not be Ferrari without racing and the carmaker plays a starring role in the history of the 24 Hours of Le Mans. Luigi Chinetti first brought the Italian marque to Le Mans in 1949, just two years after its launch. A little 166MM was entered, and despite its lack of power compared to Delahaye and Delage, it won the race. The British cars were difficult to beat in the fifties, Jaguar taking five victories and Aston Martin one, in 1959. Yet Ferrari gave them a run for their money, claiming

the trophy in 1954 with the 375 and in 1958 with the 250 TR58. From then on, Ferrari was no longer just another contender, but the team to beat. Between 1960 and 1965, the firm pocketed a string of victories. Their domination was such that the top ten finishers nearly all bore the emblem of the prancing horse. In 1963, the top six cars were all Ferraris.

### 7 WINS FOR JAGUAR

Innovation and more innovation



Jaguar stood out from the crowd in more ways than one: not only was it a winner, but the marque's distinctively elegant lines and sleek aerodynamics coupled with ingenious technical prowess set it apart. Jaguar's maiden Le Mans in 1950 saw the British brand finish twelfth. The

following year, they were back, with a car designed to win races: the Type C (XK120-C). And it did just that. The 1953 version of the Type C sported disc brakes. Technology hitherto reserved for



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aeroplanes on aircraft carriers. Reliable brakes mean greater efficiency and Jaguar logically took home a second Le Mans 24 Hours trophy. However, in 1954 Ferrari claimed it back, sending Jaguar running to the drawing board. The designers responded with the Type D, whose refined allure and unparalleled performance made it the winner for the next three years.

In 1985, Jaguar made a comeback at the French 24-hour marathon with the XJR6, drawing huge crowds and inciting much enthusiasm. The 1988 version, with a V12 naturally-aspirated engine, was coined the XJR 9LM. It beat Porsche to first place, although the German marque boasted nine cars in the top eleven. Two years later, in 1990, the British firm's XJR 12 swiped a one-two finish.

### 6 WINS FOR BENTLEY

#### Where the legend began

Bentley is one of the first makes to have entered the Le Mans 24 Hours hall of fame, starting with two wins in 1924 and 1927. The British brand also introduced the concept of the "gentleman driver", an amateur able to make a substantial financial contribution to the team in return for a seat. Woolf Barnato was one such gentleman. A multi-talented businessman and diamond importer, he helped refill the Bentley coffers in the mid-twenties. Not content with saving the company's finances, he decided to take the wheel at the 24 Hours of Le Mans. Barnato, who had something of a Midas touch, lifted the glittering trophy in 1928, 1929 and 1930, becoming the first driver to claim three wins in a row.

Just seven years into the history of the race, Bentley already appeared five times on the race roll of honour. But the constructor remained stuck on five for 73 years! In the meantime, Bentley was purchased by VW, under the same umbrella as Audi.

In 2003, the Audi factory team decided not to field the R8s itself, leaving its subsidiaries free to do so. The Bentley EXP Speed 8 therefore joined the fray with an Audi engine. Danish driver Tom Kristensen scored his fifth Le Mans win and the other Team Bentley entry came in second.



### 4 WINS FOR FORD

Ambitions of rivalling with Ferrari



In the early sixties, Ferrari's domination sparked envy among opponents. The most vexed of all, Henry Ford II, vowed to dethrone the Italian. Ford's road to Le Mans began in 1964 with three GT40s. None of them lasted the course. The following year was even worse: six cars in the line-up, six withdrawals. But Ford persevered. In 1966, he fielded a fleet of thirteen and was rewarded with a flourishing one-two-three finish. It was the first of three successive victories for the American, but the 1969 race was the most enthralling of all. In protestation against the dangers of the Le Mans-style start in which drivers often neglected to fasten their seatbelts, Jacky Ickx sauntered rather than ran to his GT40, settled in comfortably, ostensibly fastened his belt and started the race from the very back of the field. 24 hours later, he crossed the line in first place, a mere two seconds ahead of the Porsche 908. It was the closest-run finish in the history of the race.

To celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the one-two-three sweep, Ford entered four GTs in the GTE Pro class at the 2016 Le Mans 24 Hours. Despite valiant resistance from Corvette, Ferrari, Porsche and Aston Martin, the Fords finished first, second, fourth and fifth in class.

### 4 WINS FOR ALFA ROMEO

#### A car built to win

If the twenties belonged to Bentley, the early thirties were all about Alfa Romeo. With two criteria key to Le Mans victory – a racy design and reliable, high-performance mechanics – the 8C was born to win. 1931: Alfa Romeo claimed its first win in a race that saw 17 withdrawals out of 26 entrants. The following year was even better. The 8Cs produced a one-two finish and then 1933 spelled one-two-three! 1934 brought a fourth victory but Lagonda put an end to the winning streak in 1935.

