

Le Mans (not just) for Dummies



The Club Arnage Guide to the 24 hours of Le Mans 2015



www.clubarnage.com

"Every input was pure reflex - things were coming at me everywhere I looked. For about 50 percent of the lap I felt like I was on the verge of a massive accident."

Mark Blundell commenting his pole position lap in a 1.100 hp Nissan Group C at Le Mans 1990

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Foreword

Welcome to the tenth (!) edition of the Club Arnage guide to the 24 hours of Le Mans – a free guide made by fans for fans. This is now the 83rd edition of this great race and looking at the competition for overall win the situation seems to be as follows:

Toyota: Last year saw them winning the WEC and they arrive at Le Mans with the prestigious start no. 1 and as the reigning champions – but let's be honest: It's the Le Mans victory that counts, anything else is just a bonus. One of last year's lessons for the Japanese team is clearly "Thou shalt not come to Le Mans without a 3rd car" but obviously the Japanese manufacturer doesn't want to spend the money on one. However, it's excellent news for all fans that they have committed to stay until 2017 in the WEC – which is something we would like to hear from Audi too. The cars look strong and reliable but have failed to really impress so far. Both cars were clearly off the pace in the first 2 WEC rounds as well as on the test day – but Le Mans isn't about speed only and their test day lap times were probably just sandbagging.

Audi: In 2014 they were slower than Toyota, but in the end it was the Audi-typical mixture of endurance, flawless driving, reliability and their capability to quickly replace broken parts (turbocharger change in less than 15 minutes, tell this to your local workshop!) which got them on top of the podium again. For 2015 they decided to focus on more speed, upgraded the electric part of the power system to 4 MegaJoules (MJ) and as a result they were the quickest car and winners at the season openers in Silverstone and Spa – and their lap times were not much behind Porsche and well ahead of Toyota on the test day.

Porsche: They are taking a 3rd car to Le Mans this year – and with drivers Hülkenberg, Bamber and Tandy a strong line-up for it. A big welcome to Niko Hülkenberg on this occasion, it's been a while since an active F1 driver competed at Le Mans in parallel. Porsche was the fastest in the pre-season Paul Ricard test; and to sort out any reliability issues they did more than 30.000 km of testing, a similar effort to Audi and Toyota. They also have increased the Hybrid part of the car and have moved to the highest MJ – class, which gives them a combined output of about 1.000 hp. Everything they did at Zuffenhausen in the last months clearly spells: "We want to win!". Full kudos for the livery of the #17, picking up the historic design of the Le Mans winning Herrmann/Attwood Porsche 917 is a great idea.

Nissan: Producing big amounts of media reports without doing much racing – that was what we saw last year from them, when they did just 5 laps. I would not be surprised if their effort for 2015 ends in a similar fashion. A couple of slow test laps at Sebring was all what they presented to the general public before calling off the WEC prologue test and the first 2 rounds at Silverstone and Spa. By mid-April they had done less than 4.000 km of testing and managed just one back-to-back stint. At the test day they couldn't even match the pace of most LMP2 cars. Once again it looks like the Nissan marketing guys had more saying than the engineers! No mistake: The GT-R LM NISMO looks ultra-cool and all fans I've talked to like the approach of trying something completely different. But is that all what a global manufacturer the size of Nissan has to offer after more than one year of development and a lot of ballyhoo? Let's hope they keep going and we see something respectable from them in 2016.

Drivers: The WEC has become one of the most attractive series for professional race drivers – especially since rival series F1 seems to be unable to produce grids of more than 20 cars – and almost half of the drivers are paying for their seat there. In the WEC there are currently about 50 drivers earning good money in the LMP1 and the GTE pro class works cars. Many of them have multi-year contracts, since consistency in driver pairings is a key factor for success in endurance racing. Of course, no one makes the silly money which drivers like Vettel, Hamilton or Alonso are earning in F1, but contracts with a solid 6-digit or in some cases 7-digit yearly income aren't that bad. Even the LMP2 and GTE Am classes see some paid drivers, usually financed by the typical gentleman (pay) driver in these classes.

Works Teams vs. Privateers in LMP1: With the current rule book it looks like the days when privateers could compete with the factory teams in the top category are definitely over. To race an up-to-date LMP1-Hybrid requires coaches full of engineers and truckloads of IT equipment – this is well beyond the capabilities of teams like Rebellion, ByKolles and the like. Even more surprising though that just one year after its introduction they ended the LMP1-L class and integrated it with the LMP1-H class again. But just 3 cars probably don't justify a class of its own.

The track: In the last few years the A.C.O. have been trying desperately to keep lap times above 3:30 min., a mark which they consider safe for the current track standard. It looks like this year they will fail more than ever. Even on the test day with its difficult track conditions and the usual sandbagging last year's pole time of 3:21 was broken. Assuming good weather and a dry track I expect lap times around 3:15 in Qualifying.

Clear favourites: None! Toyota, Audi and Porsche are all capable of winning; the same applies to Aston Martin, Chevy, Porsche and Ferrari in the GTE Pro category. I expect thrilling battles in all classes.

On behalf of Club Arnage, I wish all of you exciting 24 hours!

Werner Kirchmann
Editor

Hall of fame

Welcome to the 10th edition of the Club Arnage Guide to the 24 Hours of Le Mans, a guide from fans for fans and a project which was first started beginning of 2006. Beginning of 2010 saw a little change in the editing process, we did put all information into a Wiki, and all text can be maintained directly on the internet. More than 50 people have been involved up to now in the production of the CA Guides, wow! The following list of contributors – using either their CA forum nicknames and/or their real names – is probably not complete, apologies in case someone is not mentioned:



Adrian Jackson-Woods aka "ajw"; Allon Stokes; Graig; Anita Williams aka "Piglet"; Bas de Graf aka "Bas"; Andrew Hawley aka "Andy Zarse"; Calum Cousins aka "ccr32"; Chris Clark aka "Chris24"; Chris Howles; Chris Norris aka "dukla2000"; Christopher aka "Kpy"; clkgrlm1; Dave Davies aka "Grand Fromage"; Deborah Dudley aka "termietermite"; Ian Dudley aka "Mr. Termite"; Derek Appleyard aka "Delboy"; Ewan Dalton aka "ewan"; "Fagey"; "Fran"; Geoff Morgan aka "smokie"; Hansgerd Bramann aka "hgb"; Ian Swan; Jason Gore aka "Jason"; John Curtis; John Dickinson aka "6Euros"; John G; John Brooks; John Hindhaugh; JPS Beemer; Julian aka "Jules G"; Justin Moran; "Lorry"; "Lofty"; Kristof Vermeulen aka "Dottore"; "landman"; Marcel ten Caat; Marius van Herpen; Mark Every aka "jpchenet"; Mark Williams aka "mgmark"; "Martini"; "mwbenett"; Neil Dobson aka "Dobbo"; Nick Livingstone aka "nickliv"; Paul Richards aka "Risky"; Paul Robertson aka "Robbo"; "rdj-pics"; Rick Wilson aka "Mr. Rick"; "Rhino"; Rob Preston aka "RobP"; Robert Walsh aka "Pilgrim"; Rupert Lowes aka "Nordic"; Simon Lowes aka "SL"; "SmithA"; "Slash"; Steve Barnes aka "SJ"; Steve Brown aka "Steve Pyro"; "stu_mchugh"; Thierry Charge; Tony Brown aka "lynxd67"; Trevor aka "topcatz" and of course thanks to all Club Arnage moderators and administrators for keeping the CA forum up and running!

2015 edition: Special thanks to John Stevens, Tony Brown and Geoff for their pictures for the entry list!

	<p>YOU found outdated information in this guide? YOU think things have changed? YOU saw something that should be in this guide but it isn't?</p> <p>Then you're our man – or woman!</p> <p>Sign up at the Club Arnage forum at www.clubarnage.com and help us by adding your stuff to our Wiki at www.clubarnage.com/wiki.</p> <p>Please support us to make this guide the ultimate compendium to the Le Mans Galaxy!</p>
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The Deborah Dudley Memorial Fund

A Call for Donations

Thank you for choosing to download this year's Club Arnage (CA) guide. As usual the guide is free. However we are once again asking you to spare a few Pounds / Euros / Dollars for charity as a way of thanks to those who gave their time and skills putting the guide together. Thanks to the few who donated last year, but overall it was disappointing!

A trackside beer at Le Mans is around €6, and we think the guide is worth at least one! Please don't be a cheap Charlie, it's all for a good cause!

Once again, our chosen charities are:

- **Association of International Cancer Research**, charity registration no. SC022918: The AICR funds cutting edge research into the causes of cancer. In the past 26 years, they have supported a large variety of projects in all corners of the world. Currently they have more than 220 projects underway. For further details please see www.aicr.org.uk
- **Motorsport Safety Fund**, charity registration no. 296802: After the death of Roger Williamson at Zandvoort in 1974, a fund was set up in his name with the primary aim of educating marshals on fire fighting and rescue techniques. In 1987, it was reconstituted as the Motor Racing Safety Fund and became a registered UK charity with the wider scope to generally aid improvements in safety standards at motorsport events. For further details please see www.motorsportsafetyfund.com

Payment can be made by bank transfer or Paypal to the Club Arnage Charity Fund from where **the funds will be divided equally to each of the 2 charities listed above.**

- **Bank transfer:** Account name: Club Arnage, Bank: Natwest Bank, Sort Code: 60-03-27, A/c Number: 78121477, IBAN: GB31 NWBK 6003 2778 1214 77, BIC: NWBK GB 2L
- **Paypal:** Please go to www.paypal.co.uk and donate to cafund@hotmail.co.uk. Please note: You need a paypal-account to do so. **Please ensure your payment via Paypal is marked as a Charitable Donation which will not attract any fees.**

Thank you very much in advance

Club Arnage

Le Mans (not just) for Dummies – A brief history

Initial version courtesy of Marcel ten Caat, Gabriel Portos and www.planetlemans.com. All pictures are in the public domain except as noted otherwise.

Once upon a time...



It is 16.00 hours on May 26th, 1923 and 33 cars await the start signal under the pouring rain. A gruelling 24 hour race awaits them running in a road circuit of 17.262 kilometres. The drivers do not know it yet but this is the birth of the race of races, the first edition of the 24 Heures du Mans. The idea of a 24-hour race was not new and actually a few of them had taken place both in Europe and the United States already when 3 visionaries with initiative created what would become the most popular long distance race in the world. It was the combination of George Durand (secretary of the Automobile Club de l'Ouest, the A.C.O.) and Charles Faroux (editor of La Vie Automobile) that started turning an idea into reality after they met at the 1922 Paris Motor Show. The final ingredient was the involvement of Emile Coquille, Rudge-Whitworth wheels

representative in France who committed a donation of 100.000 French Francs and established the triennial Rudge-Whitworth Trophy for the races of 1923-24-25.

So, with some strict (and sometimes complicated) homologation rules and a winner which would be declared only after 3 years of running for the main trophy, the first race started in 1923 with 30 French entries, 2 Excelsiors from Belgium and a single private Bentley representing the UK. By 16.00 on Sunday and after 2209.5 km covered in 128 laps, it was the Chenard-Walcker of André Lagache-René Léonard that crossed the finish line first although it would not be recognized as winner, rather as top qualified in the Rudge-Whitworth Cup. A whole odyssey with rain, mud, no windscreen wipers and a lot of champagne consumed at the "Hartford Hotel" (a sort of proto-paddock of the time), the experience encouraged participants to engage the year after and 1924 saw 40 entries for the June scheduled race. Just one of them was non-French and it would win the race: the number 8 Bentley of John Duff and Frank Clement which had learned the 1923 lesson installing front brakes to improve their performance. The following two years saw the domination of André Rossignol and his Lorraine-Dietrich, despite the increased international presence and entries ranging in the 60 cars.

1925 saw the first appearance of the "Le Mans start" which would be a trademark of the race (until the famous Jacky Ickx walk to his Ford GT40 in 1969) as well as the first two fatal accidents on the track. The Bentleys were very competitive but eventually retired so it was the Chenard-Walckers to win the only ever triennial cup and the newly established biennial cup. 1926 saw new pits, a new prize (the Index of Performance) and another French victory, the last one until 1932. And the reason for the first 4 of that 5-year drought was no other than the Bentley Boys.

The Bentley Boys

A fundamental step in the creation of the Le Mans legend, the 4 victories in a row of the green machines put the La Sarthe race into the definitive map of the greatest events in the world. Driven by the men that would become the everlasting symbol of the Gentleman Driver, the Bentleys were unbeatable until the appearance of another symbol of the big race, its first Italian winner. The names of Woolf Barnato, Sammy Davis, Dudley Benjafield, Bernard Rubin, Henry Birkin and Glen Kidston would forever bind the UK fans and teams to the dream of a 24-Hour win.



The 1931 victory would also be for a British team, however on an Italian car which would reign for another 4 years: the mythical Alfa Romeo 8C. The circuit, that had been shortened in 1929 to 16.430 km and would go to 13.492 km in 1932 was constantly evolving in terms of facilities, safety and road surface, therefore allowing higher speeds to be achieved and longer distances to be covered. 1933 saw 233 laps (3144km) being covered by the winning car, a works Alfa Romeo where Raymond Sommer (who had won the year before with Luigi Chinetti) shared the drive with the legendary Tazio Nuvolari, in his only (very successful!) appearance at Le Mans. Lagonda, Bugatti (twice) and Delahaye would be the last pre-war winners, the race not being run in 1936 due to a strike. The name of Jean-Pierre Wimille would be associated with both Bugatti successes (1937 with Robert Benoist, 1939 with Pierre Veyron), reaching a record 248 laps and 3354.7 km covered on the last summer before the start of World War II. By this time the Le Mans 24 hours was established as a top international event, one that manufacturers wanted to attend and win to show their cars' performance in the

most demanding of events; a race where anything could happen and unpredictability was a fundamental part of the plot, circumstances that changed constantly and unimaginable reversals of fortune, the very same components that attract so many people to this day to Le Mans in mid-June.

The war would put a stop to the race and 10 long years would go by before a swarm of racing cars would return to La Sarthe to take history from where the Bugattis had left it. The spirit of the race would be reborn with multiplied energy and the 1950s would witness more amazing victories (including the first of a small red car with a prancing horse) and the biggest tragedy ever in motor sport history.

After the war



By 1944 the location of the Le Mans circuit next to the local airfield had taken its toll. Practically nothing had been left standing of the infrastructure after the bombings and even today unexploded bombs can be found when any modifications are going on at or near the track. So it was only through a titanic effort from the A.C.O. that the "24 Heures" could return in 1949 with new pits, new grandstands and a road surface in race condition. It was the start of a new era, an era where road racing would become the source of tales to tell your grandchildren, where races like the Mille Miglia, Carrera Panamericana or Targa Florio would flourish and attract the cream of the crop in terms of drivers, privateers and manufacturers. But the status that Le Mans had earned before the war as the greatest race would not change, and its fame would soar as

communications became better and motor racing more popular.

The 1949 race saw a field with a big mixture of pre-war and modern cars. The British were now as numerous a force as the French and the presence of Bentley, Frazer-Nash and Aston Martin was much more noticeable. The victory however would go to a new marque, a car made by an Italian rebel that had been Alfa Romeo's racing manager many years before and was preceded by as many victories as conflicts: Enzo Ferrari. But it was not his entry, rather the British Lord Selsdon's one that saw the chequered flag in the hands of (now triple winner) Luigi Chinetti and Peter Mitchell-Thompson. 1950 would see a battle of epic proportions between Ferrari, Talbot, Jaguar and Allard. In the end victory would be for the father-son pairing of the Rosiers, the dad driving over 23 of the 24 hours in their beautiful Talbot-Lago. But by 1951 another new winner would start writing their history: with a wonderful streamlined body the Jaguar XK120C would win the race it had been designed for in the capable hands of Peter Walker and Peter Whitehead.

By this time Le Mans was also attracting attention from overseas and, after his first experience the year before with a regular Cadillac and the famous "Le Monstre", the American challenge of Briggs Cunningham would become a Le Mans feature as well as the pioneer in putting the race in the map for American motorsport. 1952 saw another new winner, this time a German one.

The unequivocal (and massive) presence of Alfred Neubauer in the pits, the collection of technical innovations and huge star signs to indicate where to stop were the clear sign of the presence of Mercedes-Benz at Le Mans. But their "gullwing" 300SL did not have an easy time and the main prize could only be clinched in the last hour by the all-German line-up of Hermann Lang and Fritz Riess who finished just ahead of their team mates Helfrich and Niedermayer. The leading Talbot where Pierre Levegh had driven almost 24 hours on his own gave up with practically minutes to go, possibly due to the driver over-revving the engine. A reversal of fortune so typical of this "gruelling monster" as someone qualified it.



The period 1953-1958 would see a ferocious rivalry between Jaguar and Ferrari which would become the first of many mythical head-to-heads at La Sarthe. The Jaguar C-Type from the works team would win in 53 with Tony Rolt-Duncan Hamilton after a Ferrari debacle that saw all but one of their cars retire or being disqualified. A new regulation was introduced as well allowing a maximum of 80 laps per stint and 18 hours total of driving per driver in order to avoid another "Levegh 1952" situation. But Ferrari would come back in strength in 1954 and the 375 Plus was able to beat both the Aston Martins as the new D-Type Jaguars. Skilled driving from Maurice Trintignant and the only South American winner ever, the Argentinian "Raging Bull of the Pampas" José Froilán González brought the first works victory for the Maranello team. "El Cabezón" González was able to resist the Jaguar pressure during a late rain period and give the Scuderia its maiden works victory at Le Mans as he had done at Silverstone in 1951 in the field of Grand Prix racing.

The catastrophe

The biggest tragedy in racing history would cast a black cloud over the Mike Hawthorn-Ivor Bueb victory for Jaguar in 1955. The infamous flight of Pierre Levegh's Mercedes 300 SLR engine and debris into the main grandstands taking the lives of 80 spectators as well as the driver's has marked Le Mans and motor sport forever and threatened then to stop car racing altogether in Europe (the ban is still valid today in Switzerland). Mercedes retired while Juan Manuel Fangio and Stirling Moss were in the lead in another 300 SLR but the race went on in order to avoid total chaos.



Renewed safety measures and the circuit shortened to 13.461 km incorporating a new section between the main straight and Tertre Rouge saw a big crowd show up for the 1956 race. In the first of two successive victories by the Jaguar D-Types of the Ecurie Ecosse, Ron Flockhart and Ninian Sanderson covered 300 laps of the new layout winning in a close battle from the Aston Martin of Moss and Peter Collins. Flockhart would repeat in 1957, this time with 1955 winner Bueb as partner beating 10 Ferraris and five Maseratis as well as the ever competitive Astons.

The Belgian Oliver Gendebien would score the first of his four victories in 1958 driving on a mighty Ferrari 250 Testa Rossa (nicknamed redhead, due

to the color of the upper half of the engine block) with American ace Phil Hill. They had a hard time battle the Aston Martins until about noon on Sunday but they won comfortably after a series of rival retirements. The 1950s would end with a DBR1 Aston Martin giving the British team its only overall victory to date, drivers were the American constructor-to-be Carroll Shelby and Roy Salvadori. After 30 years of trying it even was a 1-2 since 2nd place went to driver-journalist Paul Frere and Maurice Trintignant in another Aston. Ferrari succumbed to the "hare and tortoise" tactics from Aston Martin which had sent Moss to drive at a furious pace from the start and forced the Ferraris (and the Moss-Jack Fairman car as well) to retire. The great "uncrowned champion" would never win Le Mans but Sir Stirling Moss is undoubtedly one of the greatest drivers of all times. But 1959 was just a hiccup in the dominance of the Prancing Horse, the 60s would see the small factory from just outside the city of Modena dominate "la grande épreuve" and trigger the fury of a certain Mr. Ford.

The Italian era

If the fifties had been the start of the mythical marque duels at Le Mans, the sixties would propel these duels to an unknown level. The decade would start with a Ferrari victory in 1960. Oliver Gendebien (1958 winner) and Paul Frere (second in 1959) would bring home their beautiful Testarossa, just one of eleven Ferraris entered. Only Aston Martin could show some resistance to this Ferrari swarm with the car driven by Roy Salvadori and none other than Jim Clark arriving third in his best Le Mans finish ever.

It was the time of the Maserati Birdcage, the Austin Healey and so many fast cars but it was the period where Ferrari would prove unbeatable in Le Mans: 6 wins in a row (5 by the Scuderia itself and the last one by the NART) would bring first an offer and then the rage of Ford by the mid-sixties. 1961 saw another Gendebien victory, partnered again by Phil Hill like 3 years before. A clean sweep with a 1-2-3 followed by a Maserati and a Porsche which could have been even more humiliating if a Ferrari vs Ferrari battle between the cars of Ritchie Ginther/Wolfgang von Trips and Pedro/Ricardo Rodríguez would have not taken those two cars out of the race. The following year was almost a copy of 1961, same winners, same Ferrari domination and another 1-2-3 against mild resistance from Maserati and Aston. Fourth victory for Gendebien and third for the Gendebien-Hill pairing in a field with 15 Ferraris entered.

In 1963 an early Maserati lead soon gave way to another Ferrari all-Italian victory with Lorenzo Bandini and Ludovico Scarfiotti putting their 250P on the top of the podium. A curiosity in 1963 was the inclusion "hors-concours" of the turbine Rover-BRM which even managed to finish the race (it would have been a virtual eighth). The Jean Guichet-Nino Vaccarella victory of 1964 made it 5 in a row for Ferrari. However, this year saw the debut of Ford, anxious to grab the top spot from the small Italian constructor. This would be the last year for Jaguar and Aston Martin for decades and it also was a year for the victory in the GT class of Dan Gurney/Bob Bondurant in another legendary Le Mans car: Carroll Shelby's AC Cobra. Another 1-2-3 for Ferrari and on to 1964. And another 1-2-3 would materialize when the Ferrari of Jochen Rindt and Masten Gregory would lead another two Maranello cars after a disastrous performance by Ford which saw all their MkIIs abandon the race in just a few hours.

The Ford – Ferrari battle

The Ferrari domination would come to an end in 1966 when the 13 Fords vs 11 Ferraris race ended with a legendary victory by Bruce McLaren/Chris Amon leading a procession of 3 Fords to achieve a 1-2-3 in the closest finish ever in history. The rest of the decade would be a solo of the GT40: 1967 saw the beautiful MkIV take the win in the hands of Dan Gurney/A.J.Foyt in a first ever all American win which also broke the distance record with 5232km run. The

fantastic P4 Ferraris could only manage second and third in a tough battle with the American monster. But 1968, when the race had to be moved to the end of September due to the social unrest in France, witnessed two important facts: the first was the win of (yet another) Ford GT40 run this time by John Wyer Engineering with Pedro Rodríguez/Lucien Bianchi in Gulf colors, a team/sponsor that would become a symbol of Le Mans. The second fact was that a small German manufacturer that had always raced in small classes started now knocking on the door of the big win: Porsche. Since no works Ferrari was present due to regulations issues the Porsche offensive with their 908 car was even more visible and the Ford could take over only after the 908s showed their mechanical weaknesses, as did another future star: the Matra.



1967: Disaster for the Ford GT40 MK II 7 litre V8 driven by Jo Schlesser and Guy Ligier

© Derek Appleyard

1969 would see the fiercest fight ever with an almost photo-finish between Ford and Porsche. This was the occasion where the Porsche 917 did its first Le Mans appearance and it was both tragic (John Woolfe was killed in a first lap accident) and almost glorious: one 917 came close to winning the race, the Vic Elford/Dick Attwood car retiring with just three hours to go. Three 917s and three 908s had retired and the battle was left to the old 1968 winning Gulf-Ford GT40 (this time with Jacky Ickx/Jackie Oliver behind the wheel) and the sole survivor of the Porsches, the 908 driven by Hans Herrmann/Gerard Larrousse. The 908 and the GT40 exchanged positions constantly and the spectators were treated to an amazing duel that lasted until the very last lap. Ickx thought he had the race on the bag but crossed the line a few seconds before the

4PM clock so a thrilling and unexpected last lap brought Herrmann close to the Ford entering the Hunaudieres straight. A smart move by Ickx simulating he was out of fuel (a known issue in the Ford during the race) had Herrmann take the lead realizing too late that Ickx would use his slipstream to overtake him again at Mulsanne corner and hold the lead by 100 meters at the end of the race...la ronde infernale...

For 1970 a new, short lived age will start. Ford would be gone and the battle of the giants would take place between Porsche and Ferrari with a funny blue car watching right behind.

Battle of the Titans – Ferrari vs. Porsche

1969 was the last year of the Beatles together, the year of Woodstock and the end of the hippie era but it had also been the last year of the Le Mans start. The 1970 edition of the 24 Heures would see many unique happenings: A weird start with the cars in their traditional Le Mans layout but with drivers already in them, a certain Steve McQueen shooting for what would become a classic film among racing fans and the so-called Battle of the Titans between two very powerful cars ending on the first overall victory for Porsche. In fact the duel between the three John Wyer Porsche 917s and the four works Ferrari 512S was never as thrilling as in the film: a multiple crash in the rain would cripple the red team and leave one lonely car that never made it through the night and several issues would have the legendary Gulf-sponsored cars retire leaving the victory to the number 23 Porsche Salzburg 917 of Dick Attwood and Hans Herrmann.



1967: Downhill from Dunlop Bridge towards the Esses

© Derek Appleyard

For the first time one make got the win in all classes and all classified Porsches and Ferraris were private teams. The following year would see the fastest lap to date at Le Mans, the longest distance covered at 5335 km and the first rolling start which has been kept until now. The Porsches had again the edge but victory would again escape the Gulf-Wyer team and go rather to the Martini Porsche 917 of Helmut Marko-Gijs van Lennep, for the second time the short-tail 917 K (Kurzheck) would beat the "made for Le Mans" 917 LH (Langheck). Neither the privately entered Ferrari 512Ms nor the Alfa Romeos could beat the pace of the best racing car of the century in its last outing at La Sarthe.

King Henri and the Matras

For 1972 rules had changed and the 3-litre engine limit had completely altered the picture, much to the advantage of the small French Matra-Simcas who would become unbeatable emperors of Le Mans, this year with no real challenge as Ferrari was absent. This first victory was in the hands of Henri Pescarolo-Graham Hill making the British driver the only man to date to win Indianapolis, the Monaco GP and Le Mans with another Matra completing a neat 1-2 for the blue prototypes. Jo Bonnier was killed in an unfortunate accident leaving endurance racing without one of its main drivers and team owners. With the circuit now modified adding a complete new White House section, the next year would see a well earned Matra victory in an all-out fight with the all-but-Le-Mans conquering Ferrari 312. Henri Pescarolo was again part of the winning team partnered this time by Gérard Larrousse and they would repeat in 1974 even when gearbox failure kept them 47 minutes in the pits and put their lead at stake.



1979: GTC Mirage Ford of Vern Schuppan, David Hobbs and Jean-Pierre Jassaud

© Rupert Lowes

After their third victory in a row Matra would leave Le Mans and 1975 would see some familiar colors return to victory. And it was Gulf sponsored Mirage which would bring a British car back to the top of the podium driven by Jacky Ickx and Derek Bell and a first victory for the DFV Cosworth engine at Le Mans. John Wyer's team met again with victory in a year where the big works teams were absent and other names like Ligier or de Cadenet would continue growing as part of Le Mans history. 1976 would see again familiar faces on the podium when Gijs van Lennep and Jacky Ickx would help return Porsche to the first spot at la Sarthe. The Porsche-Martini team would start a long era of Porsche domination where having another manufacturer winning would certainly become a rare exception. Both the Porsches and their main rivals Alpine-Renault were using turbo engines in which would also be a change for the 24

Hour race. There was also a certain Jean Rondeau introducing a nice prototype called Inaltera...more about him later.

Alpine-Renault came back in 1977 with three cars but none of them would see the finish so victory was assured for the Jacky Ickx-Hurley Haywood-Juergen Barth Porsche when drama would come back to Le Mans in its typical fashion: a piston broke on the leading car with only minutes to go. Given their huge advantage Porsche decided to take a major risk and waited until 15:50 to send Barth back to the track with a crippled car to finish the 24 Hour race almost at walking pace in a very dramatic way. The race ended with a fourth victory for Ickx and a finish for both de Cadenet - now in his own car - and the Inaltera of Jean Rondeau.

But there is always a revenge and after their 1977 disaster Alpine-Renault managed to get their win in 1978 with Jean-Pierre Jassaud and Didier Pironi beating the Porsches fair and square in a race that saw Porsche even change Ickx to a better placed car in a futile attempt to give him his fifth victory. Renault retired from endurance after this victory so 1979 would see Porsche be total favourites with practically no opposition. And while Porsche would effectively win again with Klaus Ludwig and Bill and Don Whittington, the big news was the second placed car since one of the drivers was Paul Newman getting to the podium on his first attempt on the race of races. The 70s would close then like they started: Porsche on top and a Hollywood actor on the spotlight. The 80s would start in a very different fashion, with the first ever constructor-driver to take the honors.



1984: The V12 6 litre Jaguar XJR 5 of Brian Redman, Doc Bundy and Bob Tullius

© Rupert Lowes

The 70's at the Le Mans 24 Hours ended with a clear Porsche victory. The German manufacturer had seven cars inside the top 10. Apart from a lonely BMW M1 only one manufacturer was able to get two of its cars in the top 10, namely Rondeau. And for Rondeau finishing fifth was not enough... The Le Mans-built Rondeau was the car to beat

in the 48th running of the 24 Hours. The number 15 Rondeau M379 of Henri Pescarolo and Jean Ragnotti had taken pole position, its sister car with Jean-Pierre Jaussaud and constructor/driver Jean Rondeau started from fifth place.

Early on in this very wet race it was the Liqui Moly-Martini Racing Porsche 908/80 of Jacky Ickx and Reinhold Joest that lead the race but lost it when the car suffered a problem. At midnight there was a Rondeau in the lead, but Ickx got the repaired Porsche back on the same lap an hour later. The Porsche increased its lead over the hours to come and had a decent lead at 7 am when it suffered a gearbox failure. Unfortunately for Ickx and Joest the Rondeau did not suffer any problems and while the Porsche was being repaired the Rondeau car of Rondeau/Jaussaud gained the lead. With just 30 minutes to go the rain came back and the Porsche went in for wet tyres in an attempt to finally close the gap and take the win. The Rondeau stayed out and won the race, despite a spin from Jaussaud (who did not hit anything), the first time ever a constructor won the race with his own car.

Porsche dominates



1984: The Kremer Porsche 956 driven by Tiff Needell, David Sutherland and Rusty French

© Rupert Lowes

Despite announcing his retirement after Le Mans 1980 Jacky Ickx was back in 1981 with the Porsche 936. The car he shared with Derek Bell was in a league of its own and won the race after completing 354 laps. The Rondeau M379s finished second and third, 14 and 19 laps behind the winner. The 1981 edition however was marred by the death of Jean-Louis Lafosse who crashed his Rondeau on the Hunaudières straight.

In 1982 the new FIA Group C rules were introduced and while privateer teams were unhappy with these new rules, the manufacturers did support them. Porsche built a new car to replace its successful 936 and the Porsche 956 was the result. The car was unbeatable and the number 1 Rothmans Porsche 956 in the hands of Jacky Ickx and Derek Bell won the 50th edition of the 24 Hours. Two other Porsche 956 cars completed a Porsche 1-2-

3. The success of the Porsche 956 in 1982 meant Porsche could sell several customer cars to privateer teams like Kremer Racing and Joest Racing. With all these teams competing at Le Mans the 1983 race turned into a Porsche parade. Eleven Porsche 956s took part in the race and nine of them finished in the top 10. Vern Schuppan, Hurley Haywood and Al Holbert won the race, just beating their team mates Jacky Ickx and Derek Bell.

Lancia responded to the 956 with its LC2 but despite running well in qualifying the cars did not finish. The 1984 race was won by the Joest Racing entered Porsche 956 of Henri Pescarolo and Klaus Ludwig. They won in the absence of the Porsche factory teams, which disagreed with the new 1984 rules and therefore boycotted the race. Despite the factory teams not being there, there were still eight 956s in the top 10 at the end of the 52nd Le Mans 24 Hours. Once again Lancia tried to win Le Mans, but even though they claimed the front row for the race it was once again a Porsche on top at the end of the race.

With a revised 956, being named the Porsche 962C, the Weisenbach-based manufacturer returned to Le Mans in 1985. This car, that was eligible under the new IMSA rules, was not able to beat the 'old' 956s however and Derek Bell/Hans-Joachim Stuck only finished third overall. The race was once again won by the Joest Racing team, the number 7 Porsche 956 driven by Klaus Ludwig, Paolo Barilla and "John Winter". Winter was in fact a pseudonym for Louis Krages, a German who used this name to prevent his family from finding out he was racing.

A year later, in 1986, no one was able to catch the works Porsche 962C of Stuck/Bell/Holbert. The number one car finished the race after 367 laps, beating several other Porsches. Unfortunately the 962C win was overshadowed by the death of Austrian Formula One and sports car driver Jo Gartner. During the night, just after 2 am, Gartner's Porsche suddenly made a hard left turn on the Mulsanne straight after suffering a (suspected) jammed gearbox. The car hit the barriers at nearly 290 km/h, became airborne and rolled down the track until it came to a rest on the right side barrier and caught fire. Jo Gartner was killed instantly.



1983: The Lancia of Paolo Barilla, Jean-Claude Andruet and Alessandro Nannini

© Rupert Lowes

In between the 1986 and 1987 editions of the 24 Hours of Le Mans the track underwent some reconstruction at the Dunlop Bridge. A chicane was put in place at the Dunlop Curve as the ACO tried to slow down the cars around the track. Stuck/Bell/Holbert repeated their 1986 win by scoring yet another Porsche victory at Le Mans in 1987. The Porsche-powered Cougar C20 of Yves Courage/Pierre-Henri Raphanel and Hervé Regout finishes third making it the first time in years that there is a non-Porsche chassis on the podium.

The Porsche winning streak came to a halt during the 56th running of the 24 Hours in 1988. After four previous attempts with the XJR it was the latest evolution, the XJR-9, of Tom Walkinshaw Racing (TWR) that finally managed to dethrone Porsche. The number 2 Silk Cut Jaguar, driven by Jan Lammers, Johnny Dumfries and Andy Wallace, finished just over 2.5 minutes ahead of the Porsche 962C driven by Stuck/Ludwig/Bell. Apart from another Jaguar in fourth place the rest of the top 10 was taken by Porsche 962Cs however. The WM P87 reached a speed of 405 km/h early in the race, before breaking down, a sign that the attempts to slow the cars had failed.



1986: The Joest Porsche 956B driven by George Follmer, John Morton and Kemper Miller
© "Lorry"

In the final race of the eighties at Le Mans Jaguar was hoping for a repeat of their 1988 victory, but there was one other team that spoiled it for the British squad. Swiss constructor Peter Sauber, who had been running cars at Le Mans for more than a decade, and Mercedes-Benz became partners and Sauber's Team became the official Mercedes-Benz factory team. The Sauber C9 with its 5 litre Turbo V8 dominated the 1989 event. The number 62 Sauber C9 of Schlesser/Jabouille/Cudini took pole position and eventually finished fifth. Its sister cars went on to make it a one-two finish for Team Sauber Mercedes. Jochen Mass, Manuel Reuter and Stanley Dickens in the 63 car won after completing 389 laps. The number 61 of Baldi, Acheson and Brancatelli followed, albeit five laps down. All three cars were capable of reaching speeds up to 400 km/h. The winning Jaguar of 1988 was down in fourth place and seemed to have been tamed... The 90's would bring a lot more diversity in race winners and of course a new track layout.

The end of the Hunaudieres...



1988: The winning #2 TWR Jaguar XJR-9 LM driven by Jan Lammers, Johnny Dumfries and Andy Wallace

© "Lorry"

The domination by the Porsche 962C and its predecessor the 956 in the 80's meant other manufacturers had to improve their cars and get higher speeds out of those cars to be able to win again. In the 1988 and 1989 races at the Circuit de la Sarthe speeds in excess of 400 km/h were measured and the FISA decided it was time to stop the fun. As a result of the intervention by the autosport federation two chicanes were placed in the Mulsanne Straight and when the 1990 race took place the drivers had three shorter Mulsanne Straights to tackle, rather than one long.

After winning the 1989 race Sauber decided not to return to Le Mans in 1990. The TWR Jaguar team did return to France with an all new XJR-12. Their major opponents were the works Nissan R90CKs as well as numerous Porsche 962Cs. Nissan

took the pole position and fastest lap in the race, but the R90CKs did not last the full 24 hours. At the end of the day the Silk Cut Jaguars took a one-two finish again, with John Nielsen/Price Cobb/Martin Brundle beating everyone to take the victory. The renovation of Le Mans continued into 1991. A new pit complex, with modern boxes, pit stalls and suites was completed in the year between the races.

Out on the track a new World Sportscar Championship rule caused an upset. The new rules meant cars would be 750kg with 3.5L normally aspirated engines. TWR-Jaguar, Sauber-Mercedes and Peugeot built these cars, but nobody else did and there were not enough cars to fill the grid. The FIA reserved the top 10 of the grid for the new cars and invited older Group C cars to fill up the grid. The result was that the Group C cars were more reliable and quicker than the new cars and TWR and Sauber withdrew their new cars and raced with the old ones.



1991: First ever victory for a Japanese manufacturer: The #55 Mazda 787 B driven by Volker Weidler, Johnny Herbert and Bertrand Gachot

© "Lorry"

However this was not enough to beat the Oreca-Mazdaspeed Mazda 787B. The Japanese manufacturer had overcome the problems that troubled the Mazda 787 and with Volker Weidler, Johnny Herbert and Bertrand Gachot behind the wheel of the number 55 car they took the first ever Japanese victory at Le Mans, as well as the first ever non-piston engine car to win.



1992: The Peugeot 905 driven by Philippe Alliot, Mauro Baldi and Jean-Pierre Jabouille

© Werner Kirchmann

Despite the problems with the new rules in 1991 the FIA did not change the regulations in 1992 and the 3.5L rules ushered in a new era of sportscar racing. Peugeot, the only manufacturer that ran the '91 event with a 3.5L car, returned to Le Mans with the Peugeot 905 Evo 1B and took on the Japanese opposition from Toyota and Mazda. The number 1 Peugeot Talbot Sport entry driven by Derek Warwick/Yannick Dalmás/Mark Blundell was the first '3.5L' car to win Le Mans, beating the Toyota TS010 and the number 2 Peugeot 905. For the 1993 race the ACO made the decision to allow GT cars back in the race for the first time since Group C was created. As a result many Porsche 911s and Venturi 500LMs were entered. The GT category in 1993 was won by Larbre Competition, putting their 2 Porsches in first and second.

The World Sportscar Championship collapsed before the 1993 season started and Peugeot and Mercedes focussed on F1 projects. Peugeot did return to Le Mans however, with the 905 Evo 1B. Eric Hélary/Christophe Bouchut/Geoff Brabham gave Peugeot a back-to-back victory, the two other Peugeots finishing second and third. Toyota Team Tom's was the best of the rest. Following this dominant performance, Peugeot pulled out of sports car racing. With new IMSA regulations coming into place to lower the costs the 3.5L cars were no longer eligible to race in 1994.

New cars had to be open-top, flat-bottomed sports-prototypes with production engines. The so-called LMP1 cars were not able to fight for victory though as Porsche exploited a loophole in the GT rules. Two street-legal versions of the Porsche 962 were built and modified to fit into the GT category. Jochen Dauer ran the so-called Dauer 962 cars, with Porsche support, and finished first and third. Toyota ran a couple of Group C Toyota 94C-Vs and finished second and fourth. The first real 'WSC' car (LMP1) to finish was the Kremer K8 Spyder, 18 laps behind the winning 962 in sixth.

The 63rd 24 Hours of Le Mans only saw proper GT and WSC cars on the track. Entries like the Dauer 962 and dusted-off Group C cars were not allowed. The Le Mans Prototype WM's of Welter Racing took pole position and set the fastest lap time in the race but suffered mechanical problems and retired. The McLaren F1 GTR, which was in its first racing season, turned out to be the most reliable car around the track, as it had already shown in the '95 BPR Global GT Series, and beat the Courage C34. Yannick Dalmás/Masanori Sekiya/JJ Lehto completed 298 laps, one more than the Courage. The McLaren F1 GTR took the remaining top 5 spots. Porsche responded to the McLaren F1 GTR in 1996 by entering two Porsche 911 GT1s and intended to win the race overall, defeating the McLarens and the LMPs. They succeeded in beating the McLarens, but missed out on the overall victory as Joest Racing entered a prototype for Davy Jones/Alexander Wurz/Manuel Reuter that won the race. This car was built around a TWR Jaguar

XJR-14, modified to fit into the LMP regulations and, ironically, fitted with a Porsche engine. At the end of the day Porsche won Le Mans, but not with the cars they wanted it to win with.

The 1997 race saw the same outcome as the 1996 race. The Joest Racing Porsche WSC-95 was not the fastest car out on the track, but mechanical problems for the Porsche 911 GT1s and McLaren F1 GTRs meant Joest Racing claimed his second ever back-to-back Le Mans victory with the same chassis. The drivers of this car were Michele Alboreto, Stefan Johansson and Le Mans rookie Tom Kristensen. In June 1998 the number of manufacturers officially involved in the 24 Hours of Le Mans saw a significant increase. Porsche upgraded its 911 GT1, BMW entered its new BMW V12 LM in cooperation with the Williams F1 team, Nissan sent 4 new R390 GT1s, Mercedes was involved with the CLK-GTR LM and the American Panoz team sent two Esperante GTR-1s. The race became a war of attrition that was won by Porsche. The cars from Mercedes, BMW and Toyota retired with mechanical problems or accident damage, while the Nissan R390 GT1s and McLaren F1 GTRs did not have the pace to keep up with the Porsche 911 GT1-98s. Laurent Aiello, Allan McNish and Stephane Ortelli in the number 26 Porsche gave the German manufacturer the Le Mans victory it wanted and the number 25 Porsche made it even better after taking second place. Porsche announced they would not return to Le Mans in 1999, taking a sabbatical instead...



1996: TWR Porsche WSC 95 from Joest Racing driven by Michele Alboreto, Pierluigi Martini and Didier Theys

© „Lorry“



1999: The BMW V12 LMR driven by Tom Kristensen, J.J. Lehto and Jörg Müller

© „Lorry“

For the 1999 season the rules changed again. GT1 had come to an end and was replaced by the LM GTP category for GT prototypes. Despite Porsche not being at the race, the number of manufacturers involved did not drop. Toyota entered three GT-One cars, Mercedes three new CLR LM GTPs, while Nissan and Panoz moved to the open cockpit LMP class. Newcomer for the 1999 race was Audi. They decided to race in both classes and ran two open cockpit R8R's in the LMP category and two closed cockpit R8Cs in the LM GTP. BMW entered their new V12 LMR. The 1999 event became famous for the Mercedes incidents during qualifying and race. A flaw in the CLR design caused the car to become airborne. During qualifying and warm-up Mark Webber was driving

the car when it lifted off. His car was withdrawn, the other two cars continued. Unfortunately for Mercedes a few hours into the race it was Peter Dumbreck who suffered the same problem. The Scot went into the air, over the barriers and landed in the trees. The whole accident was caught by the cameras and broadcast live on TV. Mercedes instantly withdrew the remaining car and withdrew from sportscar racing again. The race itself was won by Winkelhock, Martini and Dalmas in the Team BMW Motorsport BMW V12 LMR, ahead of the Toyota GT-One and the brand new Audi R8R. With another Audi Sport Team Joest R8R finishing in fourth place it looked like Audi had the right package to go for the win at Le Mans in the future.

The new millennium – Audi!

In 2000 three Audi R8's were entered and the R8 turned out to be an instant winner. During qualifying the number 9 R8 of Aiello, McNish and Ortelli took the pole position, the other Audi's were second and third on the grid. At the end of the 2000 Le Mans 24 Hours the same three cars were on top, albeit in a different order. Frank Biela, Tom Kristensen and Emanuele Pirro beat the sister cars to clinch the R8s first Le Mans victory.

In 2001 the Mulsanne straight was once again changed, the large hill on the last part of the straight was lowered in order to prevent accidents like the Mercedes-Benz CLRs becoming airborne in 1999. The race itself saw a famous name making its return to the French circuit. British manufacturer Bentley, like Audi owned by the Volkswagen Group, entered a Bentley EXP Speed 8 to challenge the German Audi R8. The race was hampered by heavy rain throughout the race but even the huge amounts of water could not stop Audi. The number 1 Audi of Biela/Pirro/Kristensen won again, 1 lap ahead of the number 2 Audi and 15 laps ahead of the Bentley. The 2002 race was driven on yet another

Le Mans circuit layout as the track was changed between the Dunlop bridge and the Esses. Once a straight it had now been turned into a set of fast turns leading to Tertre Rouge. Under much better weather conditions than in 2001 Bentley and Audi took on each other again and just like the previous years it was Audi that prevailed. With this result Audi Sport Team Joest and its drivers Biela, Pirro and Kristensen took their third consecutive victory as a team and manufacturer. It was the first time the same three drivers won the event three times in a row.



2002: The #3 Audi R8 driven by Marco Werner, Michael Krumm and Philipp Peter

© "Lorry"

With the success of winning three times in a row Audi did not field a works team in 2003, but privateers like Champion Racing, Team Goh and Audi Sport UK did enter the R8 though. However it was Bentley that won the race, its first victory at Le Mans since 1930. The Bentley team was supported by Audi factory squad Joest Racing and Audi had put its drivers Rinaldo Capello and Tom Kristensen in the winning car, joined by Briton Guy Smith. For Tom Kristensen it was his fourth consecutive victory, a new record. After taking the win Bentley withdrew from Le Mans again which meant there were no official works entries for the 2004 edition of the race. Nevertheless several privateer teams returned to the track with an R8 and the car showed its capabilities by scoring a 1-2-3 finish. The winning R8 of Audi Sport Japan Team Goh had a couple of familiar names in its line-up, next to Japanese Seiji Ara Audi works drivers Rinaldo Capello and Tom Kristensen were in the car. For Kristensen it was his fifth straight victory at Le Mans and his sixth overall, he was now on the same level as Jacky Ickx. The Le Mans-based Pescarolo



2006: The "Racing for Holland" Dome S101-HB – Judd driven by Jan Lammers, Alex Yoong and Stefan Johansson

© "Lorry"

squad entered its own Pescarolo C60 to compete against the Audi's and finished fourth, preventing an Audi top 4.

The 2005 edition was driven in exceptionally hot weather. The temperature was well over 30°C and caused a lot of mechanical problems for the teams. The Pescarolo Sport C60 of Collard/Boullion/Comas had taken pole position and with French rally ace Sébastien Loeb behind the wheel of the second Pescarolo the French fans all came to Le Mans hoping for a French victory for the first time since Peugeot in 1993. Unfortunately for them the Pescarolo cars had a lot of bad luck during the race and despite the lower speed of the car the reliability of the Audi R8 was the key factor. The Champion Racing R8 in the hands of Lehto, Werner and (again) Kristensen won the race, 2 laps ahead of the number 16 Pescarolo. Kristensen set a new record of seven overall Le Mans victories, six of them in succession. He was now one win ahead of Le Mans legend Jacky Ickx.

Diesel power

Before the 2006 event started the ACO changed the Dunlop Curve and Dunlop Chicane area again and extended the pit lane, as requested by the FIA. After receiving many complaints about the longer and slower pitlane during the Le Mans test day the ACO decided to use the old pit exit for the race. Audi Sport Team Joest returned to Le Mans as the official Audi works team with the diesel-powered R10 that had replaced the legendary R8. The car showed it was able to carry on where the R8 had left and it was the number 7 Audi R10 of Kristensen/McNish/Capello that took pole position for the 74th Le Mans 24 Hours. However the number 7 turned out to be less reliable as its sister car. While the number 8 of Biela/Werner/Pirro won the race, ending the winning streak of Tom Kristensen, it was the Pescarolo C60 Hybrid of Loeb/Hélary/Montagny that took second place ahead of the



2007: The #64 Corvette C6-R driven by Olivier Beretta, Oliver Gavin and Max Papis

© „Lorry“

second Audi R10. Kristensen did not improve his record, but Audi did rewrite motorsport history as the R10 became the first ever diesel-powered sports car to win Le Mans.



2009: The #8 Peugeot 908 driven by Sébastien Bourdais, Franck Montagny and Stéphane Sarrazin

© "Lorry"

The return of Peugeot to Le Mans in 2007 with a Diesel powered sports car prototype coupé was the beginning of a battle of a series of 24 hour battles. In 2007 and 2008 Audi won again with the R10, although Peugeot had the much quicker car in 2008 they were defeated by their own pit stop strategy. For 2009 Aston Martin joined the battle – hoping in vain that changes of the regulations would equalize their petrol-powered engine with the diesel powered entries. Audi presented with their new R15 that proved not to be sufficiently race ready and Peugeot 908s duly took top honours.

2010 saw the renewal of the 2009 battle. Peugeot dominated the 12 hour season opener in Sebring and laid down the gauntlet to Audi. Come June Peugeot were odds on favourites to take the win at Le Mans and on

race day four Peugeot 908's lined up against 3 Audi R15's. An assortment of petrol powered cars including Lolas, Zyteks, Oreca and the Prodrive Aston Martin were also entered but it was clear they still lagged behind the Diesels on pace.

The 3 factory 908's made good starts from the green flag and such was the pace of the leading trio of factory Peugeots they pulled out a lead of about one minute in the first hour. McNish was in the first of the Audis in 4th place having passed the privately run Oreca 908. But at about 7pm the lead Audi went for a trip in the gravel at a cost of 3 laps. The Peugeots could now ease the pace, something they looked very keen to do.

The damage to Peugeot's reliability seemed to have already been done with all 3 factory 908s and the privately run Peugeot 908 eventually retiring throughout Sunday (one suspension failure and three engine failures). En route to failure and as the situation became increasingly desperate the No.64 Corvette was sent into the barriers by the exuberant Davidson further adding to the embarrassment. Audi locked at the podium with a 1, 2, 3 finish for the Joest team. The petrol engined LMP1 race was won by Oreca and LMP2 was won by the Strakka racing Honda. It was fitting that the last LMGT1 race was won by a stalwart of the GT1 series the Saleen SR7, with GT2 glory going to the Felbermayr Porsche.

2011 - Peugeot vs. Audi - 13.8 seconds

In the 79th running of the Le Mans 24 hour race the Audi vs. Peugeot rivalry was reignited again and was the focus of the majority visiting La Sarthe that weekend. The Sebring 12 hour earlier in the year hinted that the Peugeots had the upper hand but Le Mans very rarely follows the form book.

For the first time since 2006 Audi took the top spot in qualifying with the Joest team setting a faster lap time than the much larger capacity previous evolutions of the Audi. Signatech Nissan qualified first in LMP2 and the newly created LM GTE Pro and Am categories were headed by the factory BMW team M3 and AF Corse Ferrari 458 respectively. As in 2010 the race started with 4 Peugeots taking on 3 Audis in the feature LMP1 race with all 7 mixed up in the top 7 slots. Even before the first lap was completed both teams were aware of the ability of the Peugeot to run one lap longer on a tank of fuel than the Audi. Over the course of the 24 hours this could crucially mean 2-3 less stops for the Peugeot team with respect to the legendary efficiency in the pits of the Audi team.

Within the first hour the first major incident of the race took place. Allan McNish exited the pits and thought he had an opportunity to dive past one of his team-mates just after the Dunlop Bridge. Unfortunately the No.58 Ferrari was lurking on the other side of the Audi, unsighted by McNish, who collected the Ferrari on his trip to the gravel. The Ferrari was relatively unscathed and re-joined the race but McNish was sent flying into the catch fencing before finishing up on his roof. The car was destroyed and the crowd held its breath and then released a collective sigh of relief as McNish opened the door and walked away. A spectacular accident that 20 years ago may have had a much sadder ending. The safety car came out whilst the crash barriers were repaired and due to the length enabled the Audis to make back one of their pit stop deficits whilst retaining the lead.

8 hours later and the crowd were stunned by a copycat incident involving the No.1 Audi (driven by Mike Rockenfeller) at the time and the No.71 Ferrari. In the dead of night Rockenfeller appeared to misjudge the routine pass between the Mulsanne and Indianapolis corners. He careered off the track and smashed into the barriers, the video footage showing the Audi disintegrating into thousands of pieces. Again the pilot was able to walk away much to the credit of the safety technology of the modern race car. The resulting safety car came out for over 2 hours whilst the barriers were repaired, an indication of the massive forces in the shunt. The length of this safety car resulted in a Le Mans first where a replacement safety car was deployed as the first one ran low on fuel.

As the morning broke the remaining leading Audi and Peugeot pack were close together with the staggered fuel stops causing the lead to change on several occasions. The teams began work on a finish strategy to ensure they wouldn't be pitting with only a couple of laps to go. Spectator calculations seemed to think that in this case the Peugeot No.7 would benefit and take the win but Alex Wurz through a curve ball, hitting the barrier at Indianapolis and dropping back 3 laps. This epitomized the closing hours of what many are saying is the best end to a race in a long time. Audi had worked their pit stops to give themselves back the advantage but a fuel tank issue meant they couldn't use the full 65litre capacity and an unscheduled stop was forced. At the final stop Lotterer in the No.2 Audi took the time to put on new tyres as well as fuel. Pagnaud in the No.9 Peugeot only added fuel and both he and Lotterer emerged from the pits seconds apart with the Audi ahead. The tyres paid dividends as both cars hammered round the track in a desperate sprint to the finish line with Lotterer's Audi pulling clear by only 13.8 seconds from Pagnaud's Peugeot to take the victory with the final lap at full race speed as opposed to the usual processional luxury afforded to the leader. This marked Audi's tenth win at Le Sarthe and moves them clear into second of all time wins from Ferrari on 9 and behind Porsche on 16.

A dramatic end to the GTE Pro race saw the AF Corse Ferrari narrowly missing out on the class victory to the Corvette Racing C6 despite finishing on the same lap. Corvette wrapped up a successful 24 hours by winning the GTE Am class.

2012 - The first hybrid car wins

2012 was another landmark in the long history of this race. First of all Le Mans became part of a FIA sanctioned series again, the WEC - World Endurance Championship. Almost 20 years after the last world sports car championship went down the drain; a new attempt to promote this sport worldwide has been made. The series didn't really have a dream start, just weeks before the first round Peugeot decided to pull the plug on their endurance racing program. The A.C.O .then managed to convince Toyota to step in - they actually had planned 2012 just as a test year. Without any dress rehearsal the Japanese sent a 2 car team to La Sarthe and for the first time there was petrol vs. diesel powered race fought by 2 large manufacturers, both using hybrid systems. Toyota did well for a couple of hours and even led the race for a short time - but after they had lost both cars due to an accident and mechanical trouble the race soon became another clear run for Audi. However, the German team had been unsure if the conventional car or the hybrid system would perform better and had brought 4 cars, 2 conventional and 2 hybrids. In the end Le Mans saw another landmark victory with a hybrid car taking the overall win for the first time.

2013 - Hybrid battle overshadowed by tragedy

The 2013 24 hours had overtones of the previous year with Audi vs Toyota for overall honours and plucky private teams trying to keep in the same league, followed by a big grid of LM P2 competitors that were very closely matched. In GT it would be a battle between Aston Martin, Ferrari and the newly resurrected factory Porsche Team. Corvette were, as usual, heroically upbeat but on this occasion somewhat off the pace. The Vipers looked sexy but were more optimistic than confident.

The cloud that overshadowed the race was the tragic death of Allan Simonsen driving the number 95 Aston Martin, who just at dusk ran wide at the exit of Tertre Rouge and hit the barrier at considerable speed. The 34 year old Danish driver had a huge following in his homeland along with a sizeable fan base in UK. GT drivers don't always attract that type of admiration. Tributes poured in from people who had worked with him and raced against him and without exception they all talked of one the 'good guys' of racing. This sad event cast a massive shadow over the race.



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The fatal crash was not the only incident, often resulting in time consuming repairs to barriers. As a result the safety cars were deployed 11 times and the race cars spent a total of more than five hours ploughing steadily around behind them.

The expected Audi domination was spoilt by the Toyotas. They never looked likely to win outright but they gave Audi a serious run for their money as far as podium places were concerned. They didn't have the pace of the Audis but they were more economical and the weather seemed to suit them. It was the number 8 that squeezed onto the podium and knocked one of the Audis off the perch... it was a brilliant effort with the other Toyota coming 4th despite a big accident. The LM P2 honours went to the fast and reliable No 35 OAK Racing Morgan-Nissan followed by the 24 OAK Racing Morgan-Nissan.

Aston Martin arrived with big hopes of victory in both 'Pro' and 'Am' classes but sadly these plans were knocked sideways both emotionally and tactically. Porsche on the other hand were preparing for battle in LM P1 next year and

what better way than to run a pair of factory cars to get their act together. Initially it was thought the threat to Aston would come from the reliable, nimble and economical Ferraris but it never materialized. For Porsche this was surely a dress rehearsal for their return to LM P1 next year and a very good one it was too... the team functioned well and they got what they wanted, a 1st & 2nd in LM GTE Pro. Not bad for their return to the big time. Corvette kept their hand in with an 'old' car. The C7 could not arrive soon enough for them. Aston's misfortune was complete, and at the finish of terrible 24hrs for them, the No 76 IMSA Performance Matmut took the LM GT Am class.

2014 - Threesome

Le Mans 2014 was a vintage race in so many ways. Visiting the racetrack, no one could be in doubt from the extensive marketing livery and banners from Porsche and Audi that manufactures believe in Le Mans and sports car racing and Le Mans in particular. Record attendees demonstrated the continued popularity of Le Mans with some 262,000 spectators. Finally the events of the weekend were fit to have been the storyline of a Hollywood film script.

Three top flight manufacturers, Audi (3 cars), Toyota (2 cars) and now Porsche (2 cars) all entered LMP-H hybrid cars. Rebellion taking up the non-hybrid LMP-L baton. Despite Audi, Toyota and Porsche each having a different architecture for their hybrid powerplants, there was little to choose between them in outright pace. The story started even before the race began, in Free Practice, Loic Duval badly crashed the LMP1-H '1 Audi in the Porsche Curves and put himself, and so we thought, the car too, out of the race. Amazingly the car was rebuilt, Marc Gené from Jota Sport's Zytec #38 being drafted into Audi, leaving a place that was filled very late by a surprised but very happy Oliver Turvey.

In LMP1, Toyota looked very strong having come from a win at Spa, and Porsche having found good outright pace. Qualifying suffered frequently from crashes that led to safely cars, (new) slow zones and early finishes. Despite a frustrating qualifying, the grid of Toyota in first and third position, and Porsche second and forth with Audi taking the fifth-seventh places appeared to reflect the relative speeds and it looked as though Audi's domination of recent years had ended. The prevailing view was that Audi's chance lay in reliability and team performance. In the race Toyota, Audi and Porsche all led and it looked as though any could win outright. But the race was far from predictable and there were many twists and turns from changes of places and retirements due to crashes and car unreliability. In the case of Toyota #7 caused by the failure of FIA monitoring equipment. Audi, Toyota and Porsche all lost a car. Audis came first and second, and the remaining Toyota in third. In fourth place, finishing fourteen laps behind was the remaining Rebellion. There was no shortage of excitement in the other three categories, either. LMP2 saw a fierce battle between over ten teams, with Jota Sport winning in the class (with Oliver Turvey). Meanwhile, in the GTE categories, Porsche, Corvette, Ferrari and Aston Martin fought each other in a part of the Le Mans race that should not be overlooked. Corvette, Aston Martin and Ferrari cars all claimed the top spot in GTE Pro at different times, but the AF Corse Ferrari won at the end. GTE Am was also an interesting race, with Aston Martin winning two laps ahead of the Proton Porsche.

Nissan returned to Garage 56 with their new ZEOD, an electric hybrid experimental car. It qualified 27th, behind the LMP2 and ahead of the GTE cars. It made a credible top speed of 300 km/h (186 mph). Although it succeeded in completing a lap solely on electric power it became the race's very first retirement, having a fatal gearbox issue after only five laps. Overall, the racing was extremely close and somewhat unpredictable in all areas. Spice and excitement was added through reliability, rain showers and driver misjudgements. However, for 2015, Nissan will be joining Audi, Toyota and Porsche in LMP1, which can only bring more unpredictability to the already very promising race...

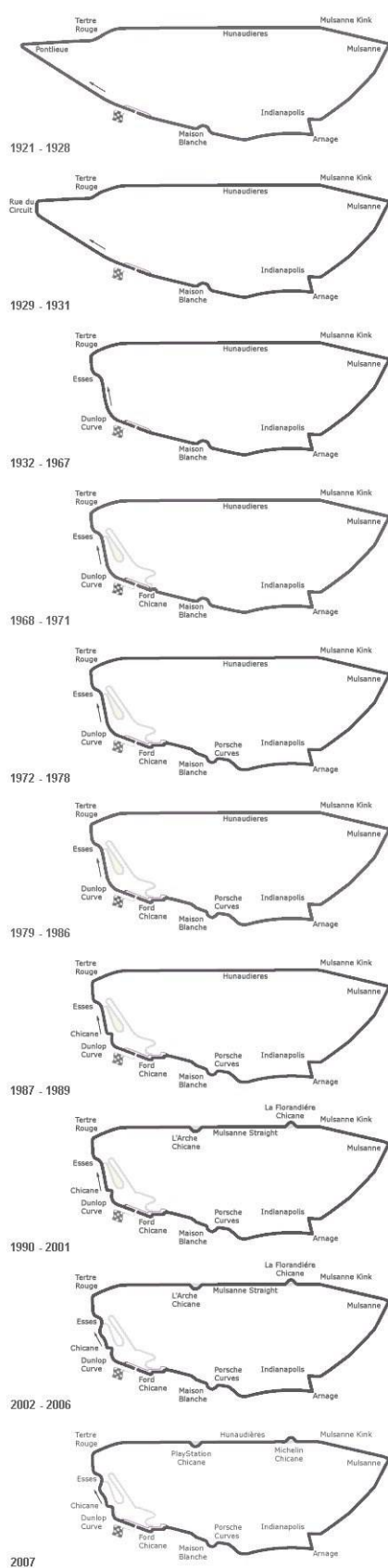
Overall winners since 1923

Year	Car	Drivers	Distance (km)
1923	Chenard & Walcker	André Lagaché (F), René Leonard (F)	2209
1924	Bentley 3-Litre	John Duff (GB), Francis Clement (GB)	2077
1925	La Lorraine	Gérard De Courcelles (F), André Rossignol (F)	2233
1926	La Lorraine	Robert Bloch (F), André Rossignol (F)	2552
1927	Bentley 3-Litre	Dudley Benjafield (GB), Sammy Davis (GB)	2369
1928	Bentley 4.5	Woolf Barnato (GB), Bernard Rubin (GB)	2669
1929	Bentley Speed Six	Woolf Barnato (GB), Sir Henry Birkin (GB)	2843
1930	Bentley Speed Six	Woolf Barnato (GB), Glen Kidston (GB)	2930
1931	Alfa Romeo 8C-2300sc	Earl Howe (GB), Sir Henry Birkin (GB)	3017
1932	Alfa Romeo 8C-2300sc	Raymond Sommer (F), Luigi Chinetti (I)	2954
1933	Alfa Romeo 8C-2300sc	Raymond Sommer (F), Tazio Nuvolari (I)	3144
1934	Alfa Romeo 8C-2300sc	Luigi Chinetti (I), Phillipe Etancelin (F)	2886
1935	Lagonda M45R	J.S. Hindmarsh (GB), Louis Fontes (RA)	3006
1936		Race was cancelled	
1937	Bugatti S7Gsc	Jean-Pierre Wimile (F), Robert Benoist (F)	3287
1938	Delhayé 135M	Eugène Chaboud (F), Jean Tremoulet (F)	3180
1939	Bugatti S7Gsc	Jean-Pierre Wimile (F), Pierre Veyron (F)	3354
1940-1948		Races were cancelled	
1949	Ferrari 166MM	Luigi Chinetti (USA), Lord Selsdon (GB)	3178

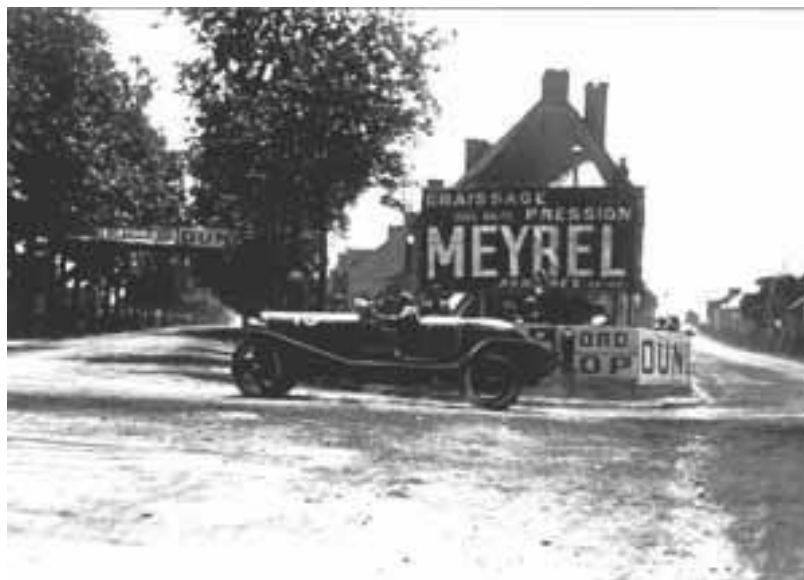
1950	Talbot-Lago	Louis Rosier (F), Jean-Louis Rosier (F)	3465
1951	Jaguar C-Type	Peter Walker (GB), Peter Whitehead (GB)	3611
1952	Mercedes-Benz 300SL	Hermann Lang (D), Fritz Reiss (D)	3733
1953	Jaguar C-Type	Tony Rolt (GB), Duncan Hamilton (GB)	4088
1954	Ferrari 375	Juan Froilan Gonzales (RA), Maurice Trintignant (F)	4061
1955	Jaguar D-Type	Mike Hawthorn (GB), Ivor Bueb (GB)	4135
1956	Jaguar D-Type	Ron Flockhart (GB), Ninian Sanderson (GB)	4034
1957	Jaguar D-Type	Ron Flockhart (GB), Ivor Bueb (GB)	4397
1958	Ferrari 250TR58	Olivier Gendebien (B), Phil Hill (USA)	4101
1959	Aston Martin DBR1	Caroll Shelby (USA), Roy Salvadori (GB)	4347
1960	Ferrari 250TR59/60	Olivier Gendebien (B), Paul Frère (B)	4217
1961	Ferrari 250TR61	Olivier Gendebien (B), Phil Hill (USA)	4476
1962	Ferrari 250P	Olivier Gendebien (B), Phil Hill (USA)	4451
1963	Ferrari 250P	Ludovico Scarfiotti (I), Lorenzo Bendini (I)	4561
1964	Ferrari 275P	Jean Guichet (F), Nino Vaccarella (I)	4695
1965	Ferrari 250LM	Jochen Rindt (A), Masten Gregory (USA)	4677
1966	Ford GT40 Mk II	Chris Amon (NZ), Bruce McLaren (NZ)	4843
1967	Ford GT40 Mk IV	Dan Gurney (USA), A.J. Foyt (USA)	5232
1968	Ford GT40	Pedro Rodriguez (MX), Lucien Bianchi (B)	4452
1969	Ford GT40	Jacky Ickx (B), Jackie Oliver (GB)	4997
1970	Porsche 917	Hans Hermann (D), Richard Attwood (GB)	4607
1971	Porsche 917	Helmut Marko (A), Gijs van Lennep (NL)	5335
1972	Matra-Simca MS670	Henri Pescarolo (F), Graham Hill (GB)	4691
1973	Matra-Simca MS670B	Henri Pescarolo (F), Gérard Larousse (F)	4853
1974	Matra-Simca MS670B	Henri Pescarolo (F), Gérard Larousse (F)	4606
1975	Mirage-Ford M8	Jacky Ickx (B), Derek Bell (GB)	4594
1976	Porsche 936	Jacky Ickx (B), Gijs van Lennep (NL)	4769
1977	Porsche 936	Jacky Ickx (B), Jurgen Barth (D), Hurley Haywood (USA)	4671
1978	Renault-Alpine A442	Jean-Pierre Jaussaud (F), Didier Pironi (F)	5044
1979	Porsche 935	Klaus Ludwig (D), Bill Whittington (USA), Don Whittington (USA)	4173
1980	Rondeau-Ford M379B	Jean-Pierre Jausaud (F), Jean Rondeau (F)	4608
1981	Porsche 936-81	Jacky Ickx (B), Derek Bell (GB)	4825
1982	Porsche 956-82	Jacky Ickx (B), Derek Bell (GB)	4899
1983	Porsche 956-83	Vern Schuppan (AUS), Hurley Haywood (USA), Al Holbert (USA)	5047
1984	Porsche 956B	Klaus Ludwig (D), Henri Pescarolo (F)	4900
1985	Porsche 956B	Klaus Ludwig (D), Paolo Barilla (I), "John Winter" (D)	5088
1986	Porsche 962C	Derek Bell (GB), Hans Stuck (D), Al Holbert (USA)	4972
1987	Porsche 962C	Derek Bell (GB), Hans Stuck (D), Al Holbert (USA)	4971
1988	Jaguar XJR-9LM	Johnny Dumfries (GB), Jan Lammers (NL), Andy Wallace (GB)	5332
1989	Sauber-Mercedes C9	Jochen Mass (D), Stanley Dickens (S), Manuel Reuter (D)	5265
1990	Jaguar XJR-12	Martin Brundle (GB), John Nielsen (DK), Price Cobb (USA)	4882
1991	Mazda 787B	Johnny Herbert (GB), Bertrand Gachot (B), Volker Weidler (D)	4922
1992	Peugeot 905	Derek Warwick (GB), Yannick Dalmas (F), Mark Blundell (GB)	4787
1993	Peugeot 905B	Geoff Brabham (AUS), Eric Helary (F), Christophe Bouchut (F)	5100
1994	Dauer Porsche 962LM	Yannick Dalmas (F), Hurley Haywood (USA), Mauro Baldi (I)	4678
1995	McLaren F1 GTR	Yannick Dalmas (F), J.J. Lehto (SF), Masanori Sekiya (J)	4055
1996	Porsche WSC95	Manuel Reuter (D), Alex Wurz (A), Davy Jones (USA)	4814
1997	Porsche WSC95	Michele Alboreto (I), Stefan Johansson (S), Tom Kristensen (DK)	4909
1998	Porsche 911 GT1	Allan McNish (GB), Stéphane Ortelli (F), Laurent Aiello (F)	4773
1999	BMW V12 LMR	Yannick Dalmas (F), Jo Winkelhock (D), Pierluigi Martini (I)	4968
2000	Audi R8	F. Biela (D), Tom Kristensen (DK), E. Pirro (I)	5007
2001	Audi R8	F. Biela (D), Tom Kristensen (DK), E. Pirro (I)	4381
2002	Audi R8	F. Biela (D), Tom Kristensen (DK), E. Pirro (I)	5118
2003	Bentley EXP Speed 8	Rinaldo Capello (I), Tom Kristensen (DK), Guy Smith (GB)	5146
2004	Audi R8	Rinaldo Capello (I), Tom Kristensen (DK), Seiji Ara (J)	5169
2005	Audi R8	Tom Kristensen (DK), JJ Lehto (SF), Marco Werner (D)	5050
2006	Audi R10	F. Biela (D), E. Pirro (I), Marco Werner (D)	5187
2007	Audi R10	F. Biela (D), E. Pirro (I), Marco Werner (D)	5029
2008	Audi R10	Rinaldo Capello (I), Tom Kristensen (DK), Allan McNish (GB)	5192
2009	Peugeot 908	David Brabham (AU), Marc Gené (ES), Alexander Wurz (AT)	5206
2010	Audi R15+	Timo Bernhard (DE), Romain Dumas (FR), Mike Rockenfeller (DE)	5410
2011	Audi R18 TDI	Marcel Fässler (CH), André Lotterer (DE), Benoît Tréluyer (FR)	4839
2012	Audi R18 e-tron quattro	Marcel Fässler (CH), André Lotterer (DE), Benoît Tréluyer (FR)	5151
2013	Audi R18 e-tron quattro	Allan McNish (GB), Tom Kristensen (DK), Loïc Duval (FR)	4743
2014	Audi R18 e-tron quattro	Marcel Fässler (CH), André Lotterer (DE), Benoît Tréluyer (FR)	5165

The “Circuit 24 Heures”

Since 1923 this small part of France has been a Mecca for motorsports fans from across the globe. From fairly humble beginnings, today's race is watched by close to 300,000 people trackside and a TV audience of millions, making it one of the largest single venue sporting events in the world.



The 24 hour event has evolved from a complex handicap race where the car that crossed the line having covering the most laps, was not always the winner, to the balls-out 24 hour sprint we have today.



1923: The Pontlieue hairpin corner

Likewise, the track has had to change to accommodate shifting attitudes to safety and the expanding needs of this industrial city. The winners of the first race in 1923 were André Lagache & René Léonard, driving a Chenard & Walcker. While these two drivers have the honour of grandstands named in their honour along the pit straight, they would find the track very different today.

The original 17.2 km circuit which those pioneers raced on in 1923 started in the same area as now, but carried on much closer to Le Mans city until it reached an area known as Pontlieue, (roughly where the Carrefour now stands). There it turned sharp right onto the Les Hunaudieres straight, sometimes also referred to as the Mulsanne. From there on it travelled for miles towards Mulsanne village before turning sharp right again towards Arnage and then the pit straight.

In 1929 much to the disgust of the drivers, the track was shortened slightly to 16.34km. This was achieved by cutting out the hairpin bend in the village of Pontlieue at the request of the local inhabitants. It was replaced by two right hand bends joined by a short straight just outside the village before rejoining Les Hunaudieres and carrying on as before.

The track remained unaltered until 1932 when the A.C.O. purchased some land between the pit straight and the Hunaudieres. The Club now was able to route the track to avoid the fast expanding city and these corners were to evolve into the Esses and Tertre Rouge (French for 'Red hillock'). This new section proved to be a massive success with drivers and spectators alike, getting the right line for the drivers was crucial for a fast ride down the straight and a good lap time and provided the public with an amazing view that was to become famous.

The circuit was to stay with this layout until after the horrific 1955 accident when changes were made to the pit straight to widen it. This was costly, as it involved the moving of tonnes of earth and the creation of signalling pits at the exit of the Mulsanne corner, to prevent the drivers being distracted by pit boards. These changes made little difference to the general layout.

Until a few years ago it was still possible to see the remains of the signalling pits, last used in the mid 80s, just after the Mulsanne Corner.



1995: The Esses

© Rupert Lowes

However, the pace of competing cars grew, and the lap times fell by over 30 seconds. The speed differential between a 50's D-type Jaguar and a 60's Ford GT40 was becoming a worry and the A.C.O. realised that it needed to make a few changes. These started in 1968 when the Ford chicane was installed immediately before the pit entrance. This brought the distance down to 13.469 km. The organisers also added Armco along the entire circuit and created better runoffs. In 1971 the famous Le Mans 'ear of corn' running start was also forgone and replaced with a rolling start.

In 1971, a Porsche 917K driven by Helmut Marko and Gijs van Lennep, set distance and speed records that remain to this day. 5335.31 km (3334 miles) were covered at an average speed of

222.3 kph (138.9 mph). By comparison Audi's R10 completed 5187.0 km (3223 miles) in 2006 with an average of 215.40 kph (133.843 mph). The lap record in 1971 went to Jackie Oliver's 917 LH at a stunning 3:18.4 sec, an incredible average of 244.387 km (152.7 mph).

In 1972, the ACO continued its revisions and decided it needed to have greater control over the track. More land was purchased and a completely new section was created between Arnage & the Ford Chicane, by-passing Maison Blanche completely, before rejoining the existing track just before the start straight at the Ford Chicane, which was also modified. This lengthened the track to 13.64km, pretty much the distance today. The circuit stayed in this format between 1972 and 1986 with only some modifications to the Tertre Rouge corner to allow for the widening of the N138. The Mulsanne corner was also re-profiled for the construction of a roundabout.

In 1987 the Dunlop chicane was added. This slowed the cars dramatically on their approach to the Esses and destroyed a classic section of track. The circuit, along with most other European ones, was also falling victim to enlarged runoff areas that have evolved into acres of gravel with the public having to face increasing amounts of mesh fencing between them and the cars, to the point where now, almost the entire track is fenced off. However, worse was to come in 1990. The "Les Hunaudières" straight - along with the character of the entire track - was changed when two chicanes were added. Gone were the Langheck specials, corner speeds went up and top speeds fell. The track had fallen victim to a bitter dispute between the A.C.O. and the FIA, who had brought in a new rule limiting the length of a single straight. The lap times went up by about 15 seconds. Whether the track is any safer with the chicanes is open to debate; true the top speeds of the cars were slowed by about 30 mph on the straight, but as a consequence higher down force set-ups were used then which has pushed up the corner speeds on the rest of the track. The one good thing to come out of this is that the small WM Peugeot team will forever hold onto the fastest speed down the chute. Set during the 1988 race Roger Dorchy hit 405 km/h (251.1mph) strapped into his WM88 Peugeot. The fastest in 1990 was a Jaguar XJR-12 at 353km/h (218mph) some 50km/h (31mph) slower. Despite some meddling with the Dunlop chicane and the construction in 1991 of a new pit complex, the track was to remain largely unchanged throughout the growth and death of the GT1 cars of the 90's.



1982: Dunlop Curve

© Rupert Lowes

In 2002 the Esses were extensively reworked at the request of the bikers to slow the bikes entry onto the short Bugatti track. This led to the loss of another seminal section of track. The Esses between the Dunlop bridge and Tertre Rouge, once an exciting, tight yet flowing section of track, now became a wide open section of sweepers set in

masses of gravel that could just about be on any circuit in the world. For 2006 the bikers once again demanded changes. The Dunlop chicane was tightened up still further. The sight of the cars sweeping up the slight hill at the end of the pit straight, then under the Dunlop bridge before dropping down into the Esses and onto Tertre Rouge is now a distant memory.



1996: Dunlop Bridge

© Rupert Lowes

Work on the new Paddock and Village areas was completed in the early part of the decade, removing another part of the history of the Le Mans track. Gone was the country market feel of the old village, that had over time become rundown replaced by a large modern plaza. Extra garages were also added at this time to allow for an increase in the number of starters in the race. The track re-profiling of Tertre Rouge to allow for the new Tram link was completed in time for the 2007 race. This has opened up the corner so the entry speed onto the straight have increased and provides an excellent vantage point. The cars now pass the another sign of progress, the new Le Mans FC stadium, modelled on the Bolton FC Reebok stadium in the United Kingdom, Le Mans twin town.

For 2012 the run-off areas at Arnage corner were extended. Following the tragic accident of Allan Simonsen, for 2014 the A.C.O. did some additional safety related modifications to the circuit: At the Esses new kerbing was installed and the hard shoulders were stabilised. At the exit from Tertre Rouge two rows of tyres were added in front of the guardrail and Corvette corner got a new runoff area consisting of a gravel trap. Also new kerbing at the final right-left of the two-part chicane before the start-finish straight was introduced to stop GTE drivers straightlining the second apex. More changes are probably planned for the coming years as the A.C.O. continues to evolve the circuit to match the demands on both available space as the city expands and the speeds of cars. However, in recent years there has also been an effort to make the speed of the cars match the circuit standards. The technical rules were changed several times in the past by restricting engine size and adding extra weight to the cars. Target was to slow down cars to lap times of 3:30 mins; a time which is considered to be safe for the current track standards. But no matter how much they tried to slow the prototypes down, this mark was always beaten.

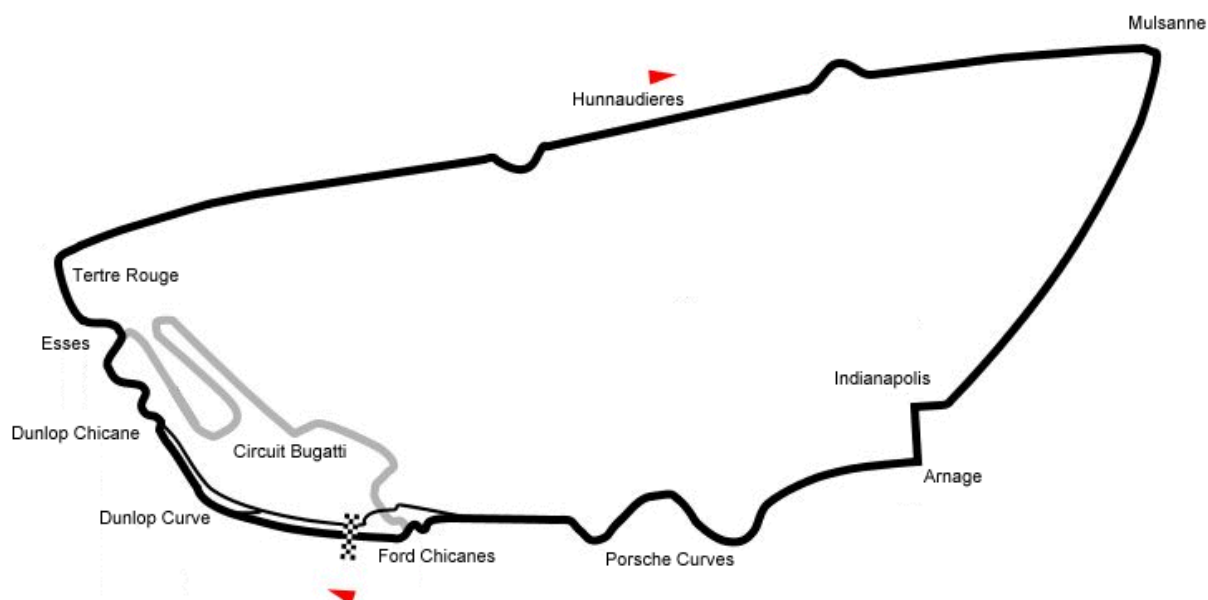
For 2014 there are completely new regulations for the P1 cars in the book, basically limiting energy consumption by almost 30%, restricting tyre size and overall widths of the cars. Let's see what the new generation of P1 cars can do, but I bet they'll beat the 3:30 mark again.

Changes to 2015 focus on the Porsche Curves. This iconic series of fast sweeping bends were introduced in 1972 and are considered by drivers one of the most challenging aspects of the circuit. The changes start on the outside of the tricky right hander that leads the cars into the complex and are not to the tarmac itself but consist of extended run-off and gravel trap. To accommodate these changes the banking has been moved backwards. New NASCAR style 'Safer' Tec Pro barriers have been introduced in an effort to improve safety.

Major circuit changes - overview

1923 – 1928	10.726 miles, initial track
1929 - 1931	10.153 miles, hairpin bend at Pontlieu cut out
1932 - 1955	8.475 miles, new section from the pits to the Esses and Tertre Rouge
1956 - 1967	8.364 miles, wider pit straight, Dunlop curve changed
1968 - 1971	8.369 miles, Ford chicane installed
1972 - 1978	8.475 miles, new Porsche curves between Arnage and the Ford chicane
1979 - 1985	8.467 miles, modified Tertre Rouge corner
1986	8.51 miles, modified Mulsanne corner
1987 - 1989	8.41 miles, Dunlop chicane installed
1990 - 2001	8.45 miles, Mulsanne chicanes installed
2002 - 2006	8.483 miles, new section between Dunlop Bridge and Tertre Rouge
2007	8.480 miles, Tertre Rouge was modified

The current track layout



War of the classes

Le Mans isn't just about winning the race overall - it comprises four main separate classes, each entrant fighting for the honours in their respective class, and the competition within each often as fierce as that for the overall victory. The prototype classes - LMP1 and LMP2 - are for cars specially developed for the track only, and the GTE classes - GTE-PRO and GTE-AM - are essentially road cars modified for the track.

LMP1 - Le Mans Prototypes Class 1: A new era - It's all about the energy consumed

For many years, in order to prevent excessive power development, the rule makers for Le Mans and almost every other motor race on the planet have restricted engine output by limiting the cubic capacity or the number of cylinders, by modifying the size of air restrictors or restricting turbo boost, thus limiting the amount of air (and thus fuel) which could be fed into the engine. From 2014 in the LMP1 category, these fundamentals radically changed in that the energy consumption of the engine becomes the key factor. Manufacturers can largely build what they want.

There are minimal restrictions on engine size number and turbo boost and in addition the regulations permit up to two energy recovery systems (ERS) per car. These systems recover what would otherwise have been lost energy and allow it to be used to power the car. However, what the regulations have done is give with one hand and take away with the other. Depending on the level of energy that a car can recover and use, it is placed into a category that determines how much fuel it is allowed to consume. Fuel flow meters measure the flow and relay the information back to the authorities. In simple terms, the new regulations challenges entrants to make the best use of a prescribed amount of energy in order to cover the longest distance within a given time – such as 24 hours at Le Mans. This makes the challenge for the cars to be both fast and energy efficient.



Old hands among the fans remember that this concept is not really brand new: In the glorious days of Group C sports car racing there was a regulation which limited energy consumption, everyone got an allowance of 2,140 litres of petrol for the whole of the 24h of Le Mans. Engine constructors had complete freedom, in those days Porsche raced a 6 cyl. flat 3.0 litre Turbo, Jaguar used 7.0 litre V12 normally-aspirated engines, the folks at Mercedes built a 5.0 Litre V8 Turbo and Mazda used a rotary engine. Despite these very different concepts the performance of the competitors was close to each other, competition was fierce and the races were interesting to watch. However, in the Group C days there were no energy recovery systems around and diesel was only used for team trucks, so this rather simple approach worked fine.

For 2015, the differences between manufacturers and privateers have been abolished, and the class is now divided into LMP1 Hybrid (for cars with ERS) and LMP1 (for those without ERS).

Hybrid systems are prescribed in four different performance classes, and a maximum amount of energy able to be used is defined for each of these classes. The energy chart below shows the amount of energy allocated to each power train concept, and the associated fuel flow allowed.

	LMP1	LMP1 Hybrid			
Energy recovery (Megajoule)	0	2	4	6	8
Minumim weight	850 kg	870 kg			
Max fuel flow Kg/h (petrol)	100.9	94.3	91.9	89.5	88.5
Max fuel flow Kg/h (diesel)	87.0	81.0	79.0	77.0	75.1

What this boils down to is that entrants must have optimum control of the car's fuel consumption, be able to approach the permissible energy limit as closely as possible, and the drivers must exercise an efficient driving style. If the amount of energy available per lap is not fully consumed, it cannot be carried over to subsequent laps and will

therefore be lost. Should the prescribed maximum levels be exceeded, the excess consumption must be compensated for within three laps, otherwise penalties like stop-and-go may be imposed. So effectively, the manufacturer with the most efficient power train being driven by drivers with an efficient driving style will win the race.

All this will mean that on-board loggers and computers will constantly be monitoring the fuel flow and output of the energy recovery systems, and data will be sent real-time to ACO computer equipment which will flag any discrepancy to the stewards. What this means is that the teams monitor the car's fuel consumption and if it goes over that allowed in their hybrid category, then the driver is instructed to recover the discrepancy, by for example, slowing down.

Today's constructors seem to have a very different view on what might be the best solution, so similarly to the old Group C we see a variety of extremely different engines and hybrid systems.

- Toyota (6Mj) use a 3.4 ltr. V8 normally aspirated petrol engine driving the rear wheels together with a hybrid system using energy recovery from the front axle, energy storage in a supercapacitor and drive electric motors on the rear axle.
- Audi (4Mj category) employ a 3.7 ltr. V6-Turbo Diesel together with a hybrid system recovering energy from the front axle together with 700kj accumulator storage driving electric motors on the front axle.
- Porsche (8Mj) have the smallest engine with a 2.0 Ltr. 4-cyl-Turbo petrol engine driving the rear axle in addition to a hybrid system recovering front axle and exhaust energy, storage using a lithium iron battery and drive electric motors on the front axle.
- Nissan (2Mj), who return in 2015 with a very innovative design including a (Panoz inspired???) front-engine 3 ltr V6 twin turbo driving the front wheels in addition to a flywheel energy storage that can mechanically power both or either the front and rear axles.

The ACO, in their perennial quest to have all cars in a given category going round the circuit with exactly the same lap times (fortunately they have not yet achieved this!!), have defined the principle of "Equivalence of Technology", and this gives them the ability to balance out the performance between the hybrids and non-hybrids by increasing the performance of the non-hybrids. This EoT is calculated on historical data collected from the fastest car(s) in each technology.



Manufacturers must balance all the compromises in their design – the conventional fuel driveline together with the hybrid components including the systems to recover the energy, the storage, and the hybrid drive method and the overall impact these have on the car's weight as well as packaging and reliability. Conventional wisdom appears to suggest that the more hybrid capability a car has, the faster it is, despite the best intentions of the regulations. In addition, the more efficient the car is, the less refuelling it has to have, so the longer it can stay out on track.

Other Changes in LMP

In LMP1 (hybrid and non-hybrid):

- Wheels have been reduced in size to 14" width and 28" diameter, the minimum weight of the cars is now 870kg for LMP1 Hybrid and 850kg for LMP1.
- Stop lights must automatically flash as an alarm when loss of acceleration is greater than .4g within .2 secs for at least .2 secs. The alarm is deactivated when the brakes are applied, in which case the lights come on solid or when acceleration increases.
- Drivers weight is now taken into consideration. If the average weight of all drivers in a car is less than 80kg, ballast, equal to 80kg less the average weight of drivers will be added to the car. If the average weight is equal to or greater than 80kg, no ballast is added (nor weight reduced elsewhere).

- The seating position of the driver is now more upright, and their angle of forward vision has been enlarged, while cutouts at the rear ends of the fenders optimize lateral vision. Passive safety has also been improved in that the monocoque must cater for higher loads, and special exterior layers provide protection against the intrusion of sharp foreign objects. Wheel tethers help prevent wheels from separating from the suspension in accidents, and cars will be equipped with crash-boxes to better absorb energy in rear-end shunts.

In LMP2:

- The rules essentially remain unchanged for 2015, allowing competitors to continue racing their existing chassis, however cars conforming to the 2014 specification can also be entered. Open prototypes are still allowed in this class and manufacturers are discouraged – “The ACO do not wish to encourage the Manufacturers to invest in LMP2 in any developments which improve the performance of the cars. The main objectives for these cars must be reliability, safety and a low maintenance cost.” Also the rules for the LMP2 engines remain unchanged, and for cost reasons, these need to be based on production engines.
- Once again, the balance of performance between different cars can be adjusted - in other words, if your car performs consistently better than others in the class, your car will be slowed down by reducing engine power, having additional ballast or by reducing fuel tank size.
- One of the timed laps in qualifying MUST be made by a silver or bronze driver

The GT cars

For 2015, there are no significant changes to the regulations. These are cars built by manufacturers for sale on the open market: Engine sizes are limited to 5.5 litres for normally aspirated engines, and 4.0 litres for turbos. Fuel capacity is limited to 90 litres. These cars are based almost totally on the old GT2 specification, with a few minor changes (ie paddle shift systems allowed and display, push buttons and switches allowed on the steering wheel). Cars not homologated by a manufacturer will also be accepted if entered by tuners - subject to separate homologation criteria. All cars are limited to one evolution per year, to be made before the first race of the season. LMGTE is sub-divided into two separate classes:



- LMGTE-Pro - designed more especially for professionals where up-to-date models are used as the basis for the race car. Driver line-up is free.
- LMGTE-Am - more for the 'amateur', where cars must be at least one year old and without further modification. This is designed to create a second-user market for GT cars. The crew is limited to only one professional driver. One minor change in 2015 is that one of the timed laps in qualifying must be made by a bronze driver.

Leader Lights

In 2007 the A.C.O. introduced the “leader lights” system. Each car must have 3 LED lights mounted on both sides; these lights have different colors for each class:

- LMP1: red lights
- LMP2: blue lights
- LMGTE-Pro: green lights
- LMGTE-Am: yellow lights

The leading car of each class will show one light switched on, the second place car two lights, the third place car 3 lights; if no lights are burning then the car is fourth or further down the order. These “Leader Lights” will help trackside spectators to follow the progress of the race, especially at night or in poor visibility. This system reloads at the timing line so it is basically the previous lap position that one is viewing.



The 4 classes – overview

The following overview page gives just the most basic facts; the exact regulations are very extensive with lots of technical stuff, e.g. numbers about the minimum of road cars produced for the GT classes, size of the wings and others. All figures mentioned are maximum values, except the car's weight of course...



LMP1

- Closed roof sports cars with room for 2 seats
- 4.65 m length, between 1.8 to 1.9 m width, 1.05 m height
- Engine size is free for P1 Hybrid, max 5.5 litres for non-Hybrid
- Minimum weight of 870 kg for P1 Hybrid, 850 kg for P1
- 68.3 litres fuel tank for petrol engines, 54.2 litres for diesel
- Headlights with white beam
- Race numbers white digits on red background
- 14" wheel width, 28.5" diameter
- Bronze drivers are not accepted.



LMP2

- Open or closed roof sports cars with room for 2 seats
- Production based engines: 5.0 ltr. atmo engine (max 8 cyl) or 3.2 ltr. Turbo/supercharged (max. 6 cyl)
- 900 kg minimum weight
- 4.65 m length, 2.00 m width, 1.03 m height (or 1.05 for 2014-spec cars)
- 75 litres fuel tank
- Headlights with white beam
- Race numbers white digits on blue background
- 14" wheel width, 28" diameter
- Must include a minimum of one Silver or Bronze driver



LMGTE-PRO

- "Professional" GTE sports cars
- 5.5 ltr. atmo engine or 4 ltr. Turbo
- Minimum weight 1245Kg
- 4.8m length, 2.05m width (excluding rear-view mirrors)
- 90 litres fuel tank
- Headlights with yellow beam
- Race numbers white digits on green background
- 14" wheel width, 28" diameter
- Carbon brake discs
- The driver line up is free



LMGTE-AM

- "Amateur" GTE sports cars
- Specification same as GTE-PRO
- The car must be at least one year old
- Race numbers white digits on orange background
- At least one bronze and one silver or bronze rated driver in the team, only one professional driver from Platinum or Gold class

Sporting regulations

The full regulations (see www.24h-lemans.com) cover everything from what can be done where and when, the penalties for infringement, to what patches must be worn by drivers and mechanics on their worksuits. These rules now cover all races in the WEC Championship, with differences for Le Mans. Although the regulations look rather comprehensive and strict, the organizers often leave themselves the option to decide differently because of “force majeure”, a term which can be found many times in the sporting regulations. The following list is just a summary of some of the rules.

Race Numbers

- All race numbers displayed on the car (side and front) must be in the ‘class’ colours ie LMP1 – red, LMP2 – blue, GTE-PRO – green and GTE-AM – orange. The actual numbers are in white on a background of these colours. They must also be lit so that they are visible in the dark.

In-car Cameras

- All competitors have to accept and facilitate the setting up in their cars of a system of technical means enabling the production, the storing, the selection, the compression and the transmission of a video signal or any other signal via satellite.
- Any other camera can only be used on the test day and the free practice session on Wednesday.

Drivers

- Drivers are placed into one of 4 categories - Platinum, Gold, Silver and Bronze depending on their experience and ability. See separate section in this guide for details
- To be accepted, a driver must be on the ACOs list of confirmed drivers. If they are not, they can a)take part in the Test Day or b)take an ACO-organized half-day training course to gain a certificate of competence.
- A maximum of 3 drivers is allowed for each car. Drivers are not allowed to change to another car during the race, even within the same team
- In order to qualify, each driver must achieve a lap time at least equal to 120% of the average of the 3 best laps set by 3 cars of different makes, and at least equal to 110% of the best time achieved by the fastest car in each of the classes LMP1, LMP2 and GTE Pro. In GTE AM, the CAR must meet these criteria - ie any and only one of the drivers need to meet them. Furthermore, all drivers have to do a minimum of 5 laps during night time qualifying sessions, at least one of which must be a complete lap (ie must cross start/finish line).
- A driver is only allowed to drive a maximum of 4 hours within a 6 hours’ time frame (minus pit stop time)
- Maximum total drive time for a driver is 14 hours
- Minimum drive time - For LM P2 and GTE Am categories, a driver is not permitted to drive less than 4 hours

New in 2015 – Tyres

- There is a limit on the number of dry-weather tires that can be used during race week:

	Sets allowed for free practice & qualifying	Sets allowed for the race
LMP1	7	12
LMP2	7	16
GTE-Pro	8	16
GTE-Am	8	16

- An extra 2 sets are allowed for new tyre manufacturer (race only).
- There is no limit on the number of wets or intermediates.
- Tyre-warmers can only be used in the area behind the pit garage - they are a definite no-no in the pits or on the pit apron.

Test day

- The Test Day is mandatory for new Cars, new Teams and new Drivers.
- In 2015, the new LMP3 cars will be allowed at the test day, but are not allowed in the race.

Qualifying/Grid Position

- The regulations for 2015 regarding qualification have changed. A couple of times in recent years, a team (usually a French-entered one) has been allowed to race in spite of the team's woeful inability to get their car around the circuit during practice/qualifying in anything close to a qualifying time. 2 drivers from each crew must set at least one timed lap during qualifying. The average of the 2 best laps determines the grid position. The starting grid will be established firstly by those teams that completed the mandatory 2 laps (minimum of 1 lap by 2 drivers), followed by teams that completed only one mandatory lap, and finally by teams that were unable to set a time. The word 'mandatory' used here is taken directly from the wording in the published regulations, but it will be obvious that it is used here in a different sense in that a team will be

allowed to start even if it has not completed the 2 “mandatory” laps - perhaps it has lost (or gained??) something in translation from “obligatoire”.

Other New Rules

- Someone has obviously upset the ACO in the recent past - a new rule forbids the starting of an engine during the National Anthem.
- Any person working on the pit apron - with the exception of the wheel-change crew - must now wear full fire protection clothing including fire-proof overalls, gloves, balaclava, goggles, long underwear, shoes and helmet - this includes the guy with the long pole and the car number on the end, windscreen cleaners and datalog collectors. For the 4 wheel changers the gloves, balaclava and goggles element of the dress code are recommended rather than mandatory.

The start

- The starting grid will be in a staggered 2 x 2 formation. After one lap behind the pace car there will be a “flying” or “rolling” start.
- In P1 and GTE Pro, the start driver must be nominated at scrutineering. In P2 and GTE AM, the driver who set the fastest time in qualifying must start the race.
- If a car can't make it to the starting grid, it is allowed to start from the pits. It has a maximum of 1 hour after the actual start to do so, after which the car will be excluded from the race.

Pit stops

- The engine must be switched off at the start of the pit stop; once the pit stop is finished it must be re-started without any additional device or outside assistance
- During refuelling no one is allowed to work on the car (except for driver changes and windscreen/rear-view mirrors cleaning), and the car cannot be jacked up. An exception to this is in P1 - if the fuel-flow meter is defective, another mechanic can change the meter at the same time.
- Cars must be electrically earthed before the refuelling equipment is connected
- Fuel tanks must always be filled to the top ie no more ‘splash & dash’ scenarios
- For tyre changes, a maximum of any 2 mechanics (from a maximum of 4 designated) and one only air gun is allowed, and all equipment and wheels must be taken from/returned to the garage whilst the car is stopped in the pit lane.
- A third person is allowed only to retrieve data from the ACO Data Logger.
- For other repairs in the pit lane a maximum of 4 mechanics are allowed to work on the car. The car may be pushed back into its garage where more people can work on it
- Speed limit within the pit lane is 60 km/h
- Reverse gear cannot be used in the pit lane - if necessary, the car must be pushed by no more than 4 people
- It is strictly forbidden to spin the wheels when leaving the pits!! Penalty for this in 2012 was a 3 minutes Stop-and-Go.

Safety Car/SLOW ZONES

- When it is decreed necessary by the race director, safety cars are deployed. There are three safety cars located around the circuit, and when directed, they are deployed immediately ie they do not wait for a particular car (eg race leader), and all usual safety car rules apply – the main one being no overtaking. There is nothing new in this procedure, but obviously the experiences of the past few years, where many hours of the race were conducted under safety car rules, has forced a new concept to be adopted – Slow Zones.
- The circuit is divided into 21 numbered zones corresponding to the Post Marshal number at the entrance of the zone, the start of each zone corresponding to a main signaller post. When a particular zone of the circuit is deemed to be a Slow Zone due to on-track activity (medical, Armco repairs), then the previous zone becomes a slowing down zone. The start of this zone will be indicated by a large yellow sign (1.2m x .6m) saying NEXT SLOW. Drivers must slow down in this zone to a maximum of 80kph, and overtaking is prohibited. The start of the Slow Zone itself is indicated by the same sized yellow board with SLOW and an encircled 80. There is a maximum speed of 80kph in the Slow Zone and again, overtaking is not allowed. The end of the Slow Zone is situated at the start of the next physical zone, and is indicated by a green light and green flags. If necessary, the Slow Zone can be lengthened to include more than one physical zone.
- In 2015, the Maximum speed limit in the Slow Zones has been increased to 80kph from the 60kph speed when the system was introduced in 2014.

En route

- If a car stops on the race track and the driver leaves it and walks further than 10 metres away from his car then the car will be excluded from the race. No outside assistance is allowed; only the driver can carry out repairs using tools and spares carried aboard. Supplying with fuel, water, oil, etc., is prohibited on and along the track
- Drivers are not allowed to push their cars
- Headlights must be on at all times, on the track and whilst in motion in the pit lane
- One of the silliest rules and difficult to enforce at night time: cars are not allowed to cross the white lines marking the race track or use the kerbs

Repairs

- Chassis, engine block, gearbox casing and the differential casing cannot be changed

Time penalties

- If you have been a naughty boy (or girl) the race marshals will show you the black flag and give you a timed "Stop/Go" or drive-through penalty. When this happens, you can do a maximum of 4 more laps before coming into the pit lane for your penalty. These penalties cannot be combined with a pit stop.
- Penalties can not be taken when the safety cars are deployed, or when a 'Slow Zone' has been activated.

Withdrawal

- The pit curtain must be lowered during the race when the team declares a withdrawal of his car. So if the garage door is down, the car is out!

Fuel

- All teams have to use the fuel provided by the race organizer

End of race / classification

- Le Mans is an endurance race! You'll only be classified if you have covered at least 70 % of the race distance of the winner in your class **and** if you pass the chequered flag at the end of race. Leading the race for 23 hours and 55 minutes and retiring e.g. with a blown engine 5 minutes prior to race end won't get you on the podium or even classified, even if you have done already more laps than the subsequent winner.
- At 75% of race distance, all cars must have travelled a minimum of 50% of the leading car's distance
- It is forbidden to stop on the circuit to wait for the chequered flag, and the last lap must be covered in 6 minutes or less
- At the end of the race, all cars with the exception of the overall winner must go to the Parc Fermé, and they may be checked. The winning car is parked beneath the podium for the duration of the trophy presentations and afterwards pushed to the Parc Fermé.

Entry fees and price money

- 2015: The entry fee for each car is €11,500 for the Test Day. For the race, the fee is €50,000, with a non-refundable deposit of €4,600 to be paid in January. This deposit is payable (AND non-refundable!) for all cars, including those ones on the Reserve list, whether they race or not. Fees shown are exclusive of VAT.
- Prize money: €40,000 (1st), €25,000 (2nd), €20,000 (3rd), €15,000 (4th), €12,000 (5th), then €10,000 for each class winner. Keep in mind that a set of tyres for an LMP2 car is about €2,000 and you know that this prize money doesn't really save your day as a team owner.

Driver Categories

Not only the cars are categorized in classes, for a while now the A.C.O. has also put the race drivers into different categories – since 2010 in the Le Mans Series, since 2011 this system also applies for the 24h of Le Mans. Professional race drivers are rated as either “platinum” or “gold”, the so called “Gentlemen drivers” have “silver” or “bronze” status.

For the teams, certain restrictions for their driver squad apply:

- LMP1: Only drivers rated as “platinum”, “gold” or “silver” are allowed.
- LMP2: There must be at least one Gentlemen Driver (“silver” or “bronze”) in the driver squad.
- GTE PRO: No restrictions for the driver line up
- GTE AM: For the amateur GT class entries, only one “platinum” or “gold” driver is allowed per car.

The drivers have to take care themselves about their rating. They have to send a request for categorization together with their race driver cv and credentials at least 15 days prior to each race to the A.C.O. – together with a juicy administrative fee of €450! In case of a last minute driver change, e.g. at the beginning of a race weekend, the race stewards will categorize a driver.

Platinum

These are all internationally well-known professional race drivers below 55 years of age who meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Holder of a Formula 1 super license
- Has won the Le Mans race outright
- Have previously driven for a manufacturer team and have been paid for this
- Have finished a Formula 3000, CART/Champcar, IRL or GP2 championship within the top 10 positions
- Have finished an international top Formula 3 series or other top Formula series (e.g. Renault World Series) within the top 6 positions
- Do not meet the above criteria but are seen as a professional race driver by the sporting committee

Gold

These drivers have been active in national or international series on a semi-professional bases and meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Fulfill a criteria of the “Platinum” category, but are between 55 and 59 years old
- Top 3 position in second class international formula series, e.g. A1GP, Formula Renault)
- Top 3 position in a national formula series season
- Winner in an entry formula series, e.g. Formula Ford, Formula BMW
- Top 3 position in the Porsche Supercup
- Winner of an international manufacturer championship (Porsche, SEAT, Renault, Peugeot)
- Do not meet the above criteria but are seen as “Gold” race driver by the sporting committee

Silver

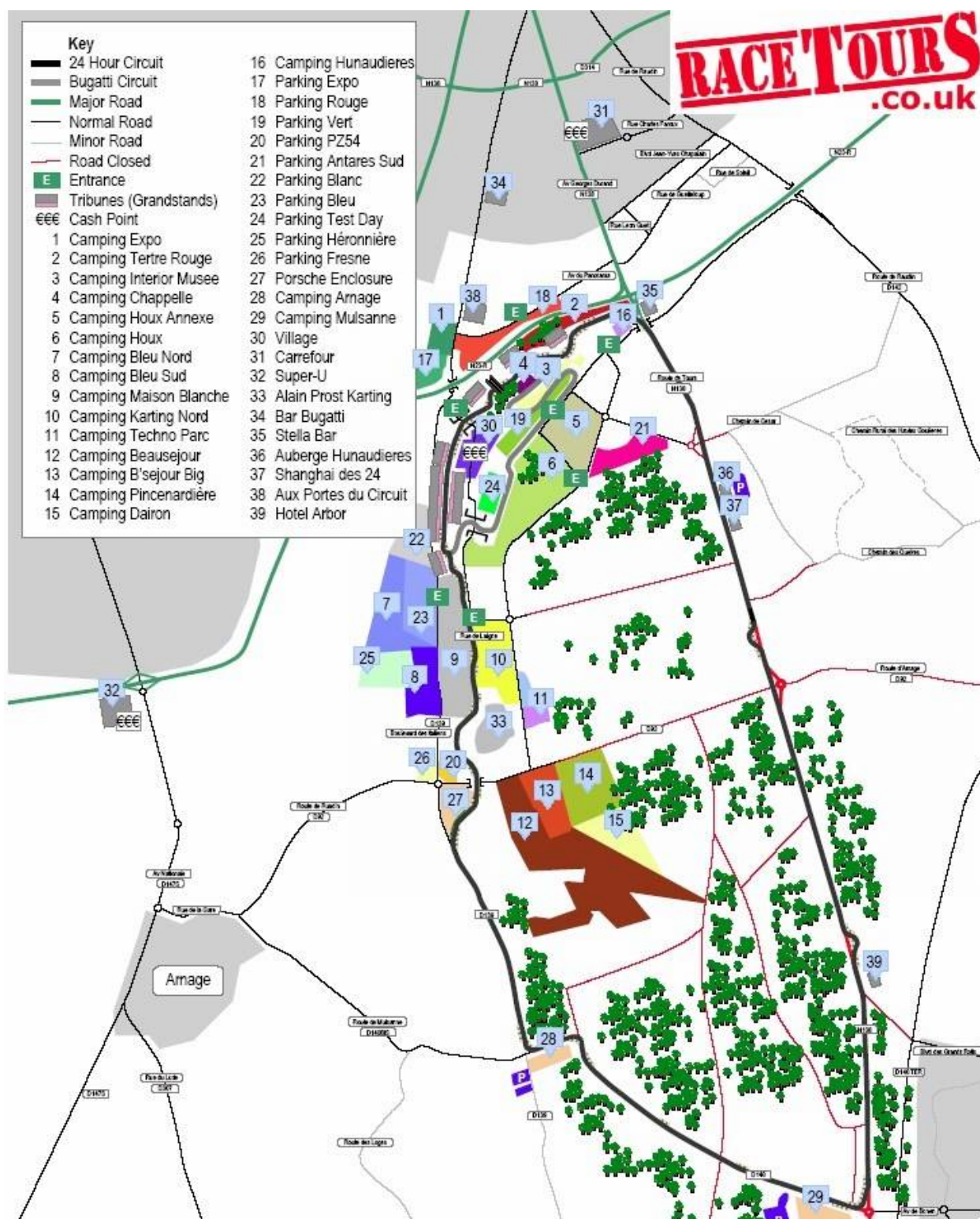
All race drivers who meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Below 30 years of age and not rated as „platinum“ or „gold“
- 60 years of age or above and fulfill one of the criteria for “platinum” drivers
- The driver has scored a race win in an international series or national championship together with a professional driver
- Has won a non-professional race series, e.g. Ferrari Challenge, Maserati Trofeo
- Do not meet the above criteria but are seen as “silver” race driver by the sporting committee

Bronze

- Amateur driver. Any driver holding an International B license without a significant record of achievement in motor sport.

Map of the circuit

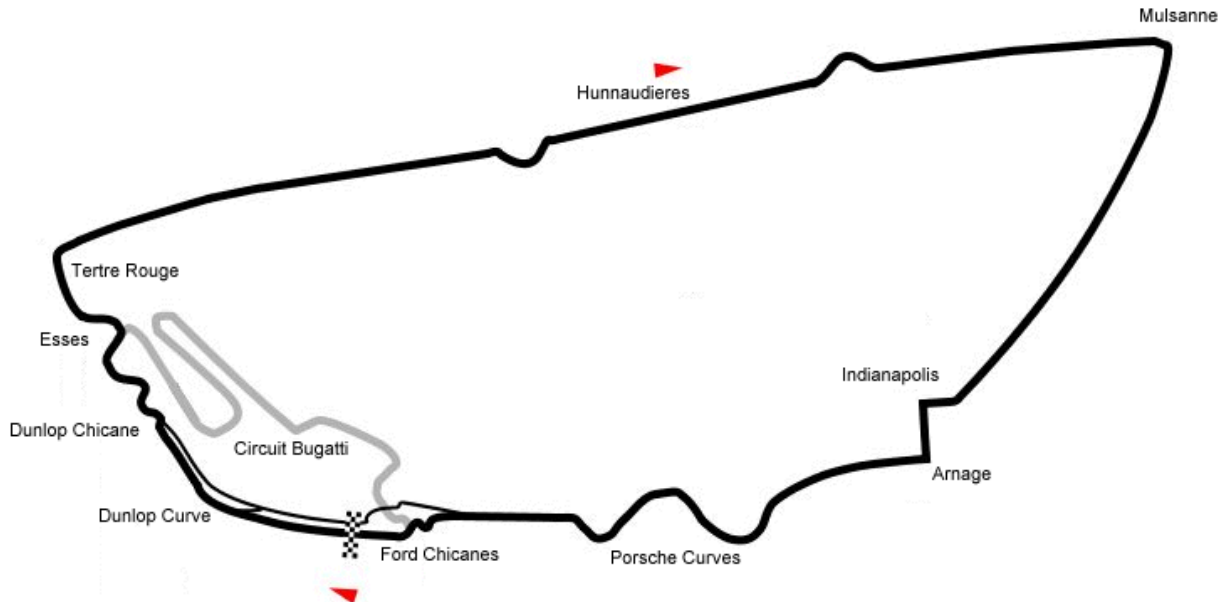


Update – since we don't have a current map:

- The campsites “Karting Nord”, “Pincenardières” and “Dairon” are no longer existing.
- There is a new campsite called “Epinettes” next to Camping Houx
- We need someone who can draw a new map for next year's guide!

Where to watch

Over the last couple of years there have been some noticeable changes to the spectator areas at Le Mans. These include better provision for disabled access, installation of more big screens and the raising of embankments to provide panoramic views of the track. For the most part these changes should be applauded as they have increased the accessibility of the event for the majority. On the down side the character and charm of the circuit has been sacrificed to some extent. However, out on the public road sections of the course there are still some fantastic opportunities for the plucky race fan to see the action in its purist form. Read on to discover the intricacies of this famous circuit and be prepared to do some walking!



Navigation: The General Enclosure is easily accessible on foot. It stretches from the exit of the Porsche Curves to the exit of Tertre Rouge, approx 2.5 km. There are pedestrian crossing points at the start of the pit straight (outside the media centre), the end of the pit straight (adjacent to the main entrance), after the Dunlop chicane and in between the Esses and Tertre Rouge. Access to the further reaches of the circuit requires a bit more planning. The enclosures at Arnage and Mulsanne are accessible by car and there is limited parking at both (see the relevant sections below for directions). Alternatively, a free shuttle bus (Navette) runs during the race - see **Transport in Le Mans** chapter for more details.

11 giant screens will be installed for the 2014 edition of the race, giving the spectator the opportunity to watch live action, whilst keeping up to date with what's going on on other parts of the track:

- On the straight line of the pits, opposite the grandstands,
- On the straight line of the pits, next to the Welcome,
- Opposite the Dunlop Grandstand,
- Outside the Tertre Rouge bend,
- Inside the Mulsanne bend,
- Inside the Arnage bend,
- At the breaking point of the Raccordement
- At the level of the starting line
- In the village by the Audi clock



Grandstands: These are referred to as tribunes at Le Mans. They are situated at the exit of the Ford Chicane, opposite and above the pitlane, at the exit of the Dunlop Chicane and The Esses outfield. It is worth noting that access to the tribunes is not restricted during Wednesday and Thursday's qualifying sessions; the separate tribune tickets become valid from Saturday morning. A grandstand seat will provide a guaranteed good view of the start and finish of the race and a place in the shade to regroup on Sunday morning, especially useful considering the temperature regularly gets into the 30s through June. However, if you prefer to sample the circuit in its entirety a seat in a tribune may not represent good value for money for you.



Pit Straight: There are concrete steps running the length of the pit straight in front of the tribunes. These serve as a free seating area enabling those without grandstand seats to view the action from this spot. Its extremely crowded at the beginning and end of the race but try to squeeze yourself in for the closing stages and you will be rewarded; once the last of the competitors rolls into park ferme the marshals open up the gates in the 8ft wall that borders the track, signalling a mass track invasion. Follow the crowd down to the finish line to see the winners presented with their trophies on the podium.

Dunlop Chicane: The Dunlop Chicane, within very easy reach of the ACO village, was modified for the 2006 season to bring the track speeds down. However, the new tighter left-right chicane still provides many thrills and spills, arguably more than before the modification. Position yourself on the infield 50 yards down the hill from the entry to the chicane for a clear insight into the undulations and racing line of this section of track. Watch the drivers attempting to keep their braking tidy during the fast right-handed approach, all under the backdrop of the famous Dunlop Bridge. Another prime spot is on the outfield at the chicane exit (in front of the Dunlop tribune) where many a driver will be caught out getting on the power too early.





The Esses: The famous Esses cut their way through a natural amphitheatre that provides spectacular views of this challenging sweeping section of track. Take up position on the infield banking beyond the point where the Bugatti circuit peels off to the right. Here you will be able to follow the cars all the way down the hill from the Dunlop Bridge and up through the left handed section of the Esses. Then watch as they blast away from you, sweeping right and disappearing into the trees. Tertre Rouge Tribune, situated on the outfield, provides an elevated view of the Esses and must be sampled during Wednesday or Thursday night qualifying when this flood lit section of the circuit will look particularly impressive. Walk a hundred yards further down the track and you will find yourself amongst the trees at the exit of

the Esses. A bit of careful positioning and you will notice that this is one of the few locations at Le Mans that offers a photo opportunity genuinely unimpeded by catch fencing. Thanks to the ACO having kindly removed a number of trees around here over the winter, there is a much better view now than in the last few years. Catch a shot of the cars as they accelerate up the hill and on down to Tertre Rouge.

Tertre Rouge Approach: The area between the Esses and Tertre Rouge was completely redeveloped in 2007 at the same time as the Tertre Rouge corner itself was revised. Viewing here is excellent thanks to a huge embankment to the infield that runs the full length of the straight. Wide walkways slope gradually to the top of the spectator area where there can be found a number of ample viewing platforms suitable for disabled spectators. The ageing and cramped pedestrian underpass that has always served this part of the circuit was also replaced for 2007. In its place is a well-lit and wide underpass, again served by gradual concrete slopes on both sides of the circuit. The cars are full throttle for this short burst and ear splittingly loud. Worth busting your way down to the front of the busy enclosure if that's your thing!



Tertre Rouge: The Tertre Rouge corner marks the point where the purpose built racetrack joins the public road and the surrounding viewing areas signal the extremities of the 'General Enclosure'. The layout of the corner was heavily modified for the start of the 2007 season to increase the size of the run off area. The right hander is shallower than its former self and the cars now carry a great amount of speed through the heart of the corner, the drivers letting the cars drift out from the apex as they make the transition onto the public road section of the course. The embankment mentioned in the previous section runs all the way round the inside of Tertre Rouge and offers views all the way up to the Esses, down through Tertre Rouge and on to the Mulsanne. Refreshment and merriment lie only yards away when at Tertre Rouge; exit the General Enclosure, turn left under the circuit and you will find a lively trackside bar dubbed the 'Stella Bar' by many a seasoned campaigner!

Mulsanne Straight (Hunnaudieres): Access to the Mulsanne is prohibited, the track being kept secure by race officials (stationed at the various posts) and the local police, both of whom will take a dim view to any attempts to break through the trees to the circuit. Nevertheless, there are still viewing opportunities waiting to be exploited, it will just require a little endeavour and organisation.

It is possible to get within a few feet of the action at the Auberge des Hunaudieres or Shanghai des 24 Heures restaurants situated a couple of hundred yards before the braking zone of the first chicane. The legendary Auberge des Hunaudieres used to offer dramatic trackside seats from where you could enjoy good food and drink. Unfortunately green covers attached to the catch fencing obscure the view (although if you are lucky they will have been eased down!) and getting a table can be problematic during track time as the restaurant tends to be taken over by corporate hospitality. However, there is still an open air public bar at the rear of the property; clamber up onto the benches for a glimpse of the cars going flat out down the Mulsanne. To get to Hunaudieres (and the Shanghai des 24 Heures) during track time refer to the circuit map and stick to the following instructions. Head South East on the N142 (Route du Mans) running parallel to the Mulsanne Straight. Turn right on to Chemin de Ceasar and you will enter the network of minor roads. The restaurant will be temporarily signposted and there will be French police or race officials willing to direct you. They may be blocking the final turning so you need to be ready to tell them you are eating at Hunaudieres and they will gladly let you through. Eventually you will end up in a field at the back of the restaurant where you can park for free. The less well known Hotel Arbor presents a better spectating opportunity. It sits alongside the Mulsanne straight on the circuit outfield only a couple of hundred yards after the second chicane. Parking is permitted in the hotel car park for a fee of 10 Euros per person. From there, the chicane can be found only

a short stroll away through the trees. This is an excellent spot to watch from, particularly as there never seems to be anybody else there! Parking is at the discretion of the hotel and information listed here is purely based on their setup in previous years.

Mulsanne Corner: Your General Admission ticket will give you access to the Mulsanne Enclosure although getting there is another issue. The 90-degree right-hander marks the end of the Mulsanne straight and the spectator area follows the track for about 200-300 meters as the cars accelerate down the narrow section towards Indianapolis. The view over the corner itself is helped by a small embankment that just gives you enough elevation to take some photos over the catch fencing. The entry to Mulsanne corner is a very heavy braking zone so you can expect to see plenty of overtaking and maybe the odd driver overdoing things and utilising the run off area. To get to Mulsanne follow the directions to Arnage (see below) then continue down the D139 (this will be one way during the race). In approximately 1.5 Km you will reach a crossroads. Look out for a 'P Mulsanne' sign directing you to turn left. Take the left turn and follow the narrow lane for into the outskirts of Mulsanne village. The final left turn that leads to the parking area is easy to miss so once again look out for the 'P Mulsanne' sign. The left turn is just after an area of open ground and approximately 400m before the junction with the N138. It takes you up a dusty track to the large parking area under the trees, some 300 meters after the corner.

Indianapolis/Arnage: As with the Mulsanne corner the complex at Arnage is accessed by a separate enclosure, admission being covered by your General Admission ticket. Although a fair distance from the ACO village, this zone is reasonably accessible and well worth the effort. The enclosure runs from the apex of the cambered Indianapolis left-hander to the entrance to the extremely tight 90-degree right-hander of Arnage. There is grass banking alongside the track that allows you to get close to the action, especially at Arnage, where you are right on top of it. You won't know what Le Mans is all about until you've seen some night racing from here. Watch the cars burst out of the trees towards Indianapolis, the fastest part of the circuit. They swoop through the fast right curve towards the tighter left of Indianapolis proper where several drivers land in the gravel after overestimating their ability. This is followed by the short straight before jumping on the brakes for Arnage, desperately trying to shed some speed for the uncompromising corner, brake discs glowing in the dark. You can hear the cars accelerate up through the gears long after they disappear back into the surrounding forest. This is what endurance racing is all about. Just try to get to Arnage for Wednesday or Thursday night qualifying or ideally after 2am on Sunday morning because the crowds at peak times can be a real drag. To get to Arnage corner follow Rue de Laigne in a southerly direction, passing the Maison Blanche campsite on your left and the Bleu campsite on your right. At the roundabout turn right onto Rue de Ruadin and follow the road for approximately 1.5 Km. Before entering the built up area of Arnage village take a left turn signposted 'P Arnage'. Follow this road for approximately 2 Km until you arrive at Arnage corner. Follow the one-way system as it bends to the right. Parking can be found on the right hand side in two fields. For those who are coming to Le Mans with tour companies - beware of the overpriced "excursions" to Arnage and Mulsanne which they will try to sell you. There is a shuttle bus from the front of the circuit which will take you there for free - see Transport in Le Mans chapter, Navettes.

Porsche Curves: The Porsche Curves are a series of sweeping corners starting where the racetrack curves to the right to leave the public road. An enclosure here called Porsche Exterior offers a view of the outside of this uphill corner and can be accessed from the road leading to the Beausejour campsite. Looking back up the road section of the circuit it is possible to see almost as far as Arnage in the distance. New in 2010 there was also a viewing area on the inside of the circuit at the Porsche curves, accessed via the Beausejour campsite. Further round the track you will find the Circuit de Alain Prost Karting that lies adjacent to the Karting Nord campsite. Conveniently, the kart track's pit lane roof can be accessed via steps at the back of the building. This gives a fantastic elevated view of the Le Mans circuit. Turn around and you can also watch the public karting where the skill levels are drastically lower but the crashes come immeasurably more frequently! This spot lies outside of the General Admission enclosure so you don't need to show your ticket, although on race day there is sometimes a steward demanding 5 Euros for admittance. It seems to be a little known spot so enjoy some crowd free spectating at all but the busiest times.

Stop Press!!! - The ACO (in their infinite wisdom) have decided to close access to the Outside of the Porsche Curves AND parts of Maison Blanche campsite in favour of Porsche and certain camping companies. Two of the best and classic viewing parts of the circuit could be lost to the General Public / Enceinte Générale! This is an ongoing sanitisation of the viewing areas in favour of corporate sponsorship

Ford Chicane: The final challenge on the circuit is the double left right complex known as the Ford Chicane. Stick to the outfield where you will find shallow banking (just high enough to see over the armco) that stretches right into the Maison Blanche campsite as far as the exit to the Porsche Curves. The Maison Blanche grandstand nestles conveniently over the Ford Chicane offering excellent raised views of this action packed area of the circuit. If you can't get into the grandstand try getting down to the catch fencing in front of it to get some close up views of the cars powering onto the pit straight.

Waving the flags and much more – The marshals

Little is known to many visitors about the marshals at Le Mans and their work, although there wouldn't be any race at all without them. Marshalling is a hobby done by volunteers with a passion for motor sport. These men and women spend their free time and their own money to train in the many aspects of marshalling. They act as flag marshals, chief track marshals, pit lane marshals and there are many other roles. Their skills are crucial for the success of a race, because an exciting race can be destroyed by bad marshalling but it can also be made better and safer by good work from the marshals, even saving a driver's life. The set of skills which is required is large and the willingness to attend training on a regular basis is an important prerequisite. Training covers firefighting, flagging, observing, radio communication and many other topics.



There are many types of jobs to be done at any race meeting, and Le Mans is no different. The one thing which is noticeable is that, obviously, officials can't be working for the whole 24 hours race plus the support event on the Saturday morning etc, so there would be enough for a minimum of 2 shifts, and the number is amazing, when you consider that the British Grand Prix at it's height required approximately 1500 people for the weekend (that's ALL jobs) so imagine how many for a circuit 3 times the size and a race meeting 4 times the length.

Some of the roles performed by the officials are:

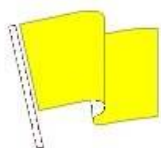
Course/Flag/Observer, these are effectively the Race Directors 'ground troops'. These three will work together on a post, the Course Marshal is the one you'll see going out to an incident

and working trackside, and reporting back to the Observer, who will report to Race Control what has happened. This is rather basic, as the Flaggie will be there waving the Blue, and reacting to what is required at that moment.

Pits, these Marshals will observe and report on all pit lane behaviour and stops. To do that requires a knowledge of the rules and regulations, no mean feat when you consider that they need eyes everywhere and will need to react quickly, nimble feet are needed in the lane to see all, but avoid being in the way.

From the information flowing into Race Control from all the Marshal's post's it is then up to the Control room people to filter out any important information that the Race Director may need to know and act upon, for example the release of the Safety Car (there are 2 or 3 around the track) who will be informed where the Race leader is and will try to pick him up (sometimes easier said) and if the leader is mired in the SC pack, when to 'release' the cars between the SC and leader. To do that, the SC that has the Race Leader behind will 'wave by' any cars between him and the Leader, these cars will then proceed to the tail of the next queue. Once the cars are ordered, everyone is happy, the SC's will pull off, Green Flag will be shown to the Race Lead at the start line, and racing will re-commence

Following are the flags you'll see over the race weekend and their meaning.



The solid yellow flag requires drivers to slow down due to a hazard on the track. A yellow flag displayed at the starter's stand or a marshal station indicates that there is a hazard downstream of the station. The manner of display depends on the location of the hazard:

- A single stationary flag denotes a hazard off the course
- A single waved flag denotes a hazard on the racing surface itself
- Two flags waved simultaneously denotes a hazard that wholly or partly blocks the racing surface. This informs the driver that there may be marshals on the track and to prepare to stop, if necessary.



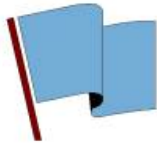
Red flags can only be waived upon instruction of the race director. When a race or a practice session is "red flagged" it is stopped due to some condition that has made the track unraceable. Typical conditions are accidents, weather problems or surface problems like too much oil or debris on the track. As soon as a red flag is shown, drivers must slow down and either stop or come back to the pits, overtaking is not permitted.



The green flag is quite similar to green traffic light and simply means "Go!". It can be waived by the starter to indicate the beginning of a race or practice session. Most typically it will be waved after a caution to tell the drivers that the race has been restarted and to indicate that the racetrack is clear of any obstacles or debris.



The yellow / red flag is commonly known as the “oil flag”, this flag indicates that there is a problem with, or change in, the surface ahead, like oil or water on the track.



The blue flag indicates to the driver that there is a quicker car following and about to pass him:

- When held motionless, this is an indication to a driver that there is a faster car following closely behind, but not yet close enough for a pass.
- A waived blue flag indicates that the driver is about to be overtaken and should take care to permit the following vehicle a safe pass.



The black flag generally means that there has been an infraction of the rules and the driver, to whom that flag is shown must bring the car to the pits. It is usually displayed along with a pit board listing the driver's car number



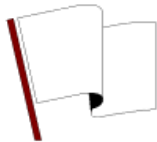
Without doubt the best known race flag, it is waved for all cars to indicate the finish of the race or a practice session.



Last warning to a driver before a black flag is shown to him, similar to the yellow card in football. It is usually displayed along with a pit board listing the driver's car number.



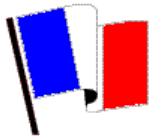
Black with an orange circle: information to a driver that his/her vehicle has a problem and that a pit stop must be made, is usually displayed along with a pit board listing the driver's car number.



Slow Vehicle on the track ahead, be it a car limping back to the pits, or during a caution period it could mean there is a breakdown truck on the track



Not a flag, it's a board which will be shown together with the yellow flag to inform the drivers that a safety car is on the track



The French flag, the Tricolore, is traditionally waived by a VIP at the starters post to get the race under way. William Clay (Bill) Ford Jr., Executive Chairman of Ford Motor Company, will be the honorary starter of the 83rd race in 2015.

Code 80 comes to La Sarthe

In 2014 there was a new type of race neutralisation, Code 80. This has been seen under other names in other races, notably the Nurburg 24. It is a GPS based system that instantly advises the driver in car of Yellow Zone, at the same time the marshals will be waving their yellows, result is an 'instant Safety Car'. The field reduce their speed to 80kph and become essentially their own SC, no catching the car in front, this way the marshals can get to work and clear an incident much more quickly. Upon removal of the hold, the driver is instantly back to racing, no need to wait to pass a point on the track. The idea of this is to prevent losing time behind the Safety Car (deploy, catch the leader, pace, reorganise, release) this allows a pause rather than a suspension to racing.

2015 Marshalling changes

For 2015 there has been a shake up for the on track marshals. Gone is the Poste system and in are Secteurs. This is all in the name of safety, although the ACO have intimated that the overall numbers required are the same, a lot of the roles we are used to seeing at a track have been changed. The secteurs will be as per the attached map, gone is the old numbering system, no longer will the British Poste be at Poste 106 for the week, instead they will be part of Sector 29, and like other secteurs, will cover a larger part of track.

Since the 2014 race the ACO/Le Mans have invested in many track modifications, and with that change has come a change to how the marshals operate. From 2015, marshals will now be placed differently, old hands may see that marshals are now in different positions to what they remember, this is due to an increase in the number of flag marshals at more points. Each flag signal will be repeated on both sides of the track, hopefully this'll ensure no signal is missed. The increase of flag points also means that any Code 60 called can be controlled easier, and smaller zones mean back to racing quicker.

What will be a significant, and major, change is in race neutralisation. After Max Bianchis terrible accident at Suzuka in 2014, gone are vehicle recoveries under yellow, Code 60 or Safety Car will be in place before anything happens – obviously this does not include urgent medical attention. This still means the marshals will be there first, but unlike now, there will be no crossing of the track to provide an initial assessment, but there will be no intervention until safe, and there will be more use of rapid intervention vehicles.



Intervening with a Hybrid

On the side of the car next to the door are two lights, Green and Red, which indicate the state of the hybrid system. The simplest piece of advice given to the marshals at Silverstone with regard to an HY car with a hybrid failure, was "Don't touch it until you have spoken to Race Control/the team" Although the posts were issued with rather thick and heavy rubber gloves, the first thing to do with was to call it to Race Control, after that a team member would arrive to ensure integrity of the system. Obviously should the car be in an accident, the priority is the driver, and he is sat in an isolated cell. However, there may be a time when extracting the driver is needed, in which case, out come the 'Marigolds' - very Heavy Duty latex gloves and a careful approach is taken. I am a pit marshal, so I can't say for sure what would happen on course, but the golden rule is if in doubt, do not touch.

Radio Le Mans – Tune in at 91.2 FM

Courtesy of John Hindhaugh

Radio Show Limited move into year 7 of the 'new' Radio Le Mans and most of the changes for this year concern the



service away from the track. Spectators at Le Mans for test day and race week will still be able to hear the popular mix of music, competitions and live commentary via FM transmitter. Further afield fans have even more to choose from to keep them entertained, both during the week of the race and the rest of the year. The portal to this information is the new look www.RadioLeMans.com.

RadioLeMans.com was re-launched in March 2008 and now boasts year-round audio streaming as well as an extensive free archive of ALMS, Le Mans and other endurance content. During three weeks in March the site attracted almost 100,000 visitors and that number was bettered in April thanks to some new, live, exclusive coverage of sportscar racing.

The classic Monza circuit was the first time the RSL team had attended a Le Mans Series race, indeed this was the first time that any commentators had been at a LMS venue for live coverage of the event. Bolstered by the new features, including video content from partner SpeedTV.com, April 1st to 28th saw over 236,000 visitors on the site.

Of course the biggest draw is still the Le Mans 24 Hours. In race week 2007 over 900,000 visitors found their way to www.radiolemans.com - adding that to our monthly numbers should mean that by the end of 2008 around 2 million people will have been exposed to the world of sportscar racing via www.radiolemans.com

This is all a far cry from the formative years of Radio Le Mans. Back then Radio Le Mans was only on air for a few days in June and existed (barely) from year to year and often scrambling for sponsors right up until (and sometimes during) race week. As early as the mid 80s the benefit of reaching spectators who didn't normally listen to commentary, or who were away from the core 'track-activity' times, was becoming clear. There were those who realized that appetites could be whetted by playing pre-recorded driver interviews early on raceday morning, and traffic news and other sports news round-ups could be provided at the end of the day as spectators made their way home. In 1986, Le Mans followed the trend and broadcast the French public address commentary on FM airwaves. This was pretty unadulterated stuff, with long periods of silence and the announcer often having to speak over background music. (Interestingly the French Service has never moved on – it's still just like that!) Fine for the locals but this wasn't helpful to the biggest single national group at the race – the British.

In 1987, spurred on by sportscar enthusiast Harry Turner, backed by Jaguar and produced by Studio 6 Marketing, a rather shabby caravan was brought from England and set up in the paddock with a radio transmitter and some dodgy phone lines to link the studio to the commentary booth in the tribune. Neville and Richard Hay provided the commentary assisted by Bob Constanduros from the pits. It's worth remembering that during the night the whole show shut down while a music loop was played.

In later years Haymarket's Autosport Magazine recognized the potential and provided some advertising for the station which enabled significantly more personnel to be brought on board

Over the years there have been numerous backers of the radio station with Unipart, Chrysler, BMW and Audi perhaps the most prominent. Haymarket's decision to bow out after the 2005 race saw Radio Show Limited – a company formed solely to ensure the continuation of the station – take over as rights holders. Radio Show Ltd continues to hold true to the tradition of Radio Le Mans whilst continuing to grow the audience and the fan base through the expansion of the website into a year-round resource.

For this year expect all the usual suspects: In essence the broadcast team remains very similar with regulars such as Paul Truswell, Graham Tyler along with USA's finest Charles Dressing and Jim Roller, all providing their usual brand of passion mixed with informative insight. Paul is famous for putting his bodily functions on hold for upwards of 30 hours (covering the build up and the race itself) as he never moves from his eyrie in the tribunes from the moment he arrives on Saturday morning until the end of the race. He manages this armed only with finger food, a blank exercise book, lots of pens and his encyclopaedic knowledge.

As usual the station will be on-air in the vicinity of the circuit, starting with the live coverage on Sunday with scrutineering.

2015 race week schedule

+ in red letters: other events

Sunday 7th June	2.30 pm - 7.00 pm	Administrative Checks and Scrutineering in the centre of Le Mans, Place du Jacobins
Monday 8th June	10.00 am - 6.00 pm	Administrative Checks and Scrutineering in the centre of Le Mans, Place du Jacobins
	6.30 pm – 7.30 pm	„The winners' handprints“ , Place St. Nicholas, Le Mans city centre
Tuesday 9th June	10.30 am – 10.45 am	Official photo of the drivers on the start-finish straight
	5.00 pm - 6.30 pm	Drivers autograph session in the pit lane
Wednesday 10th June	8.00 am – 3.00 pm	Pit Walk
	4.00 pm - 8.00 pm	Free practice session 24h of Le Mans
	8:30 pm – 9:30 pm	Free practice session Aston Martin Racing Le Mans Festival
	8:00 pm	<i>Live Music concert on the stage near Dunlop Bridge: The Lemon Queen</i>
	9:00 pm	<i>Live Music concert on the stage near Dunlop Bridge: Jabberwocky</i>
	10.00 pm - midnight	Qualifying session 24h of Le Mans
Thursday 11th June	8.00 am – 3.00 pm	Pit Walk
	4.00 pm - 5.00 pm	Qualifying Session Le Mans Legend (1949 to 1968)
	5.30 pm – 6.30 pm	Qualifying session Aston Martin Racing Le Mans Festival
	7.00 pm - 9.00 pm	Qualifying session 24h of Le Mans
	8:00 pm	<i>Live Music concert on the stage near Dunlop Bridge: Ton Zinc</i>
	9:00 pm	<i>Live Music concert on the stage near Dunlop Bridge: Cali</i>
	10.00 pm - midnight	Qualifying session 24h of Le Mans
Friday 12th June	10.00 am - 6.00 pm	Pit Walk
	5:30 pm - 7:30 pm	Drivers Parade in the city centre
	9:00 am – 6:00 pm	<i>“St. Saturnin Classic British Welcome”, see respective chapter in this guide</i>
	6:00 pm	<i>Live Music concert on the stage near Dunlop Bridge: Jr Jellam</i>
	8:00 pm	<i>Live Music concert on the stage near Dunlop Bridge: Trinity</i>
	10:00 pm	<i>Live Music concert on the stage near Dunlop Bridge: Willy William</i>
	23:30 pm	<i>Live Music concert on the stage near Dunlop Bridge: Irie Ites Sound</i>
Saturday 13th June	9.00 am - 9.45 am	Warm-Up
	10.05 am – 10.50 am	Support Race Le Mans Legends (1949 to 1968)
	11.15 am – 12:00 am	Support Race Aston Martin Racing Le Mans Festival
	12.30 pm - 1.45 pm	Drivers' Presentation
	2.22 pm	Beginning of starting procedure “24 Heures du Mans”
	3:00 pm	Start of the 83 rd edition of the 24h of Le Mans
	8:00 pm	<i>Live Music concert on the stage near Dunlop Bridge: Loran</i>
	9:00 pm	<i>Live Music concert on the stage near Dunlop Bridge: Heymoonshaker</i>
	9:00 pm	<i>Club Arnage Forum Gathering at “Le Courbes” bar - see the respective chapter for directions</i>
	10:00 pm	<i>Live Music concert on the stage near Dunlop Bridge: Charlie Winston</i>
	11:00 pm	<i>Live Music concert on the stage near Dunlop Bridge: DJ Moule</i>
	11:30 pm	<i>Live Music concert on the stage near Dunlop Bridge: Dixon Brothers</i>
Sunday 14th June	3:00 pm	Finish of the 83 rd edition of the 24h of Le Mans

Overview – All 56 entries

No.	Team	Nat	Vehicle	Class	Drivers
1	Toyota Gazoo Racing	JP	Toyota TS 040 Hybrid	LM P1	Davidson, Buemi, Nakajima
2	Toyota Gazoo Racing	JP	Toyota TS 040 Hybrid	LM P1	Wurz, Sarrazin, Conway
4	Team ByKolles	AT	CLM P1/01 - AER	LM P1	Trummer, Kaffer, Monteiro
7	Audi Sport Team Joest	DE	Audi R18 e-tron quattro	LM P1	Fässler, Lotterer, Tréluyer
8	Audi Sport Team Joest	DE	Audi R18 e-tron quattro	LM P1	di Grassi, Jarvis, Duval
9	Audi Sport Team Joest	DE	Audi R18 e-tron quattro	LM P1	Albuquerque, Bonanomi, Rast
12	Rebellion Racing	CH	Rebellion-AER	LM P1	Prost, Heidfeld, Beche
13	Rebellion Racing	CH	Rebellion-AER	LM P1	Imperatori, Kraihamer, Abt
17	Porsche Team	DE	Porsche 919 Hybrid	LM P1	Bernhard, Webber, Hartley
18	Porsche Team	DE	Porsche 919 Hybrid	LM P1	Dumas, Lieb, Jani
19	Porsche Team	DE	Porsche 919 Hybrid	LM P1	Hülkenberg, Bamber, Tandy
21	Nissan Motorsports	JP	Nissan GT-R LM Nismo	LM P1	Matsuda, Shulzhitskiy, Ordóñez
22	Nissan Motorsports	JP	Nissan GT-R LM Nismo	LM P1	Tincknell, Krumm, Buncombe
23	Nissan Motorsports	JP	Nissan GT-R LM Nismo	LM P1	Pla, Mardenborough, Chilton
26	G-Drive Racing	RU	Ligier JS P2 - Nissan	LM P2	Rusinov, Canal, Bird
27	SMP Racing	RU	BR01 - Nissan	LM P2	Mediani, Markozov, Minassian
28	G-Drive Racing	RU	Ligier JS P2 - Nissan	LM P2	Yacamán, Derani, Gonzalez
29	Pegasus Racing	DE	Morgan - Nissan	LM P2	Roussel, Tung, Cheng
30	Extreme Speed	US	Ligier JS P2 - HPD	LM P2	Sharp, Dalziel, Heinemeier Hansson
31	Extreme Speed	US	Ligier JS P2 - HPD	LM P2	Brown, van Overbeek, Fogarty
34	OAK Racing	FR	Ligier JS P2 - HPD	LM P2	Cumming, Vanthoor, Estre
35	OAK Racing	FR	Ligier JS P2 - Nissan	LM P2	Nicolet, Merlin, Maris
36	SignaTech Alpine	FR	Alpine - Nissan	LM P2	Panciatici, Chatin, Capillaire
37	SMP Racing	RU	BR01 - Nissan	LM P2	Aleshin, K. Ladygin, A. Ladygin
38	Jota Sport	UK	Gibson 015S - Nissan	LM P2	Dolan, Evans, Turvey
40	Krohn Racing	US	Ligier JS P2 - Judd	LM P2	Krohn, Jönsson, Barbosa
41	Greaves Motorsport	UK	Gibson 015S - Nissan	LM P2	Hirsch, Windheim, Lancaster
42	Strakka Racing	UK	Strakka Dome - Nissan	LM P2	Leventis, Watts, Kane
43	SARD Morand Racing	CH	Morgan EVO Judd	LM P2	Ragues, Webb, Amberg
45	Ibanez Racing	SM	Oreca 03R - Nissan	LM P2	Ibañez, Perret, Bellarosa
46	Thiriet by TDS Racing	FR	Oreca 05 - Nissan	LM P2	Thiriet, Badey, Gommendy
47	KCMG	HK	Oreca 05 - Nissan	LM P2	Howson, Bradley, Lapierre
48	Murphy Prototypes	IR	Oreca 03R - Nissan	LM P2	Chandhok, Patterson, Berthon
50	Larbre Compétition	FR	Chevrolet Corvette	GTE-Am	Roda, Ruberti, Poulsen
51	AF Corse	IT	Ferrari F458	GTE-Pro	Fisichella, Bruni, Vilander
53	Riley Motorsports-TI Auto	US	SRT Viper GTS-R	GTE-Am	Bleekemolen, Keating, Miller
55	AF Corse	IT	Ferrari F458	GTE-Am	Cameron, Griffin, Mortimer
61	AF Corse	IT	Ferrari F458	GTE-Am	Mann, Giammaria, Cressoni
62	Scuderia Corsa	US	Ferrari F458	GTE-Am	Sweedler, Bell, Segal
63	Corvette Racing	US	Chevrolet Corvette	GTE-Pro	Magnussen, García, Briscoe
64	Corvette Racing	US	Chevrolet Corvette	GTE-Pro	Gavin, Milner, Taylor
66	JMW Motorsport	UK	Ferrari F458	GTE-Am	Al-Faisal, Giermazak, Avenatti
67	Team AAI	TW	Porsche 997	GTE-Am	J-S Chen, Kapadia, Maassen
68	Team AAI	TW	Porsche 997	GTE-Am	H-C Chen, Vannelet, Parisy
71	AF Corse	IT	Ferrari F458	GTE-Pro	Rigon, Calado, Beretta
72	SMP Racing	RU	Ferrari F458	GTE-Am	Bertonini, Shaitar, Basov
77	Dempsey-Proton	US	Porsche 997	GTE-Am	Dempsey, Long, Seefried
83	AF Corse	IT	Ferrari F458	GTE-Am	Perrodo, Collard, Águas
88	Abu Dhabi-Proton Racing	DE	Porsche 997	GTE-Am	Ried, Al Qubaisi, Bachler
91	Porsche AG - Manthey	DE	Porsche 997	GTE-Pro	Lietz, Christensen, Bergmeister
92	Porsche AG - Manthey	DE	Porsche 997	GTE-Pro	Pilet, Makowiecki, Henzler
95	Aston Martin Racing	UK	Aston Martin Vantage	GTE-Pro	Sørensen, Thiim, Nygaard
96	Aston Martin Racing	UK	Aston Martin Vantage	GTE-Am	Goethe, Hall, Castellacci
97	Aston Martin Racing	UK	Aston Martin Vantage	GTE-Pro	Turner, Mücke, Bell
98	Aston Martin Racing	UK	Aston Martin Vantage	GTE-Am	Dalla Lana, Lamy, Lauda
99	Aston Martin Racing	UK	Aston Martin Vantage	GTE-Pro	Rees, Macdowall, Stanaway

1  LM P1

Team: Toyota Gazoo Racing
Vehicle: Toyota TS 040, 3.4-litre V8 cyl. aspirated – Hybrid, Michelin
Drivers: : Anthony Davidson (UK), Sebastien Buemi (CH), Kazuki Nakajima (JP)



2  LM P1

Team: : Toyota Gazoo Racing
Vehicle: Toyota TS 040, 3.4-litre V8 cyl. aspirated – Hybrid, Michelin
Drivers: Alexander Wurz (AT), Stéphane Sarrazin (FR), Mike Conway (UK)



4  LM P1

Team: Team ByKolles
Vehicle: CLM P1/01 - AER, V6 cyl. twin-turbo, Michelin
Drivers: Simon Trummer (CH), Pierre Kaffer (DE), Tiago Monteiro (PRT)



7  LM P1

Team: Audi Sport Team Joest
Vehicle: Audi R18 e-tron quattro, 4.0 ltr. V6 cyl. Turbo Diesel - Hybrid, Michelin
Drivers: Marcel Fässler (CH), André Lotterer (DE), Benoît Tréluyer (FR)



8  **LM P1**

Team: Audi Sport Team Joest

Vehicle: Audi R18 e-tron quattro, 4.0 ltr. V6 cyl. Turbo Diesel - Hybrid, Michelin

Drivers: Lucas di Grassi (BR), Oliver Jarvis (GB), Loic Duval (FR)



9  **LM P1**

Team: Audi Sport Team Joest

Vehicle: Audi R18 e-tron quattro, 4.0 ltr. V6 cyl. Turbo Diesel - Hybrid, Michelin

Drivers: Filipe Albuquerque (PT), Marco Bonanomi (IT), René Rast (DE)



12  **LM P1**

Team: Rebellion Racing

Vehicle: Rebellion R-One, AER V6 cyl. twin-turbo, Michelin

Drivers: Nicolas Prost (FR), Nick Heidfeld (DE), Mathias Beche (CH)

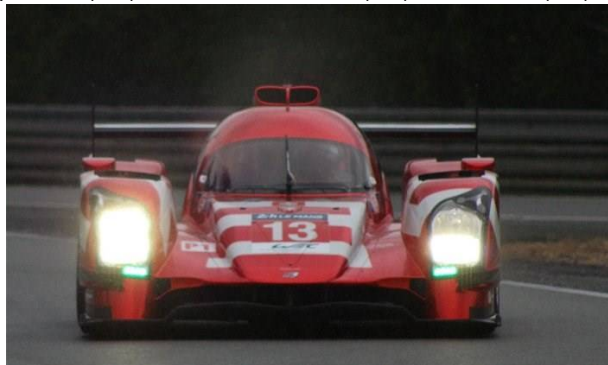


13  **LM P1**

Team: Rebellion Racing

Vehicle: Rebellion R-One, AER V6 cyl. twin-turbo, Michelin

Drivers: Alexandre Imperatori (CH), Dominik Kraihamer (AU), Daniel Abt (DE)



17  **LM P1**

Team: Porsche Team

Vehicle: Porsche 919 Hybrid, 2.0-litre V4 cyl. Turbo - Hybrid, Michelin

Drivers: Timo Bernhard (DE), Mark Webber (AU), Brendon Hartley (NZ)



18  **LM P1**

Team: Porsche Team

Vehicle: Porsche 919 Hybrid, 2.0-litre V4 cyl. Turbo - Hybrid, Michelin

Drivers: Romain Dumas (FR), Marc Lieb (DE), Neel Jani (CH)




19  **LM P1**

Team: Porsche Team

Vehicle: Porsche 919 Hybrid, 2.0-litre V4 cyl. Turbo - Hybrid, Michelin

Drivers: Nico Hülkenberg, Earl Bamber (NZ), Nick Tandy (UK)

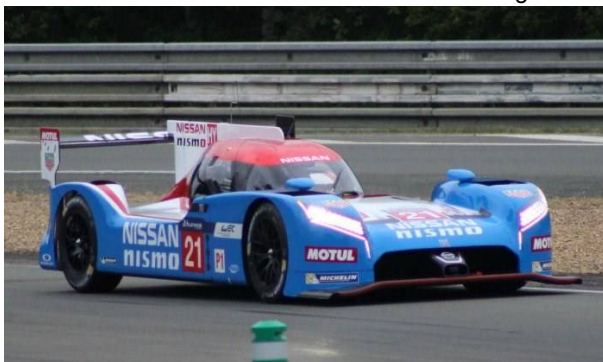


21  **LM P1**

Team: Nissan Motorsports

Vehicle: Nissan GT-R LM Nismo, 3.0-litre V6 cyl. Twin-Turbo - Hybrid, Michelin

Drivers: Tsugio Matsuda (JP), Marc Shulzhitskiy (RU), Lucas Ordóñez (ES)



22  **LM P1**

Team: Nissan Motorsports

Vehicle: Nissan GT-R LM Nismo, 3.0-litre V6 cyl. Twin-Turbo - Hybrid, Michelin

Drivers: Harry Tincknell (UK), Michael Krumm (DE), Alex Buncombe (UK)



23  **LM P1**

Team: Nissan Motorsports

Vehicle: Nissan GT-R LM Nismo, 3.0-litre V6 cyl. Twin-Turbo - Hybrid, Michelin

Drivers: Olivier Pla (FR), Jann Mardenborough (UK), Max Chilton (UK)



26  **LM P2**

Team: G-Drive Racing

Vehicle: Ligier JS P2, Nissan VK45 4.5 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Dunlop

Drivers: Roman Rusinov (RU), Julien Canal (FR), Sam Bird (UK)



27  **LM P2**

Team: SMP Racing

Vehicle: BR01, Nissan VK45 4.5 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Dunlop

Drivers: Marizio Mediani (IT), David Markozov (RU), Nicolas Minassian (FR)



28  **LM P2**

Team: G-Drive Racing
Vehicle: Ligier JS P2, Nissan VK45 4.5 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Dunlop
Drivers: Gustavo Yacamán (CO), Luis F. Derani (BR), Ricardo Gonzalez (ME)



29  **LM P2**

Team: Pegasus Racing
Vehicle: Morgan, Nissan VK45 4.5 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Michelin
Drivers: Léo Roussel (FR), Ho-Ping Tung (NL), David Cheng (US)



30  **LM P2**

Team: Extreme Speed Motorsports
Vehicle: Ligier JS P2, HPD HR28TT 2.8 ltr. V6 cyl. Twin-Turbo, Dunlop
Drivers: Scott Sharp (US), Ryan Dalziel (UK), David Heinemeier Hansson (DK)



31  **LM P2**

Team: Extreme Speed Motorsports
Vehicle: Ligier JS P2, HPD HR28TT 2.8 ltr. V6 cyl. Twin-Turbo, Dunlop
Drivers: Ed Brown (US), Johannes van Overbeek (US), Jon Fogarty (US)



34  **LM P2**

Team: OAK Racing
Vehicle: Ligier JS P2, HPD HR28TT 2.8 ltr. V6 cyl. Twin-Turbo, Dunlop
Drivers: Christopher Cumming (CA), Laurens Vanthoor (BE), Kevin Estre (FR)



35  **LM P2**

Team: OAK Racing
Vehicle: Ligier JS P2, Nissan VK45 4.5 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Dunlop
Drivers: Jacques Nicolet (FR), Jean-Marc Merlin (FR), Erik Maris (FR)



36  **LM P2**

Team: SignaTech Alpine
Vehicle: Alpine A450, Nissan VK45 4.5 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Dunlop
Drivers: Nelson Panciatici (FR), Paul-Loup Chatin (FR), Vincent Capillaire (FR)



37  **LM P2**

Team: SMP Racing
Vehicle: BR01, Nissan VK45 4.5 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Dunlop
Drivers: Mikhail Aleshin (RU), Kirill Ladygin (RU), Anton Ladygin (RU)



38  **LM P2**

Team: Jota Sport

Vehicle: Gibson 015S, Nissan VK45 4.5 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Dunlop

Drivers: Simon Dolan (UK), Mitch Evans (NZ), Oliver Turvey (GB)



40  **LM P2**

Team: Krohn Racing

Vehicle: Ligier JS P2, Judd HK 3.6 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Dunlop

Drivers: Tracy Krohn (US), Nick Jönsson (SE), Joao Barbosa (PR)



41  **LM P2**

Team: Greaves Motorsport

Vehicle: Gibson 015S, Nissan VK45 4.5 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Dunlop

Drivers: Gary Hirsch (CH), Björn Windheim (SW), Jon Lancaster (GB)



42  **LM P2**

Team: Strakka Racing

Vehicle: Strakka Dome S103, Nissan VK45 4.5 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Michelin

Drivers: Nick Leventis (UK), Danny Watts (UK), Jonny Kane (UK)



43  **LM P2**

Team: SARD Morand Racing
Vehicle: Morgan EVO SARD, Judd HK 3.6 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Dunlop
Drivers: Pierre Ragues (FR), Oliver Webb (GB), Zoel Amberg (CH)



45  **LM P2**

Team: Ibanez Racing
Vehicle: Oreca 03R, Nissan VK45 4.5 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Dunlop
Drivers: José Ibañez (FR), Pierre Perret (FR), Ivan Bellarosa (IT)



46  **LM P2**

Team: Thiriet by TDS Racing
Vehicle: Oreca 05, Nissan VK45 4.5 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Dunlop
Drivers: Pierre Thiriet (FR), Ludovic Badey (FR), Tristan Gommendy (FR)



47  **LM P2**

Team: KCMG
Vehicle: Oreca 05, Nissan VK45 4.5 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Dunlop
Drivers: Matthew Howson (UK), Richard Bradley (UK), Nicolas Lapierre (FR)



48  **LM P2**

Team: Murphy Prototypes

Vehicle: Oreca 03R, Nissan VK45 4.5 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Dunlop

Drivers: Karun Chandhok (IN), Mark Patterson (US), Nathanael Berthon (FR)



50  **GTE Am**

Team: Larbre Compétition

Vehicle: Chevrolet Corvette C7, 7.0 ltr. V8 cyl., Michelin

Drivers: Gianluca Roda (IT), Paolo Ruberti (IT), Kristian Poulsen (DK)



51  **GTE Pro**

Team: AF Corse

Vehicle: Ferrari F458 Italia, 4.5 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Michelin

Drivers: Gianmaria Bruni (IT), Toni Vilander (FI), Giancarlo Fisichella (IT)



53  **GTE Am**

Team: Riley Motorsports-TI Auto

Vehicle: SRT Viper GTS-R, 8.0 ltr V10 cyl. aspirated, Michelin

Drivers: Jeroen Bleekemolen (NL), Ben Keating (US), Marc Miller (US)



55  **GTE Am**

Team: AF Corse
Vehicle: Ferrari F458 Italia, 4.5 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Michelin
Drivers: Duncan Russel Cameron (UK), Matthew Griffin (IR), A. Mortimer (UK)



61  **GTE Am**

Team: AF Corse
Vehicle: Ferrari F458 Italia, 4.5 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Michelin
Drivers: Peter Ashley Mann (US), Raffaele Giammaria (IT), M. Cressoni (IT)



62  **GTE Am**

Team: Scuderia Corsa
Vehicle: Ferrari F458 Italia, 4.5 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Michelin
Drivers: Bill Sweedler (US), Townsend Bell (US), Jeffrey Segal (US)



63  **GTE Pro**

Team: Corvette Racing
Vehicle: Chevrolet Corvette C7, 7.0 ltr. V8 cyl., Michelin
Drivers: Jan Magnussen (DK), Antonio García (ES), Ryan Briscoe (AU)



64  **GTE Pro**

Team: Corvette Racing
Vehicle: Chevrolet Corvette C7, 7.0 ltr. V8 cyl., Michelin
Drivers: Oliver Gavin (UK), Tommy Milner (US), Jordan Taylor (US)



66  **GTE Am**

Team: JMW Motorsport
Vehicle: Ferrari F458 Italia, 4.5 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Michelin
Drivers: Abdulaziz Turki Alfaisal (SA), J. Giermazak (PO), M. Avenatti (US)



67  **GTE Am**

Team: Team AAI
Vehicle: Porsche 997, 4.0 ltr. flat-6 cyl. , Michelin
Drivers: Jun-San Chen (TW), Alex Kapadia (UK), Xavier Maassen (NL)



68  **GTE Am**

Team: Team AAI
Vehicle: Porsche 997, 4.0 ltr. flat-6 cyl. , Michelin
Drivers: Han-Chen Chen (TW), Gilles Vannelet (FR), Mike Parisy (FR)



71 GTE Pro

Team: AF Corse

Vehicle: Ferrari F458 Italia, 4.5 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Michelin

Drivers: Davide Rigon (IT), James Calado (UK), Olivier Beretta (IT)

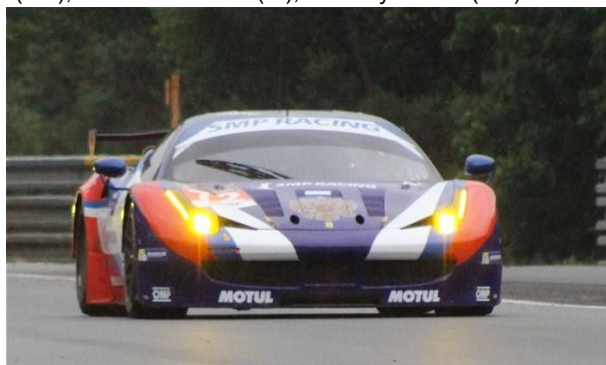


72 GTE Am

Team: SMP Racing

Vehicle: Ferrari F458 Italia, 4.5 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Michelin

Drivers: Viktor Shaytar (RU), Andrea Bertolini (IT), Aleksey Basov (RU)



77 GTE Am

Team: Dempsey - Proton

Vehicle: Porsche 997, 4.0 ltr. flat-6 cyl. , Michelin

Drivers: Patrick Dempsey (US), Patrick Long (US), Marco Seefried (DE)



83 GTE Am

Team: AF Corse

Vehicle: Ferrari F458 Italia, 4.5 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Michelin

Drivers: François Perrodo (FR), Emmanuel Collard (FR), Rui Águas (PT)



88  **GTE Am**

Team: Abu Dhabi-Proton Racing
Vehicle: Porsche 997, 4.0 ltr. flat-6 cyl. , Michelin
Drivers: Christian Ried (DE), Khaled Al Qubaisi (AR), Klaus Bachler (AT)



91  **GTE Pro**

Team: Porsche AG Team Manthey
Vehicle: Porsche 997, 4.0 ltr. flat-6 cyl. , Michelin
Drivers: Richard Lietz (AT), Michael Christensen (DK), Jörg Bergmeister (DE)



92  **GTE Pro**

Team: Porsche AG Team Manthey
Vehicle: Porsche 997, 4.0 ltr. flat-6 cyl. , Michelin
Drivers: Patrick Pilet (FR), Frédéric Makowiecki (FR), Wolf Henzler (DE)



95  **GTE Pro**

Team: Aston Martin Racing
Vehicle: Aston Martin Vantage, 4.5 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Michelin
Drivers: Marco Sørensen (DK), Nicki Thiim (DK), Christoffer Nygaard (DK)



96 GTE Am

Team: Aston Martin Racing

Vehicle: Aston Martin Vantage, 4.5 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Michelin

Drivers: Roald Goethe (DE), Stuart Hall (UK), Francesco Castellacci (IT)



97 GTE Pro

Team: Aston Martin Racing

Vehicle: Aston Martin Vantage, 4.5 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Michelin

Drivers: Darren Turner (UK), Stefan Mücke (DE), Rob Bell (UK)



98 GTE Am

Team: Aston Martin Racing

Vehicle: Aston Martin Vantage, 4.5 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Michelin

Drivers: Paul Dalla Lana (CA), Pedro Lamy (PT), Mathias Lauda (AT)



99 GTE Pro

Team: Aston Martin Racing

Vehicle: Aston Martin Vantage, 4.5 ltr. V8 cyl. aspirated, Michelin

Drivers: Fernando Rees (BR), Alex Macdowall (UK), Richie Stanaway (NZ)



The support races

Le Mans Legends - Homage to cars from 1949 to 1968!

Le Mans Legend is back at Le Mans on Saturday 13th June 2015. It will be one of the curtain-raisers before the Le Mans 24 Hours with a huge field of no fewer than 61 cars! Organised every two years this race highlights an era in the history of the greatest endurance race in the world. 14 of the cars entered actually raced at Le Mans in period, and the remainder of the grid boast their own impressive competition histories. The red GT40 of US drivers Philippe Mulacek and Alain Vinson took part in the 1967 Le Mans 24 Hours, Marc Doncieux's GT40 raced there in 1966, and Claude Nahum/Bernard Thuner's Mk 1 in 1968, with Eric Lidell replacing the car's regular driver that season David Piper to share with Mike Salmon. Bernard is the son of Jean Jacques Thuner, a four-times competitor in the Le Mans



24 Hours. The remarkable seven-GT40 entry also includes the ex-Scuderia Bear/Essex Wire Corporation 1965 Mk1 which finished 3rd in the 1966 Sebring 12 Hours (Skip Scott/Peter Revson) and was put out of the 1966 Le Mans 24 Hours when it was struck by a works-entry GT40 during qualifying. Present-day renowned GT3 and historic racer Andrew Smith will share the car with James Cottingham.

Another newcomer that the extended age range admits to the Le Mans Legend grid is the Alpine-Renault A220 of French drivers Sylvain Stepak and Jean Luc Blanchemain. This car was standing 5th overall in the 1968 Le Mans 24 Hours in the hands of Mauro Bianchi and Patrick Depailler before brake failure caused it to crash with Bianchi at the wheel. This was

the race at which Alpine and Michelin revolutionized racing with the first use of 'slick' tyres.

The A220 and the seven GT40s are joined in what promises to be a stunning class battle by Rainer Becker's Porsche 910, again, a new addition to the grid. Originally owned and raced by Bill Bradley, with Vic Elford and Tony Dean, this car enjoyed a number of notable results in period, including 1st in class and 5th overall at Hockenheim in 1968 and 5th overall in the 1969 1000km Nurburgring. Sam Thomas/Andy Dee-Crowne's Allard J2X was a 1952 Le Mans 24 Hours competitor, while Paul Griffin/Gillian Carr's Connaught ALSR raced there in 1955. Class competition for the Allard comes from another of the same marque. Touring Car driver Patrick Watts will be out in a J2. The Connaught faces sporting competition for class honours from a veteran of the 1956 Le Mans 24 Hours, the beautiful Panhard Monopole X86 of François Cointreau and from former England Rugby, Captain David Cooke, in the yellow Lotus 11 Le Mans he shares with Neil Twyman.



The Schedule

- Thursday 11th June 2015 - 16:00-17:00 - 1 hour qualifying practice session
- Saturday 13th June 2015 - 10:05-10:50 - 45 minute race

Race No.	Entrant	Marque	Model	Year	Colour	cc
LML1 Cars 1949-1954 over 2000						
2	David Wenman	Jaguar	C-type	1952	Green	3400
4	Sam Thomas	Allard	J2X Le Mans	1952	Green	5400
5	JD Classics	Jaguar	C-type	1952	Bronze	3442
15	Patrick Watts	Allard	J2	1950	Black	5400
30	JD Classics	Jaguar	XK120 OTS	1950	Green	3442
54	JD Classics	Cooper	Jaguar T33	1954	Silver	3442
121	Glynn Allen	Aston Martin	DB2 Lightweight Le Mans	1951	Green	2580
155	Andrew Sharp	Aston Martin	DB2	1953	Green	2922
LML2 Cars 1955-1959 over 2000						
11	Harry Wyndham	Jaguar	D-Type	1955	Black	3400
17	Hans Kleissel	Mercedes	300SL Gullwing	1955	Silver	2996
19	Paul Chase-Gardener	Mercedes	300M Gullwing	1955	White	2996
41	JD Classics	Lister	Costin	1959	Green	3781
42	Carlos Martinez de Campos	Jaguar	XK140 FHC	1955	Green	3443
49	Clive Joy	Jaguar	D-type	1955	Blue	3440
55	Georges Gachnang	Cooper	Monaco T49	1960	Green	2500

LML3 Cars 1955-1959 under 2000						
7	David Cooke	Lotus	11 Le Mans	1957	Yellow	1499
23	Richard Lake	AC	Ace	1957	Red	1971
26	François Cointreau	Panhard	Monopole X86	1956	Blue	750
31	Paul Griffin	Connaught	ALSR	1954	Green	1484
40	Gabriel Kremer	Lotus	15	1958	Green	1960
60	Guy Peeters	Lotus	15	1959	Green	1998
70	Gabriel Kremer	Lotus	17 Prototype	1959	Green	1220
LML4 GT Cars 1960-68 over 2000						
1	Alain Rüede	Chevrolet	Corvette	1960	White/Blue	4637
8	Martin Brewer	Aston Martin	Project 214	1963	Green	3996
9	Nicolas Chambon	AC	Cobra Shelby American	1962	Silver	4724
18	Robert Rawe	Aston Martin	DP214	2013	Green	3750
21	Karsten Le Blanc	Austin-Healey	3000	1959	BRG	3000
22	Richard Squire	AC	Cobra	1964	Silver	4727
24	Sam Thomas	Jaguar	E-type Lightweight	1961	Grey	3800
25	Martin Melling	Jaguar	E-type Low Drag	1961	Dark Blue	3800
29	Keith Ahlers	Morgan	Plus 4 Supersports	1956	Green	2188
32	Katarina Kyvalova	Austin-Healey	3000 MK1	1960	Green/White	2912
33	Nathan Harrison	Aston Martin	DB4GT	1960	White	3700
34	Eberhard Baunach	Chevrolet	Corvette	1965	White	6584
38	Jan Gijzen	Ferrari	275 GTB	1966	Red	3300
86	Till Bechtolsheimer	Tojeiro	EE Buick	1962	Blue	3500
89	JD Classics	Jaguar	E-type Semi-Lightweight	1965	Green	3781
112	Barrie Baxter	Maserati	151/154	1965	White	5044
122	Siamak Siassi	Jaguar	E-type Semi-Lightweight	1965	Blue	3781
201	Ludovic Caron	Shelby	Cobra 289 MkII	1963	Blue/White	4855
LML5 GT Cars 1960-65 under 2000						
27	John Sheldon	Lotus	Elan	1965	Red	1594
36	Jean Laurent-Bellue	Alfa Romeo	Giulia TZ	1963	Black/White	1600
39	John Emberson	Morgan	Plus 4 Super Sports	1961	Green/Cream	1991
44	Phil Hooper	TVR	Grantura MkIII	1963	White	1840
46	Christopher Clegg	Austin-Healey	Sebring Sprite	1960	Silver	1300
57	Ten Tenths Ltd	Alfa Romeo	TZ1	1964	Red	1600
59	Simon King	Morgan	Plus 4 Supersports	1962	Green	1991
64	Colin & Helen Elstrop	TVR	Grantura	1964	White	1840
65	Mark Bates	Porsche	901	1965	Light Ivory	1991
83	Gideon Hudson	Marcos	Mini Marcos GT	1967	Yellow	1250
LML6 Sports Racing Cars 1961-68						
3	Richard Meins	Ford	GT40	1966	Red	4727
6	Manual Ferrao	Ford	GT40	1965	Red	4736
10	Afschin Fatemi	Ford	GT40 Prototype	1964	White/Blue	4774
12	Claude Nahum	Ford	GT40 Mk1	1968	Green	4949
13	Shaun Lynn	Ford	GT40	1965	Blue/Red	4727
14	Marc Doncieux	Ford	GT40	1966	Red	4800
20	Rainer Becker	Porsche	910	1967	White/Blue	1991
28	Sylvain Stepak	Alpine	A220	1968	Blue	2995
37	Philip Walker	Ford	GT40	1965	Silver/Yellow	4700
48	Philippe Mulacek	Ford	GT40	1965	Red	4700
63	Andrew Smith	Ford	GT40 Mk1	1965	Silver	4700

Aston Martin Racing Le Mans Festival

The Aston Martin Festival of Le Mans will return in 2015 but bigger than ever before. Up to 60 racing cars from the last 11 years will take part in the support race on Saturday morning ahead of the main 24-hour race. Fan favourites that have all raced at the 24 Hours of Le Mans, including the Aston Martin Lola LMP1(DBR1-2) and the GT class-winning DBR9 will race against current models such as the V8 Vantage GTE and V12 Vantage GT3. Here's an opportunity perhaps to judge the relative speeds on the full Le Mans circuit of current spec GT3 machinery, this race



the only one to allow this comparison to happen! In addition, fans and media can enjoy watching exclusive demonstration laps from Aston Martin road cars of the future as they are unveiled on-track for the first time. The Aston Martin Festival of Le Mans paddock will be situated in the karting area.

The Schedule

- Wednesday 10th June 2015 - 20:30 - 21:30 - Free Practice
- Thursday 11th June 2014 - 17:30 - 18:30 - Qualifying
- Saturday 13th June 2015 - 11:15 - 12:00 - Race

The Le Mans Start.

By Robert Walsh



One of the highlights of my year. 56 cars and a combined 30,000 horsepower blasting by me only feet away.

It's always a little different at Le Mans. For starters, fans are still treated like fans, not as walking wallets like at Grand Prix. You also get more racing in 24 hours than over an entire Grand Prix season. You get it without feeling like you might as well just turn up, throw your wallet over the security fence and go home.

Every year since 1923 (barring war, civil unrest and economic disaster) the people of the city throw their town wide open. In fact, so many come from all over the world that the population triples during race week. Day to day, you'll find around 150,000 people living there. In race week you'll find the best part of 500,000. And at 3pm on the Saturday afternoon most of us are sat, beer flowing, flags waving and airhorns tooting, awaiting the latest chapter in motorsport history. Some are there just to party, some are there just for the racing, most of us are there for a little of both.

The 'Circuit de la Sarthe' has changed many times since 1923. Safety concerns, increasing speeds, local building projects and, sadly, the 'Le Mans Disaster' of 1955 (still motorsport's worst-ever accident) have all forced innovation and change. But the atmosphere at the start, as the noise of the crowd builds along with the anticipation, as the relentless sun beats down or we sit soaked to the skin by yet another downpour, never changes.

The announcers are chattering. The national anthems of every race team and driver are playing. The smells of burnt rubber, brake fluid, racing fuel, cigarette smoke and sweat hang heavy in the air. The tension builds along with the temperature or the downpour depending on which we've got this year. It builds, feeds on itself like a cloud forming. And it builds. And it builds. Right up until engines roar, ears ring and eyes water at the sudden smoke and deafening racket. The cars are off on their formation lap. The old 'Le Mans start' where drivers ran over to their cars, jumped in and sped off without seatbelts or safety harnesses, is long gone. But the tension and anticipation always remain, fierce and undiluted.

There's a cheer as the cars head off down the pit straight, head off in the wheel-tracks of the legends, of Stirling Moss, Juan Manuel Fangio, Phil Hill and many greats. Some are still remembered, some long-forgotten. But here, briefly, even the least-famous racers live again in a welter of smoke and noise as the annual cheer swells, rises and falls among the crowd.

We're almost there.

It's almost time.

It's time.

If you pick the right spot along the pit straight you can see the cars as they approach. See them sliding through the Porsche Curves, hear them jazz their engines, hammering past the pits under the world-famous Dunlop Bridge, into the Dunlop Curves, smell burnt fuel and rubber as 56 cars and 30,000 horsepower obliterate all else for just a few seconds.

Then it's over. The race has begun. As the euphoria fades a brief pang knifes through me. I've waited an entire year for these few seconds. It'll be another year before I feel this again.

Administrative Checking & Scrutineering

Le Mans lasts much longer than just 24 hours, from a spectator's point of view it is actually a full week which offers lots of events which are worth a watch. The traditional opening of the race week used to be the Monday prior to the race when the administrative checking & scrutineering started; this is already a major event in its own right. In a move to attract more spectators, it has recently been brought forward to the Sunday. Some people see this scrutineering, which is basically a technical inspection of the cars, driver's suits and helmets more as a ceremony than a function. It is to be held in the "Place de la République". Parking is much more restricted than it has been in the past so if in doubt, leave your car at the circuit and take the tram. It is this unique event which gets everyone in the mood, ok, some team bosses and drivers are probably not happy that they have to drag everything including themselves into central Le Mans, but for the race fans it is well worth a visit, at least once. One after another, the teams are certified to run according to the regulations, see below for a detailed schedule when each team is being checked:

Sunday, 7th June 2015, 2.30 pm – 7.00 pm

From	To	Car #	Team	Class	Car
14:00	14:30	42	STRAKKA RACING	LM P2	DOME S103 - NISSAN
14:10	14:40	38	JOTA SPORT	LM P2	GIBSON 015S - NISSAN
14:20	14:50	7	AUDI SPORT TEAM JOEST	LM P1	AUDI R18 E-TRON QUATTRO
14:30	15:00	8	AUDI SPORT TEAM JOEST	LM P1	AUDI R18 E-TRON QUATTRO
14:40	15:10	9	AUDI SPORT TEAM JOEST	LM P1	AUDI R18 E-TRON QUATTRO
14:50	15:20	77	DEMPSEY-PROTON RACING	LM GTE Am	PORSCHE 911 RSR
15:00	15:30	88	ABU DHABI-PROTON RACING	LM GTE Am	PORSCHE 911 RSR
15:10	15:40	47	KCMG	LM P2	ORECA 05 - NISSAN
15:20	15:50	26	G-DRIVE RACING	LM P2	LIGIER JS P2 - NISSAN
15:30	16:00	28	G-DRIVE RACING	LM P2	LIGIER JS P2 - NISSAN
15:40	16:10	45	IBANEZ RACING	LM P2	ORECA 03R - NISSAN
15:50	16:20	4	TEAM BY KOLLES	LM P1	CLM P1/01 - AER
16:00	16:30	41	GREAVES MOTORSPORT	LM P2	GIBSON 015S - NISSAN
16:10	16:40	21	NISSAN MOTORSPORTS	LM P1	NISSAN GT-R LM NISMO
16:20	16:50	22	NISSAN MOTORSPORTS	LM P1	NISSAN GT-R LM NISMO
16:30	17:00	23	NISSAN MOTORSPORTS	LM P1	NISSAN GT-R LM NISMO
16:40	17:10	46	THIRIET BY TDS RACING	LM P2	ORECA 05 - NISSAN
16:50	17:20	66	JMW MOTORSPORT	LM GTE Am	FERRARI 458 ITALIA
17:00	17:30	50	LARBRE COMPETITION	LM GTE Am	CHEVROLET CORVETTE C7R
17:10	17:40	12	REBELLION RACING	LM P1	REBELLION R-ONE - AER
17:20	17:50	13	REBELLION RACING	LM P1	REBELLION R-ONE - AER
17:30	18:00	43	TEAM SARD MORAND	LM P2	MORGAN EVO - SARD



Monday, 8th June 2015, 10.00 am – 6.00 pm

From	To	Car #	Team	Class	Car
10:00	10:30	67	TEAM AAI	LM GTE Am	PORSCHE 911 GT3 RSR (997)
10:10	10:40	68	TEAM AAI	LM GTE Am	PORSCHE 911 RSR
10:20	10:50	34	OAK RACING	LM P2	LIGIER JS P2 - HPD
10:30	11:00	35	OAK RACING	LM P2	LIGIER JS P2 - NISSAN
10:40	11:10	29	PEGASUS RACING	LM P2	MORGAN - NISSAN
10:50	11:20	27	SMP RACING	LM P2	BR01 - NISSAN
11:00	11:30	37	SMP RACING	LM P2	BR01 - NISSAN
11:10	11:40	72	SMP RACING	LM GTE Am	FERRARI 458 ITALIA
11:20	11:50	91	PORSCHE TEAM MANTHEY	LM GTE Pro	PORSCHE 911 RSR
11:30	12:00	92	PORSCHE TEAM MANTHEY	LM GTE Pro	PORSCHE 911 RSR
11:40	12:10	62	SCUDERIA CORSA	LM GTE Am	FERRARI 458 ITALIA
11:50	12:20	53	RILEY MTORSPOITS-TI AUTO	LM GTE Am	SRT VIPER GTS-R
12:00	12:30	48	MURPHY PROTOTYPES	LM P2	ORECA 03R - NISSAN
12:10	12:40	30	EXTREME SPEED MOTORSPORTS	LM P2	LIGIER JS P2 - HPD
12:20	12:50	31	EXTREME SPEED MOTORSPORTS	LM P2	LIGIER JS P2 - HPD
13:30	14:00	17	PORSCHE TEAM	LM P1	PORSCHE 919 HYBRID
13:40	14:10	18	PORSCHE TEAM	LM P1	PORSCHE 919 HYBRID
13:50	14:20	19	PORSCHE TEAM	LM P1	PORSCHE 919 HYBRID
14:00	14:30	36	SIGNATECH ALPINE	LM P2	ALPINE A450B - NISSAN
14:10	14:40	96	ASTON MARTIN RACING	LM GTE Am	ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE V8
14:20	14:50	98	ASTON MARTIN RACING	LM GTE Am	ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE V8
14:30	15:00	95	ASTON MARTIN RACING	LM GTE Pro	ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE V8
14:40	15:10	97	ASTON MARTIN RACING	LM GTE Pro	ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE V8
14:50	15:20	99	ASTON MARTIN RACING V8	LM GTE Pro	ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE V8
15:00	15:30	1	TOYOTA RACING	LM P1	TOYOTA TS 040 - HYBRID
15:10	15:40	2	TOYOTA RACING	LM P1	TOYOTA TS 040 - HYBRID
15:20	15:50	63	CORVETTE RACING - GM	LM GTE Pro	CHEVROLET CORVETTE C7R
15:30	16:00	64	CORVETTE RACING - GM	LM GTE Pro	CHEVROLET CORVETTE C7R
15:40	16:10	51	AF CORSE	LM GTE Pro	FERRARI 458 ITALIA
15:50	16:20	71	AF CORSE	LM GTE Pro	FERRARI 458 ITALIA
16:00	16:30	55	AF CORSE	LM GTE Am	FERRARI 458 ITALIA
16:10	16:40	61	AF CORSE	LM GTE Am	FERRARI 458 ITALIA
16:20	16:50	83	AF CORSE	LM GTE Am	FERRARI 458 ITALIA
16:30	17:00	40	KROHN RACING	LM P2	LIGIER JS P2 - JUDD



The Ceremony of hands

Le Mans is a city which is proud of its racing heritage and its rightful place at the centre of Sports Car Racing throughout the world. No visitor to the city can fail to miss the monument to the 24-hour-race in the Place St Nicholas in the centre of town, and its surrounding bronze paving slabs commemorating all the recent LM winning teams – plus individual ones for Le Mans legends like Jacky Ickx, Derek Bell and Henri Pescarolo. Each year, at eleven o'clock on the morning of the day before the race, the three winning drivers from the previous year, gather along with members of the press and public, and local luminaries, for the “Ceremony of Hands”.



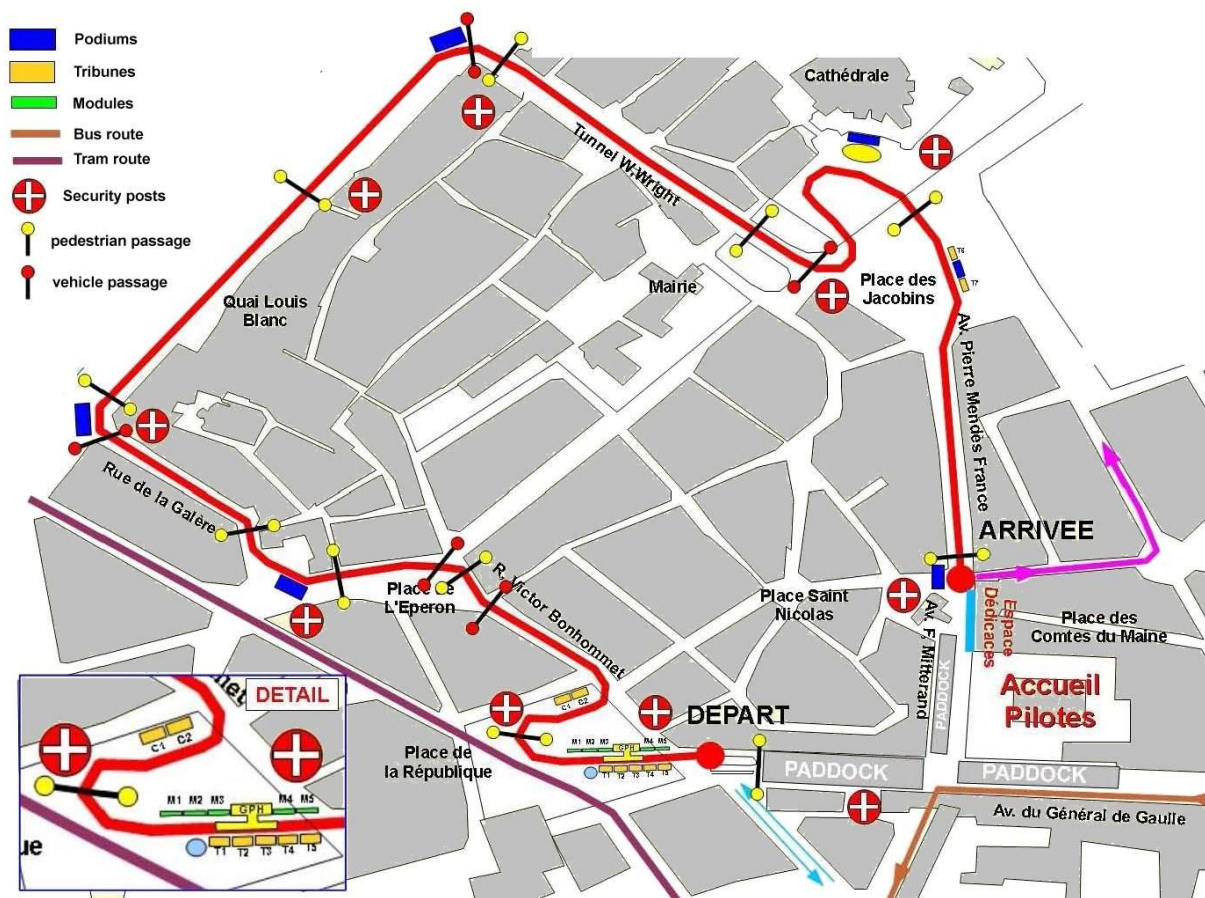
A bronze plaque is unveiled with the names of all three drivers and an impression of their hands. One of the lower-key, and least well-publicized events of the week, it is nevertheless a “must visit” for anybody who has not done it before as it gives a good opportunity to get up close and personal with the top three drivers, and to join the city in celebrating its place at the centre of the sport. This year the ceremony will be held on Monday, 8th June 2015 from 6.30 pm – 7.30 pm at the Place St. Nicholas, Le Mans city centre.



Test day at Le Mans 2012: The Boutsen Ginion Racing Oreca Nissan on its way to the technical inspection

© Deborah Dudley

The Drivers Parade



On Friday evening before the race, many people head for the centre of town to the “Parade des Pilotes”; that’s the Drivers Parade for those of you who don’t speak French. This is a unique event full of atmosphere which fills the centre with usually more than 100.000 people. All the drivers are parading around in historic open top cars, there are marching bands and of course parades of beautiful girls. The parade is rather informal, laid back and also a brilliant opportunity to get drivers’ autographs. **The annual driver’s parade 2015 will be held in Le Mans city centre on Friday, 12th June from 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm.**

Do not plan to go there by car! Take the tram or a bus instead when going from the circuit into town!

For details about the tram please see our chapter “Transport in Le Mans”. There is also a website about this event at <http://www.grande-parade-des-pilotes.com>.



The drivers parade from a race drivers perspective – a first-hand comment from Stefan Johansson:

“Friday is a day off, apart from the parade. THE PARADE!!! This is another tradition that now has become a huge event. It starts at 6pm at the Jacobin Square again, and goes through the entire downtown area of the city, with probably more than 100.000 people lined along the fences on the road.”

“Each driver team is being driven by a chauffeur in an open top historic car of some description. The start of the run is from a podium and there’s generally a long wait as each team is being interviewed at the podium. So, as you can imagine, a 1920’s shitbox with an open top on idle is not necessarily the most efficient thing when it comes to emissions so most drivers are close to passing out at this stage...The good thing is that we have another three hours of this to look forward to...Seriously, most of the drivers including myself are completely nacios by the end of the parade...”

Club Arnage Forum Gathering

The traditional CA gathering in the race village will be on **Saturday, 13th June, start around 9:00 pm**. Location is the area around the “**Courbe**” Bar – or the “**Restaurant de la Courbe Dunlop**”, that’s how it is officially called. This place is on the inside of the pit exit towards the Dunlop chicane and offers the advantage to meet and see the race at the same time.

How to get there: Coming through the main entrance just go into the tunnel in front of you which leads to the inside of the track. Exiting the tunnel just turn left. The “**Courbe**” Bar it is the bright red building by the track side, watch out for groups of people in CA T-Shirts. It’s a public gathering in a public place, so non-CA members are of course welcome. To all CA-members: Please wear your CA t-shirt!



CA Gathering at Le Mans 2005...

© Werner Kirchmann

The Saint Saturnin Classic British Welcome

The village of Saint Saturnin is situated on the main Northern entry to Le Mans, about fifteen minutes from the Circuit. Because of the tremendous popularity of the Le Mans 24 Hour Race with the British and other Nationalities arriving in classic and sports cars, the event, held in the grounds of the Val de Vray has become a highlight of the Le Mans week. The objective of the St Saturnin Classic British Welcome is to provide a rendezvous and relaxing welcome point for those arriving, or those already in Le Mans, to take a breather from the Circuit and or the City.

Each year the event is themed on a specific marque, former years have included Jaguar, Porsche, Lotus, Aston Martin, Healey, Ferrari, Morgan, Corvette and Guests of Honor have included Jan Lammers, Derek Bell, Sir Stirling Moss, Johnny Herbert, Paul Frère, Michael Salmon, Jean Bloxham and Yves Courage. Within the site there will be restaurants, bars, picnic areas, boutiques, an exhibition of the featured marque, plus models, photographs, ACO Ticket Office, an air conditioned cinema, free car wash, live music and lots more! The event, with free entrance and parking, is held all day Friday 12th June 2015 from 9.00 am to 6.00 pm. Average figures for visitors are about 5,000 and classic and sports cars around 1000.

Saint Saturnin Classic British Welcome 2015

This year's guest of honour is none other than Tom Kristensen, Mr Le Mans, with nine outright victories to his credit in the Le Mans 24 Hours.

Theme 2015: MG

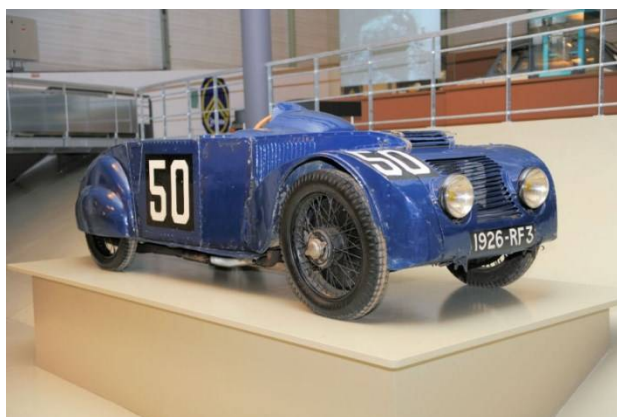
MG is the most successful make of British Sports Car ever built. An affordable classic and adored by millions all over the world. 2015 will be 60 years since the launch of the stylish MGA, but as significantly for us, in June it will be 80 years since MG sent three cars to race at Le Mans. They finished 1, 2, 3 in their class, and all the drivers were Ladies. True British Spirit! It will also be 10 years since the MG-Lola won class LMP2 at Le Mans. So there is much to celebrate with this classic British marque, and a truly worthy choice of our theme for 2015.

Postal address: Association Saint Saturnin Classic British Welcome, Centre du Val de Vray- Rue de l'Eglise, F-72650 Saint Saturnin, France. GPS position: Latitude 48°03'42.09" N, Longitude 0°09'19.17" E
Website www.classicbw.org.



The automobile museum

Just a short hop away from the main entrance of the track this museum is well worth a visit. It was founded in 1961; a new building was constructed in 1991 with app. 4.000 m² of exhibition space, a restaurant with about 100 places and a souvenir shop. There are about 200 cars on display, not surprisingly with a focus on former Le Mans participants but also some other interesting historic automobiles. Some people use a rainy day to visit it but it can be also very attractive on a very hot day; it's air-conditioned and has proper toilets. Some examples of cars which are on display are: A Martini colored Porsche 917 Langheck from 1971, a Bentley Speed 8 from 2003, the 1924 winning Bentley 3 Litre, the 1974 winning Matra 670 B, a group C Mazda and a Silk Cut Jaguar. **The museum has recently been refurbished – a report for the next edition of this guide is welcome!**



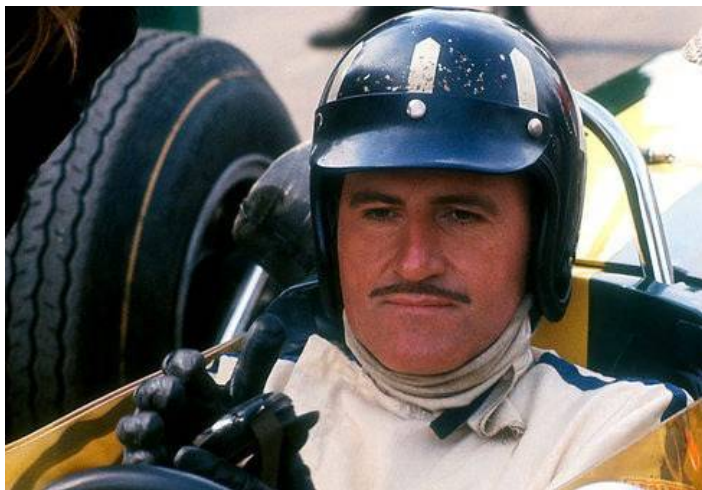
Address:	Opening hours	Tickets
Le musée des 24 heures Place Luigi Chinetti, F-72100 Le Mans Phone : +33-(0)2- 43 72 72 24 Fax : +33-(0)2- 43 85 38 96 E-mail: contact.lemusee24h@cg72.fr http://www.lemusee24h.com/ GPS: 47.9561393 – 0.2074816	June – August: Mo – Su: 10.00 am – 6.00 pm March – May and Oct. – Dec. 11.00 am – 5.00 pm Extended opening hours during the race week	Adults: 8,50 € Adolescents (9 - 18 years): 6 € Children (less 9 years): free Discounts for groups and for A.C.O. members are available



Le Mans History: Graham Hill's Last Hurrah (and Triple Crown)

By Robert Walsh

Graham Hill, AKA 'Mr. Motor Racing' and 'Mr. Monaco', twice winner of the Formula One World Driver's Championship (1962 and 1968), winner of the Indy 500 at his first attempt (1966), five-time winner of the Monaco Grand Prix (1963, 1964, 1965, 1968, 1969), winner of the Le Mans 24 Hours (1972) and the only driver in racing history to have won the 'Triple Crown of Motorsport' (F1 championship, Indy 500 and Le Mans). A hero to racing enthusiasts and petrolheads everywhere.



His win at Le Mans in 1972 sealed the Triple Crown and did so amid increasing opinion from racing journalists and fans that he was past, over the hill, washed up. He'd been racing professionally since 1958, was 44 years old and, despite his previous glittering career, was increasingly regarded as yesterday's man. To many, the old lion had lost his bite and should have already retired. He hadn't won a Grand Prix since Monaco in 1969, had been crippled by a horrendous shunt at the US Grand Prix at Watkins Glen that year and, many thought, shouldn't really be racing any more. Team bosses were regularly overlooking him when choosing new drivers, he hadn't had a big-name team employ him for a couple of years and his Grand Prix record since Watkins Glen consisted of a series of low-placed finishes and retirements. Things couldn't really have looked

any bleaker than they were.

But, while he was older than most drivers, still suffered to some extent after his Watkins Glen shunt and was regarded increasingly as a relic of a bygone age, the old lion still had one last roar left in him. He would prove his critics wrong where every serious driver longs to (on the track) and by winning a prestigious race (the Le Mans 24 Hours) when nobody really thought he had a chance in hell of winning and probably wouldn't even finish.

Le Mans in 1972 was his last hurrah. He was sharing a Matra-Simca 670 V12 with French veteran Henri Pescarolo. Le Mans 1972 would be the first of three consecutive outright wins for Matra (1972, 1973, 1974), Pescarolo's first of four outright wins (1972, 1973, 1974, 1984), the first outright Le Mans win for a French team since 1950 (Talbot-Lago) and, of course, made Graham Hill the winner of racing's only Triple Crown. Things had changed a little for the track since the 1971 race. The dangerously-fast Maison Blanche section had been removed and replaced by the Porsche Curves and Ford Chicane. The entry rules for Le Mans had changed. Out were the big 5-litre monsters like the Porsche 917 and Ferrari 512 and in were 3-litre cars, many using the Ford-Cosworth DFV engines that were dominating F1 at the time. The big opposition to Matra were Alfa-Romeo, fielding 3 of their TT3 cars. Less serious opposition came from a plethora of Lolas and a single outdated, underpowered Porsche 908/L prepared by legendary Le Mans bigwig Reinhold Joest. Ferrari weren't really interested in Le Mans that year, preferring to stick to the 1000-kilometre races that formed most of the 'World Championship for Makes' and didn't field a factory team.



As the hours dragged by, day turned into night into day again and cars began dropping out through accidents and sheer attrition, Hill and Pescarolo took the lead. The Alfa challenge disappeared relatively early with mechanical breakdowns and the Porsche 908/L was never really in contention. Another 1950's alumni, Jo Bonnier, set fastest lap with his Lola T290, lapping the Circuit de La Sarthe in 3:46.90 at an average speed of 134.532mph. By a truly bitter irony Bonnier, one of Sir Jackie Stewart's staunch allies in his campaign to improve racing safety, was killed in an accident involving Florian Vetsch and his privately-entered Ferrari GTB4 just before Indianapolis corner. Bonnier's Lola somersaulted over the crash barriers into the trees and caught fire. Bonnier died instantly.

Pescarolo and Hill inherited the lead shortly after midnight. Their Matra 670 V12 'short tail' proved reliable, durable and fast enough to be competitive while faster cars dropped out with breakdowns. When Matra team-mate David Hobbs and Jean-Pierre Jabouille dropped out with mechanical trouble it began to look as though the dream might become a reality. Could Hill really do it? It's a long race and there were still nearly 16 hours left to run. But, they were leading and if they could simply hold on then history was about to be made. But would it be..?



It would. At the finish the Hill/Pescarolo Matra was still out in front. Hill, ever the gentleman although he must have been burning to win his Triple Crown while at the wheel, was gracious enough to forgo this joy in favour of having Pescarolo, a French driver in a French car, provide the first outright win for a French team since father-and-son Louis and Jean-Louis Rosier took the chequered flag in their Talbot-Lago T26 GS in 1950. Hill and Pescarolo had survived 344 laps, covering 4691.343 kilometres at an average speed per lap of 195.472 kilometres an hour. Matra had their win, the French had their long-awaited glory and Hill had his Triple Crown. About the only people not popping copious amounts of champagne bottles were all those scribblers and talking heads who'd said he was past it and whom the old lion had just bitten soundly on their rumps. Even Lola, perennial also-rans in sportscar and endurance racing, had something to celebrate when their T290 entered by Kodak Pathe France became the first Lola to actually finish at Le Mans.

I've always admired Graham Hill. He was a great driver with a stellar record. He held Team Lotus together after the death of Jim Clark at Hockenheim in April, 1968. He drove some of the finest cars ever to grace road or racetrack. He's the only Triple-Crown winner in racing history. But, most of all, I admire him for Le Mans 1972, when he showed the world that he wasn't completely finished, did so at the toughest of races and, for anybody who dislikes journalists in general, put his media doubters firmly (and unanswerably) in their place.

Rest In Peace.

Transport in Le Mans

Public transport –trams, buses and taxis – works quite well in Le Mans. The former special bus services from the track to the town centre have been suspended; all traffic from the track to the city will be handled by the tram service instead.

The Tram

This runs from Antares, inside the full circuit and quite close to Houx Annexe, and goes through Le Mans city centre, passing under the Mulsanne Straight and heading right past Carrefour on the way. A new tunnel takes passengers direct from Garage Vert on the Bugatti circuit, to the terminus. It passes close to the Tertre Rouge bar, but sadly there is no convenient stop nearby. The tram stops on the North side of the railway station, where a major interchange is being constructed. After arriving in the city centre – Place de la Republique - all trams continue on to Universite, which is on the west side of the city. Trams run fairly frequently, typically every 12 minutes to/from Antares. A more frequent service is promised during the race and at other peak times, including Friday afternoon and evening, for the Drivers' Parade.

The trams tend to do quite well compared to cars in the traffic – which has been slowed down by numerous traffic light junctions to protect trams and cars from each other – so for sightseeing in Le Mans it has a lot to recommend it. It is also excellent value for money, especially if you use the park and ride at Antares. Currently 3.65 euros will buy a day's relatively secure parking, plus a return ticket to Le Mans each for as many occupants as there are in your car! Using the tram for shopping at Carrefour is feasible, and wheeled luggage is allowed on board, but do not expect the tram to be empty when you board for the trip back to the circuit – the service is very popular with locals. If you use the tram, remember that on the return trip to the circuit you want a tram bound for Antares – NOT Espal, which is the other branch of the service, and terminates a long way from the circuit.

At Antares, the car park is barrier controlled, and on approaching the barrier to enter, the ticket seller in the big booth will offer you the bargain tickets quoted above. After parking, walk across to the tram station, where a tram will usually be waiting. After joining the tram you must "composte" your ticket. This has nothing to do with last week's cabbage leaves, but requires you to enter your ticket in the machine near the door in the tram, which validates it. Do this every time you join a tram. When rejoining your car after the trip, the car park exit barrier will lift automatically when you approach.

If you elect not to use the park and ride, then ticket purchase takes place from a machine on the tram station platform – the same rules about validating tickets apply, of course. The tram line is UNIVERSITE – ANTARES, prices: 2,80 € for a return ticket, 4,00 € for a day pass and 12,00 € for 10 rides. Tickets are sold from automatic machines at stops, at Setram agencies and from the bus conductors.

Sunday 7th and Monday 8th June

- University to Antares/Circuit des 24 Heures: From 1:30 pm – 7:00 pm: One tram every 15 minutes
- Antares/Circuit des 24 Heures to University: From 1:30 pm – 7:00 pm: One tram every 15 minutes

Wednesday 10th and Thursday 11th June (Practice Sessions)

- University to Antares/Circuit des 24 Heures Up until 10.00 pm : One tram every 10 minutes. After 10.00 pm: One tram every 12 minutes. Last departure from University at 01.20 am
- Antares/Circuit des 24 Heures to University Up until 10:00 pm : One tram every 10 minutes. After 10:00 pm: One tram every 12 minutes. Last tram from University at 01.00 am

Friday 12th June (Drivers Parade)

- University to Antares/Circuit des 24 heures Up until 9.00 pm: One tram every 6 minutes. After 9.00 pm: One tram every 8 minutes. Last tram from University 02.12 am
- Antares/Circuit 24 heures to University Up until 9.00 pm : One tram every 6 minutes. After 9.00 pm: One tram every 8 minutes Last departure from Antares at 01.15 am

Saturday 13th June

- University to Antares/Circuit des 24 heures. Up until 11.00 am : One tram every 13 minutes. Between 11.00 am and 4.00 pm: One tram every 7 minutes Between 4:00 pm and 4.00 am: One tram every 13 minutes
- Antares/Circuit des 24 heures to University: Up until 10.00 am: A tram every 13 minutes Between 10.00 am and 2.30 pm: A tram every 7 minutes Between 2.30 pm and 01.00 am: A tram every 13 minutes

Sunday 14th June

- University to Antares/Circuit des 24 heures.: Between 04.00 am and 09.00 am : A tram every 35 minutes Between 09.00 am and 12.00 am : A tram every 13 minutes Between 12.00 am and 6.00 pm: A tram every 7 minutes Between 6:00 pm and 9.00 pm: A tram every 13 minutes Between 9.00 pm and 00.50 am: A tram every 35 minutes
- Antares/Circuit des 24 heures to University : Between 01.00 am and 03.00 am: A tram every 20 minutes Between 03.00 am and 08.00 am: A tram every 35 minutes Between 08.00 am and 10.30 am: A tram every 13 minutes Between 10.30 am and 5.30 pm: A tram every 7 minutes Between 5.30 pm and 8.30 pm: A tram every 13 minutes Between 8.30 pm and 11.50 pm: A tram every 35 minutes



Partial map of the new tram

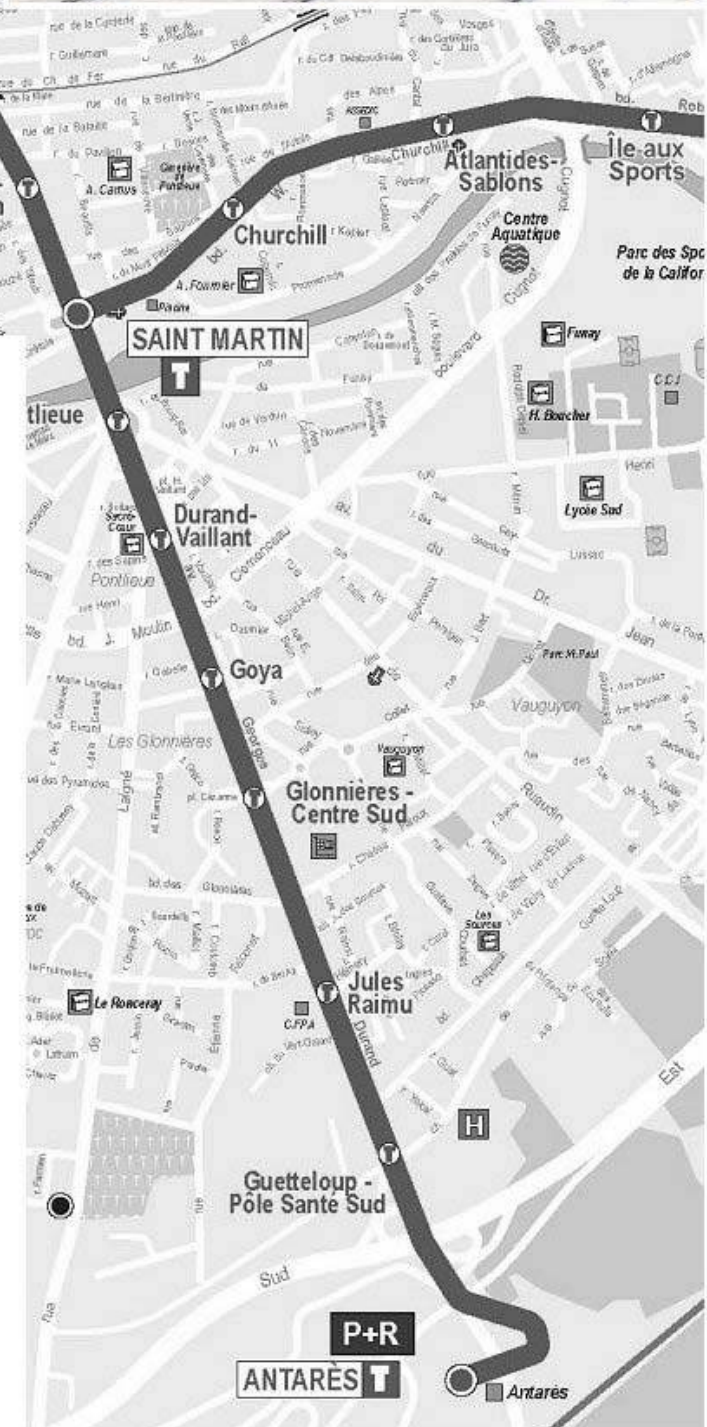
Some important tram stations:

ANTARES is the closest station to the circuit, it's actually inside the race track.

REPUBLIQUE is the best choice for visiting the drivers parade and the scrutineering.

GLONNIERES - CENTRE SUD is your exit to the big Carrefour supermarket, see the shopping chapter in this guide.

GARES is the French word for station, so if you need to catch a train leave there.



Taxi

- Radio Taxi du Mans : +33 (0) 2 43 24 92 92
- Taxis Station Gare : +33 (0) 2 43 24 99 99
- Le Mans Taxi Radio : +33 (0) 2 43 82 07 07

Taxi's are usually waiting opposite the main entrance to the circuit near the museum for customers. Permanent taxi ranks can be found at various points throughout Le Mans, e.g. Place de la République, Centre Hospitalier, Gare Nord et Sud, Sablons (Place du Marché) and at Pontlieue.

By bicycle

If you can handle the transport, a bicycle is a nice thing to have. You can whizz from Tertre Rouge to Arnage village and Arnage corner via the Esses, the Village and points in between. That way you can see loads of action and get up to the shops for fresh bread on the Sunday morning. You will also have no traffic problems.

In 2010 there were bicycles for rent at the Antares Tram terminus for €10/day. Do note though, that after dark, a high visibility jacket is required by law. Failure to wear one can be punishable by a fine.

Navettes/Shuttle buses

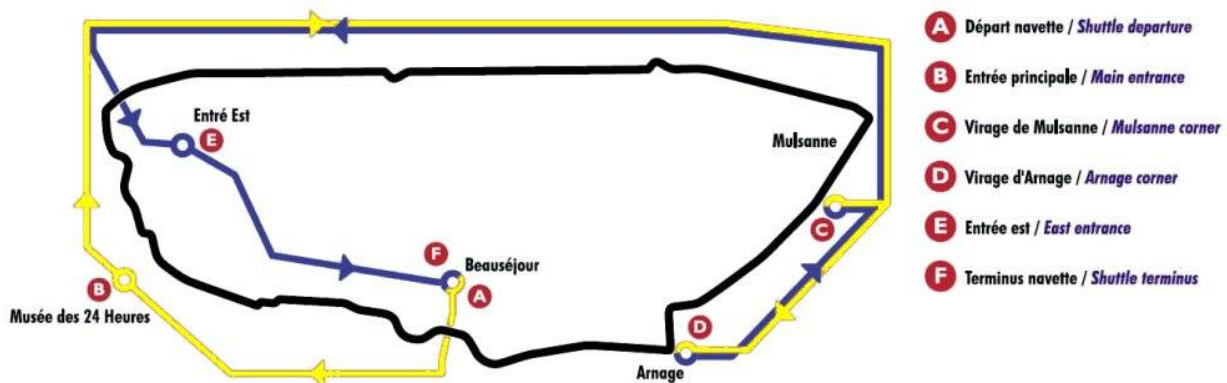
This A.C.O. service has increased over the years to provide free (to those with Enceinte Generale) transport around the circuit. These buses can be great way to get around the circuit but they have also become more chaotic with the bus-stop at Mulsanne corner becoming rather agitated after midnight due to buses arriving with few or no empty seats to take away folks waiting and buses after lunch on Sunday taking several hours to go nowhere in the traffic jams.

In 2010 the A.C.O implemented a new routing system with two navette routes. The Orange "A" route runs between the South Entrance (the tram terminus near Antares) and Beausejour with a stop at Technoparc. The Blue "B" route runs between the North Entrance and Arnage/Mulsanne viewing areas with a stop near the Porsche viewing area.

In 2010 the A route ran

- Wednesday and Thursday 15:00 to 00:30
- Saturday 09:00 to 01:30
- Sunday 09:00 to 16:30

The B route ran non-stop from Saturday 14:00 through Sunday 18:00.



8 little passenger "trains" will run as follows (free of charge):

1. North Entrance to Maison Blanche
- 2,3. P13/ Paddock/ Village
4. Beausejour
- 5,6. Virage Porsche, Technopark roundabout
7. Antares, Technopark Roundabout
8. Maison Blanche/Virage Porsche (exterior)

On Wednesday and Thursday only trains 5 & 6 run, 15:00 to midnight. On Saturday all trains run 09:30 to 02:00 and on Sunday from 09:00 till 15:00.

The A.C.O. village

With its numerous bars, food outlets and shops, the A.C.O. village represents the hub of the circuit. 'Le Village' sprawls from the Dunlop Chicane and the furthest reaches of the Interior Musée campsite, down towards the pit straight, where it peters out into a maze of team hospitality tents which fill the paddock area behind the pit lane. At its centre is the main square which is served by a giant TV screen, showing live streaming of the race. Here you will find the majority of the modern permanent structures which house toilet facilities, retailers and hospitality suites. Food and drink is expensive wherever you go around the circuit but not extortionate. The Village is no exception, and you will find a good variety including fast food, basic sit down meals, crêpe stalls and bars which serve beer, brandy and champagne in abundance. This place really comes alive during the race and at night the atmosphere is friendly and inviting, encouraging you to stay up to the wee hours and follow the race for as long as you can keep your eyes open!



Around twenty signs in Michelin colours have been erected to make it easier to find your way around, in addition to more of the traditional plans of the circuit on the "Decaux" boards.

Golf Course

There is a 18 hole course at the bottom of the Mulsanne Straight, not surprisingly it's called "Golf des 24 Heures". Drive down Mulsanne Straight, turn right at the Mulsanne Corner roundabout and turn first right in to Golf Club. The club house is the building on the inside of Mulsanne corner.

Golf des 24 Heures

Phone: +33 (0)2 43 42 00 36, +33-(0)2-43 42 00 10 (Clubhouse),

Fax: +33 (0)2 43 42 21 31

E-Mail: golfdes24heures.lemans@club-internet.fr

Website: <http://golfdes24heures.free.fr>

First aid – the Medical Center

Sometimes bad luck hits and you might be in need of a doctor. The Medical Centre is near to the old Motor Museum building. Plenty of doctors and nurses are on duty there and usually you will find someone who speaks also English or German. The author of these lines brought a mate of him there some years ago and these people did a great job. They were very friendly and helpful and there is probably a lot of volunteer work involved, so full kudos to these people! A new purpose built medical centre was opened in May this year, which replaces the old pre-fabs so it should be even better equipped now.

There are also a few paramedic vans posted around the circuit - ask for "poste de secours" or "poste medicale". In '09, there was one in the car park next to the Bleu Nord campsite, just opposite the circuit entrance. The paramedics were extremely helpful when we needed some assistance - they were glad of something to do. Nb - if you need treatment make sure you can show them any drugs that you are taking already (legal or illegal).

Funfair

The funfair has been a permanent fixture at Le Mans for many years. In particular, the big wheel at night is an iconic image. It used to be found sprawling across the infield and outfield between the Dunlop Chicane and the Esses but in recent years it has inexplicably down sized and relocated in part to the south of the pit lane heading out towards the Maison Blanche campsite. It has been moved again this year to the outside of the circuit, beyond the Dunlop Bridge on the way to Tertre Rouge. The big wheel at least seems to have survived and is worth a ride during Saturday night when you will have a panoramic view of the race.



Banking services / ATMs at the circuit

There are 3 ATMs at the circuit. One is located near the center of the village, next to the Racing Legends stand, as you come from the new tunnel it is on the left as you enter the new village area, the second is at the opposite end of the same row of buildings, on the way to the "Restaurant du Balcon", the third is by pedestrian entrance E3 (from Parking Blanc.)

Internet Access

Wi-Fi Hotspots: A free wireless internet access point is available at the McDonalds on the Mulsanne straight (1st chicane), actually all McDonalds branches in Le Mans seem to offer this service. A commercial hotspot seems to be available at the racetrack, a search on the internet found this company: Neuf Telecom, Rue des Raineries, Le Mans, Phone +33-(0)2- 43402510. According to www.jiwire.com there is now a free Wi-Fi connection at Arnage airport. This appears to be provided by Orange and runs on 802.11b. If this proves to be accurate then those campers on Bleu Nord might be able to access this hotspot. Should you stumble across other Wi-Fi hotspots this year, please update this page or drop us a mail.

French Data SIM Card offers in the UK: There are several offers on the web for Pay-Monthly data SIM cards for use whilst in France, e.g. at <http://www.0044.co.uk/france/data-sim-card-pay-monthly.htm#tabs>.

Data SIM Card offers in France: There is a SFR store next to the Carrefour and where you can buy such cards, see http://www.sfr.fr/mobile/offres-detail/pass_internet_3g_plus?vue=000mg0. In 2011 a USB stick with a SIM to access the internet cost 9.90 € for 3 days, you could recharge those for 9.00 € for another 2 days unlimited internet access. There are also good PAYG offers from Leclerc and Auchan supermarkets and from Orange. An overview about other options can be found at <http://prepaidwithdata.wikia.com/wiki/France>. However, please note that French internet is very regulated and you must produce proof of identity and address to sign up in France. We're not aware how these companies react to overseas visitors so any feedback on this aspect would be most welcome.

Visitors with physical disabilities

A first-hand report by Deborah Dudley

From the A.C.O. website: *"People with a physical handicap of 80% or above will be granted free entrance to the circuit on the presentation of their disability certificate. The accompanying person must normally pay for their 'General Enclosure' ticket. A 'disabled reception' has been put in place near to the 'Conciergerie' and the 'Porte des Italiens' (In the stands area), 'Tribune Dunlop', 'Musée' and 'P5' (Village). These points have been added to the permanent buildings: 'P16', the stands situated above the team garages, the race control centre, the A.C.O. stand, 'Houx' and 'Maison Blanche'."*

That's it for the official version!

In reality, the situation is both better and worse. Following a car smash in 2008, I have now had the opportunity to sample the A.C.O.'s disabled facilities at first hand. There's no doubt that you're better off with a helper (or preferably two given that we're talking, in my case, about nearly 40 hours without sleep here), mainly because the surfaces at Le Mans are poorly suited to the average wheelchair. Every bit of gravel or broken beer-bottle conspires to make your passage around the circuit a nightmare and a trip out to Tertre Rouge, Arnage or Mulsanne is virtually impossible although some of my fellow wheelchair users have driven round to TR during qualifying without being challenged. Whatever, you can still have a good time.

If you make it to scrutineering, for example, wheelchair users and their helpers get the best view in the house, under the press stand in front of the square where the teams and their cars pose for photographs. Many of the drivers are extremely affable (others less so!) and chatty. One of the highlights of the week for me and well worth turning up early in the week to catch.



Wheelchair access at the Tertre Rouge tunnel

Once at the circuit, blue badge holders can park within the confines, alongside the wall behind the grandstands. You need to stop just by the main entrance and go to the little office next to the turnstiles. With typical forethought, there is a big step into this office, but the staff are very helpful so if you have no helper with you, just knock on the door and the staff will come out and do the paperwork for you. Just show your blue badge, give them your registration number and you will get a parking ticket. Without a blue badge it is possible to blag your way into the circuit on practice days (smile, point to the wheelchair, and look a bit distressed) but it's hard to imagine this being possible on Saturday or Sunday. Thus it's a long and tedious push from whatever campsite you are on to the circuit if you are not registered disabled.

Once parked, it's a quick trip to the South end of the Maison Blanche grandstand where a ramp leads up to a truly excellent viewing area (one of the few perks of being in a chair with wheels on.) There are also ramps leading to a purpose designed viewing area below the yellow concrete grandstand opposite the pit exit, but the downside is that you are below the catch fencing so it's rubbish for photography. But is under cover and has a great view of the approach to the Dunlop bridge. This has become a favourite of mine in the early hours of the morning.

If you're alone, there is a disabled person's Concierge - I have never found out where they are based because since this was added, I have always found that one of the helpers tends to find me, and they are a great help in showing you around, pushing you up ramps, and explaining the best places to go. As well as the two stands listed, there are - according to the ACO, also places to watch in the Pits grandstand and at Race Control, but I've yet to find these. If you should do so, please let me know for next year's guide.

A.C.O. members have the added problem of needing to get their wristbands from the horribly-placed new members area up by La Chapelle. Without my galant helper the first year, I would have been well and truly stuffed in this respect. However, having had one dreadful experience with this, I went to the ACO truck just by the tunnel exit in the village and they were able to provide me with a wristband which saved a lot of hassle. If in doubt, ask - many of the ACO staff and helpers speak French. If you have seats in the ACO grandstand then in theory, disabled people can get in via a lift and the staff were, as ever, eager and willing to help. However, when I did ask I was taken up to the top (nice view and all, no doubt) where, unless one had a helper to go and get some assistance from the staff, one was stuck, as the lift had no call button on the exit side! Goodness knows what you're supposed to do if you need the loo..... or a drink..... or to go home again...

On the plus side, the disabled loos are good, easy to access, and these days available all around the circuit. There are even disabled-accessible showers in the lavatory block behind the pits grandstand. The tramway system makes direct access between the circuit and the city of Le Mans a piece of cake, although the downside is that you can't get from corner to corner very well. However, it's one of the easier ways to get to Tertre Rouge as it's ramps all the way (although some are pretty steep and hard work in hot weather). The little trains are an option for those with limited mobility but not for those unable to tackle a step or two.

The A.C.O. is doing its best to accommodate people with disabilities but ultimately this is a motor racing circuit and, let's face it, it's huge and in many ways has out of date facilities. Whatever, you can still have a good time and one thing I felt the first time I had to do this was that at the end of the race that I had done it - I watched 22 out of 24 hours of the race - I breathed in the atmosphere and I felt the real LM buzz. What more can you ask?

Le Mans – Not Just ‘Boys With Toys.’

By Robert Walsh

So, as you're probably aware by now, I love Le Mans. I do, it's like an itch I can't scratch. Every year I start planning my next trip in November and then I'm off again every June. Now, some people think that Le Mans (and racing in general) is simply boys and their toys, that there's nothing more to racing than a bunch of blokes rocketing round and round in circles for 24 hours. Others might see racing as unjustifiable on safety and environmental grounds, what good comes of drivers risking their lives and expending vast amounts of fuel, tyres, oil and a myriad of other consumables just so three drivers can stand on a podium and waste perfectly good champagne by spraying it everywhere rather than drinking it? It's environmentally unfriendly, physically dangerous and unjustifiable in the modern world. Sorry to say this, haters, but the facts say otherwise.

YOU. ARE. WRONG.

And now I'm going to explain why... Chances are that most of you, even the most environmentally-concerned, safety-conscious, politically-correct muesli-eating, sandal-wearing killjoys among you, drive a vehicle of some kind. Not some fire-breathing, supercharged, gas-guzzling two-seater sportscar that you'll never get to stretch to its limits on ordinary roads, but ordinary road-going cars, vans and suchlike that you can buy just about anywhere. And you're probably thinking that a bunch of speed demons whizzing round a track for 24 hours has absolutely nothing to do with you. Guess what?

YOU. ARE. WRONG.

One of the purposes of the Le Mans 24 Hours is the conception, testing and improvement of new technology. Since the first race in 1923 that covers all manner of things that appear on pretty much ANY road-going vehicle you might ever have driven. Improved engines, improved tyres, improved brakes, aerodynamics, new fuels and engine management systems that you'll find on your daily driver were devised, tested and refined at Le Mans long before they became standard on the car and/or van parked outside your house and, just to make it clear that you yoghurt-knitters profit as much from the race as anybody else, here are a few relevant facts.

Engines. Every vehicle has them, and a lot of the improvements that you'll find as standard on your road car were once cutting-edge ideas developed for racing. It was at Le Mans that engines were constantly improved to give greater reliability, higher speeds, better general performance and increased fuel efficiency. Yes, my tie-dye-wearing brethren, it was on the racetrack that this demand first arose. It was from racing that engines improved to the point they're at today and it's from racing that the standard engine-management systems on today's road cars, the reliability that gets you where you need to be when you need to be there and improved performance that gives you some extra power just when you need it.



The aerodynamic revolution that was the D-Type Jaguar.

Aerodynamics. Simply put, the better the aerodynamics on your daily driver the faster it can go, the less fuel it burns to get you where you're going and the smaller the engine needed for the same performance. Guess where aerodynamics and car design met in the middle? Yes, you've guessed it, it was Le Mans. To win the race drivers needed higher top speeds while putting the minimum strain necessary on engines, brakes, gearboxes and transmissions. That meant lowering a car's weight and making it as streamlined as possible. Designers had been toying with aerodynamics (still a somewhat black art at the time) even before the Second World War, but it was Jaguar designer Malcolm Sayer who used principles of aircraft design to produce the C and D-Type Jaguars in the 1950's. After the Jaguars spent much of the 1950's sweeping all before them at Le Mans other teams followed suit and that also trickled down into everyday road cars. More on the Jags and a certain other vital innovation later...



The C-Type Jaguar, with its then new-fangled disc brakes..

Brakes. Again, every car needs them. And just about every modern vehicle will come with ABS (anti-lock braking systems) and disc brakes as discs are far more efficient than the old-style drum brakes used on road and race cars up until the 1950's. Guess where ABS and disc brakes came from? Yep, Le Mans. It was Malcolm Sayer's C and D-Type Jaguars that were the first racing cars to have disc brakes and it wasn't long before other manufacturers followed suit. If they wanted to win at Le Mans, they had to. Disc brakes meant that the Jaguars could brake later into corners, go faster for longer along straights and still take corners at safe speeds. The disc brakes lasted longer than the previously-standard drum brakes, they took longer to wear out and meant that drivers were safer as they stood less chance of having brakes either lock or simply fail to work at all. And where did this trickle down to, you might ask? Ordinary road cars. ABS is pretty much a standard on road cars today, but didn't appear on the roads until the early-1980's. Drivers at Le Mans were racing ABS-equipped cars in the mid-1970's. ABS, the more efficient and safer form of braking that you'll find on almost everything on the roads nowadays, has saved many an ordinary road driver from serious injury or even death. It was saving Le Mans drivers long before Joe Public got his hands on it and yes, bearded weirdies pootling around in converted vans and ambulances while protesting against the very existence of motorsport, that includes the vehicles that YOU drive around in.

Hippies, do you like the new developments in biofuels? Chances are that you do. Biofuels are the next big thing. They're seen as the more environmentally-friendly way to power your vehicles. Well, less environmentally-unfriendly than petrol/gasoline or diesel anyway. Biofuels have been around for a good few years now and, while you might think they have nothing whatsoever to do with all that wasteful, noisy racing that you'd like to see banned, guess what..?



The world's first biofuel racer, the Nasamax at Le Mans in 2004.

YOU. ARE. WRONG.

You're wrong because it was at Le Mans that the world's first biofuel racing car took to the track. In 2004 the Nasamax very nearly finished the race, the whole 24 hours, running on biodiesel. It wasn't expected to win, it wasn't going to win, but it did race there as a means to prove that biofuels and related engine technology really can have high performance that will one day trickle down to ordinary road vehicles. And why did the Nasamax race at Le Mans on biofuels? Because the race organisers invited it to as part of the event's commitment to discovering, showcasing and refining new technology. The track has changed, the cars have changed, the rules have changed, but the Automobile Club de L'Ouest remain as committed now to showcasing new ideas and technology as they did in 1923 when the first 24 Hours was run. On the subject of fuel technology, the most successful team in recent years has been the Audi factory team. Their prototypes run on biofuel developed in conjunction with Shell who supply all the fuels used at Le Mans.

Environmental folk are also often fond of hybrid technology, cars that can use a combination of ordinary fuel and electricity generated by onboard electronics. Guess what, hippies. The biggest factory teams at the moment are Toyota and Audi and THEY RACE USING HYBRIDS. Yes, a lot of the currently top-secret hybrid technology on their current racing cars will appear in a few years time on whatever hybrid road vehicle that you buy when your converted ambulances and camper vans finally give up the ghost.

Before I sign off for the day I'll also acquaint the uninitiated with a few other little trifles. Trifles without which even the most environmentally-conscious motorist would find their cars being declared unfit for today's roads. Le Mans cars race right through the night, so it was at Le Mans that headlights really came into their own. A need for headlights meant improved electrics, also first develop for Le Mans. Increasing speeds on the straights forced designers to add a little thing called a windshield so that drivers could actually see where they were going. Oh, and tyre technology has long been developed and tested at Le Mans as the 'Circuit de la Sarthe' is made up largely of ordinary public roads closed off for the occasion.

So, all in all, my muesli-munching, beardy brethren, if you think that motorsport benefits nobody and that you yourselves have never derived any benefit from a noisy, dangerous, polluting spectacle that should be consigned to the dustbin of history like Roman chariot races, let me tell you one last time...

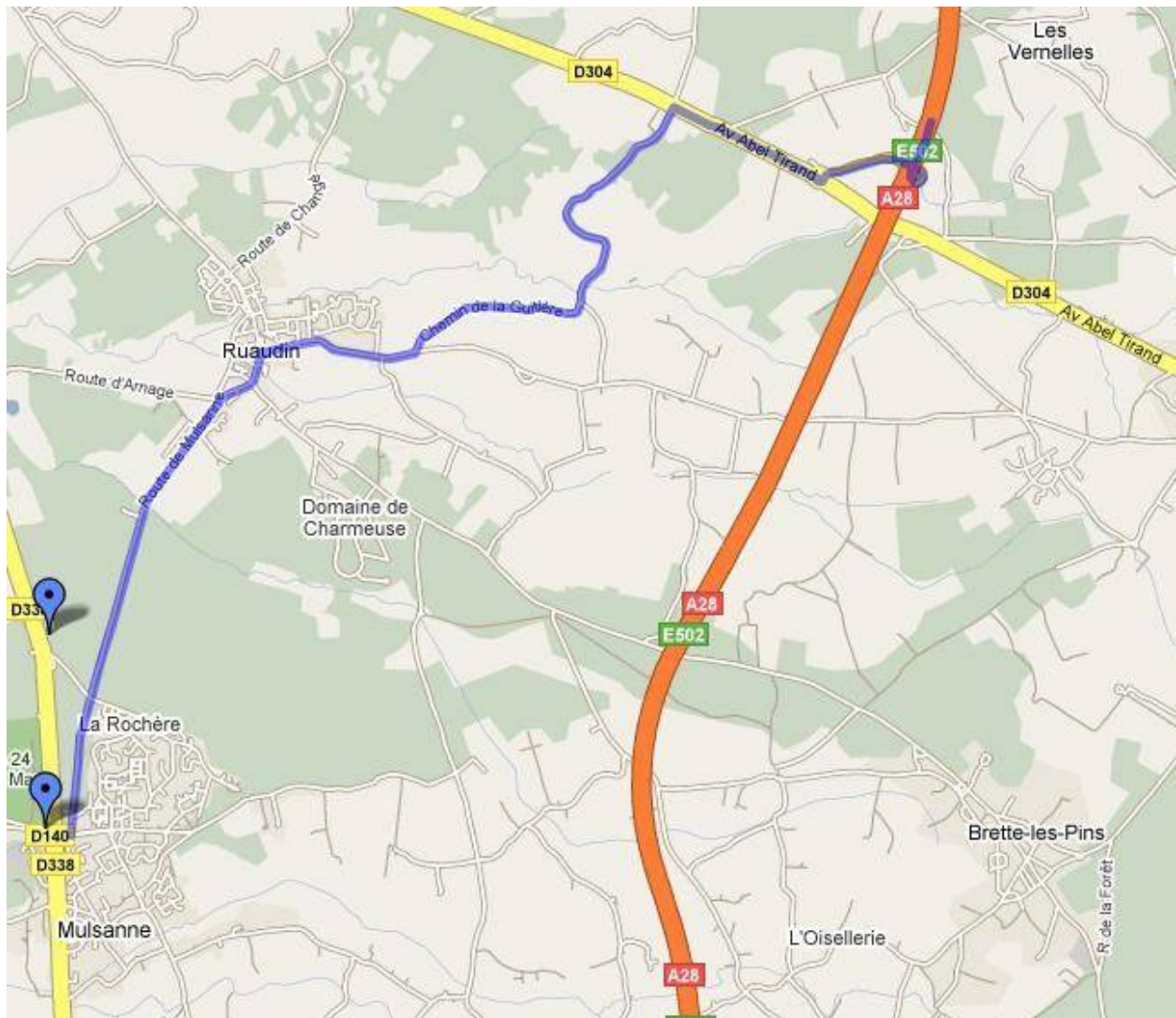
YOU. ARE. WRONG.

Bye for now.

On the run - Escaping the traffic at the end of the race

A first-hand escape plan from Neil Dobson, www.racetours.co.uk

Those who have tried a quick getaway at the end of the race know that the traffic at the end of the race can be a nightmare. I have tried and tested a route for avoiding traffic although it does involve watching the end of the race from Mulsanne. Before the end of the race (a good two hours before) you need to move your car up to Mulsanne. I would recommend parking in Mulsanne village somewhere (rather than the official Mulsanne enclosure car park) or at Hotel Arbor on the Mulsanne straight. Watch the end of the race from Mulsanne/Hotel Arbor and head back to your car. The map below shows Mulsanne corner at the bottom left (bordering the golf course) and in the top right hand corner the D304 joining the A28. This is the junction that you need to get to. Simply follow the escape route marked on the map!



From Mulsanne village take the Route de Mulsanne North. Route de Mulsanne runs off Avenue de Bonen and the turn to get onto it is between the roundabout and the Champion supermarket. Follow Route de Mulsanne towards the village of Ruadun (passing on your left the track that leads down to Hotel Arbor and the 2nd chicane). As you approach the village turn right at the first roundabout onto Rue du Vieil Hetre. This is the main road through the village. Follow for 0.5 Km and take the third turn on the right onto Route de Parigne-l'Eveque. This will take you out of the village. After 0.8 Km you will see a fork going off to your right. Ignore this and continue for another 0.2 Km and take a left turn onto Chemin de la Guiltiere. This road snakes its way through the fields for approx 2 Km until you arrive at a t-junction with the D304 (top right of the map below). Turn right and in approx 1 Km you will arrive at the roundabout where you can filter onto the N28 and happily whiz up to the A11 that will take you across the top of Le Mans, safely away from all the congestion. Hooray!

We encountered absolutely no traffic when leaving from Hotel Arbor in '08. You might encounter a little bit of traffic in Mulsanne village itself but I very much doubt it. The whole East side of the circuit is deserted during the race when compared to the Western side of the circuit.