



LE MANS

100

A Century at the
World's Greatest
Endurance Race

GLEN SMALE
FOREWORD BY TOM KRISTENSEN





LE MANS



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First Published in 2022 by Motorbooks, an imprint of The Quarto Group,
100 Cummings Center, Suite 265-D, Beverly, MA 01915, USA.
T (978) 282-9590 F (978) 283-2742

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26 25 24 23 22 1 2 3 4 5

ISBN: 978-0-7603-7617-1

Digital edition published in 2023
eISBN: 978-0-7603-7618-8

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Smale, Glen, author.

Title: Le Mans 100 : a century at the world's greatest endurance race /
Glen Smale.

Description: Beverly, MA : Motorbooks, [2023] | Includes bibliographical
references and index. | Summary: "Packed with photography, narrative,
and race results, Le Mans 100 is the definitive illustrated centennial
history of this iconic motorsport event"-- Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2022048527 | ISBN 9780760376171 | ISBN 9780760376188
(ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: 24 Heures du Mans (Automobile race)--History. | Automobile
racing--History.

Classification: LCC GV1034.48.L4 S62 2023 | DDC 796.7209--dc23/eng/20221027

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2022048527>

Design: Cindy Samargia Laun

Cover Image: Drivers sprint for their cars at the start of the 1964 race. Nearest to camera,
John Surtees runs to his Ferrari 3300 P on pole position, and Richie Ginther runs to his
Ford GT40. *Rainer Schlegelmilch/LAT*

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third and fourth (Alamy Stock Photos) and bottom row fourth (Porsche AG).

Gatefold two image credits: All courtesy the Automobile Club de l'Ouest.

Printed in China

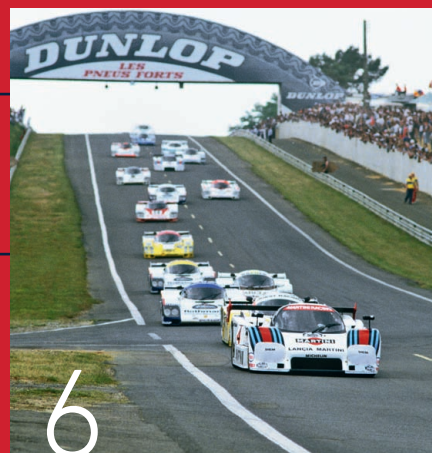
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foreword

Where to start? The *Vingt-Quatre Heures du Mans* is undoubtedly the most famous endurance motor race in the world. It seems to be the one race that any driver aspires to win. Over the years, I've fallen in love with the place that is *Circuit de la Sarthe*. One could argue that it's due to being part of great, winning teams, which has surely helped. But what I find intriguing about Le Mans is that no matter whether the race is consistently cruel, hard, or kind to teams, drivers, or manufacturers, we all seem to go back. We just can't help it. It's the ultimate challenge. The 24 hours of intense fighting fascinates fans, teams, manufacturers, and drivers from around the globe, and the more it knocks you down, the harder you work throughout the next 12 months to be able to take revenge.

Throughout the history of this legendary endurance race, the ups and downs of the motor industry have been more or less mirrored in the fortunes of the 24 Hours of Le Mans. From as early as 1930, when the effects of the Wall Street crash impacted the world where the entry totaled no more than 17 cars, to the first post-war race in 1949 when entries reached 49 cars, the race has survived through thick and thin. Fans come from far and wide: the Dutch supporters, the Japanese, the Belgians, the Americans, the British, the Germans, the Danes, and of course, the French, as well as many other nations.

Motorsport has always offered a stage on which to try new technology, and the history of Le Mans is probably one of the greatest showcases of this. Personally I've made 18 starts over three decades, debuting in the Joest-run TWR Porsche WSC-95 with H-pattern gearbox, right-hand drive, no power steering, and open cockpit to ending my career in the small, neat, and aggressive six-cylinder Audi R18 e-tron quattro with single turbo and hybrid drivetrain. In between, I've raced the naturally aspirated BMW V12 LMR with sequential gearbox, the open Audis from the five R8s, R10s and R15s, and arguably one of the most elegant cars of the modern era, the Bentley Speed 8.

The lights have progressed from halogen to xenon to LED, and lately, laser lights for our high beams. Driving at night was much more challenging in 1997 than in 2014, as there were hardly any floodlights during my first races. I can only imagine what it was like in the early days. Today it's less challenging, but in turn, it's greater for the fans, who are able to identify approaching cars during the late, dark hours. Albeit a small part of Le Mans history, the progress fascinates me. But then, it's easy to be impressed by the progress made since Le Mans's first days. Lately I've been lucky enough to run some of the vintage winners: from the 1924 3-liter Bentley, to the winning 1949 Ferrari 166 MM, to the 1957 Ecurie Ecosse Jaguar D-Type, to the 1960s Ford GT40, to the loud, powerful V12 Matra from the 1970s, when downforce started to play its part, to the aggressive Toyota TS010 machinery from the Group C times of the early 1990s in Japan. The amount of dedication and talent that has gone into preparing race cars for the 24 Hours of Le Mans, over 100 years, is what makes its history.

The 24 Hours of Le Mans has helped to nurture numerous friendships, on both a professional and social level, as it brings together many thousands of like-minded folk. But the race is about far more than just the 24 hours between the start and the finish over the race weekend. The event lasts for more than a week, with the scrutineering, practice, and qualifying sessions, as well as the Driver's Parade in the beautiful city of Le Mans, where fans and drivers get together. The race has become so much more for those who visit the event, and for many, it is an annual trip to meet up with other regulars and petrol heads.

Over the last 100 years, we've seen man, woman, teams, and machines being pushed to the limits. This has sometimes seen the most dramatic of finishes such as the 1969 race, where two greats, Jacky Ickx in their Ford GT40 beat Hans Herrmann in a Porsche 908 by a margin of just 120 yards (110 meters) after 24 hours of

fierce racing. Heartbreak memories such as in 2016 also come to mind, where a simple connector failure took out the leading Toyota with 3 minutes to go, forcing the car to stop on the start/finish line.

I will never forget our race in 2001, where it was raining off and on for nearly 19 of the 24 hours, often with zero visibility, aquaplaning, and with fog during the night, or our great win versus the forceful Peugeots in 2008, where the lead changes were many in the heavy rain throughout the night and noon the next day.

The 24 Hours of Le Mans continues to spin its magic and to attract drivers, teams, manufacturers, and spectators year after year. Not even the COVID-19 pandemic put a damper on the event, as TV-viewer figures soared, while the event itself was covered by just a limited number of media outlets.

The future of motorsport sometimes feels uncertain, but then this is nothing new. There is always uncertainty surrounding some areas of the sport. Yet there is one thing that can be relied upon, and that is that the *Vingt-Quatre Heures du Mans* will continue to be the highlight of the endurance racing calendar, and it will continue to be enthusiastically followed by that devoted band of motor racing fans who love the race.

I'll see you there . . .

Tom Kristensen

► Tom Kristensen being interviewed prior to the 2007 race. Unfortunately the No. 2 Audi R10 TDI that he shared with Allan McNish and Rinaldo Capello crashed out, recording a rare DNF. *Glen Smale*



introduction

From as far back as I can remember, the 24 Hours of Le Mans has always been my most favorite motor race. It has held a fascination for me that no other race has, in any class of racing. Back in South Africa, where I grew up, the only coverage we saw of this great race was in *Autosport* and *Motor Sport* magazines, and as a young boy, I would devour these magazines whenever I could get hold of them.

When we moved to the United Kingdom in the late 1990s, I made it clear to my family that I would be attending this great race! And as a full-time working motorsport journalist, it wasn't long before I was treading the roads that run around the outside of the Le Mans circuit, and happily, I have attended most of the races since that first time.

So, what is it about this endurance race that is so appealing? It all started with the growth of the automotive industry in France at the start of the last century, when a group of like-minded sporting enthusiasts got together and came up with the idea of creating a competitive event to test the durability and reliability of the cars on offer. The manufacturers jumped at the opportunity of proving their products in public, and so the first race was run in 1923, except that for the first few years, it wasn't so much of a race as an endurance event. Competing not only against the other entrants, the drivers also had to meet or exceed a lap target set by the organizers. The winner on average over three years would be adjudged the winner of the Triennial Cup. When this proved too difficult to keep track of, it was changed to a Biennial Cup, and when that too proved too cumbersome, it was declared an all-out annual race.

Over the years, manufacturers have indeed used the event to test new technology, and the drivers, or perhaps we should call them gladiators, have risen to the occasion. The 24 Hours of Le Mans celebrates its centennial in 2023, and during the intervening 100 years, many obstacles have threatened to throw this great race off

course. The Wall Street crash of the late 1920s and the subsequent economic downturn was one such obstacle and then a general strike in France put paid to the race in 1936. Just four years later, the race would be scrubbed from the history books as Europe was ravaged by war, but the determination of the organizers won through, and the race was revived in 1949. Then, in the middle of the following decade, the race's future was again brought under the spotlight following the tragic events of 1955. But through the decades that followed, the 24 Hours of Le Mans has survived, whether part of the World Sportscar Championship or not.

As racing enthusiasts, we have been graced by the appearance of the legendary Ferraris, the mighty Fords, and the efficiency of the Porsches. In the 1980s, Group C saw unprecedented popularity and enthusiasm in the sport, as technology grew in leaps and bounds. More recently, it was the diesel-powered Audis that dominated, while currently, Toyota is riding the crest of a wave of success. In 2021, the introduction of the new Hypercar class brought a fresh look to the paddock, and over the next couple of years, more manufacturers will join Toyota in this top class. But the future of the sport is as uncertain today as it ever has been, as the sporting authorities seek to inject the magic back into the sport, in an effort to appeal to the next generation of enthusiasts.

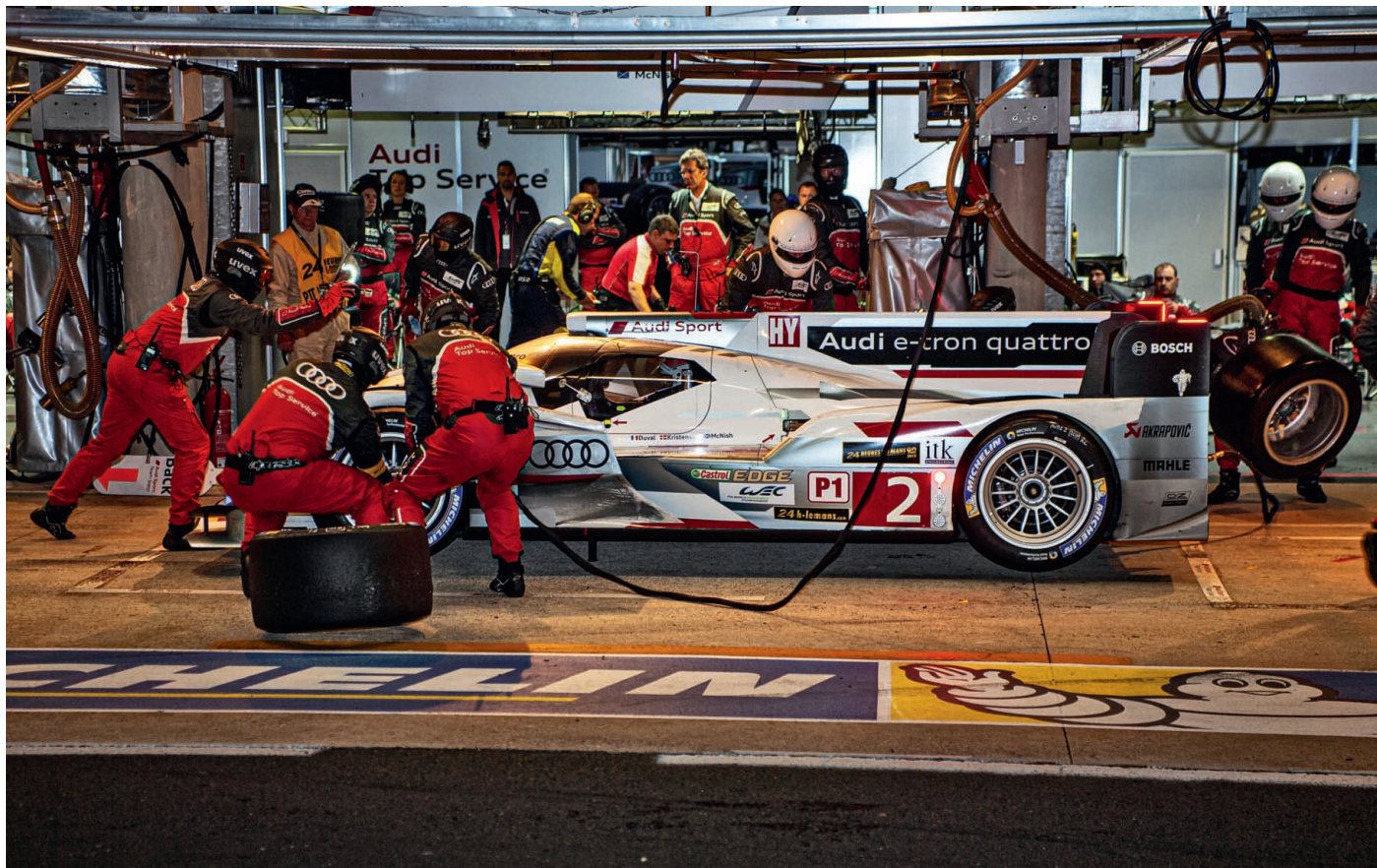
But as we journey through the 100 years since the first event back in 1923, it is clear to see how the sport of motoring has contributed to the broader safety and efficiency of the motor cars that we drive on the public roads every day. Without an international stage such as motor racing, this progress would not have happened at the speed that it has, nor would it have progressed to the levels and standards that it has.

This book project was the brainchild of my Commissioning Editor at Motorbooks International/Quarto Publishing in America, Dennis Pernu. I would

like to thank Dennis and project manager Brooke Pelletier for having the confidence in me, to tackle this monumental 100-year project. I always welcome new projects such as this, but this one in particular has challenged me on several new levels. I would also like to thank those picture editors who have gone beyond the call of duty to find the elusive images I needed. Here, I would like to thank Tim Wright at LAT/Motorsport Images, and my friend at the Porsche Archives, Jens Torner. Special mention must be made for the contribution made by

my friend John Brooks, a professional photographer of extraordinary talent and a fountain of knowledge.

Lastly, and by no means least, I would like to thank my wife Elke, for the unwavering help she has been in not only helping to select images for this book, but also working on many of them and preparing them for the publisher. She has supported me throughout this project, fighting COVID, and acting as a very wise sounding board when needed. *Vielen Dank für deine Unterstützung und Geduld!*



▲ Action stations! The 2013 winning No. 2 Audi R18 e-tron quattro of Allan McNish, Tom Kristensen, and Loïc Duval calls into the pits during the night hours. *Glen Smaile*

The 1920s



The No. 5 Stutz Model M Blackhawk of Guy Bouriart and Philippe de Rothschild is followed past the pits by the No. 6 sister car. No. 5 Stutz would finish fifth in the 1929 race, while the No. 6 car retired after 104 laps. LAT

First Steps

Little could the architects of the *Grand Prix d'Endurance* have envisaged in 1923 what a great motor racing spectacle the event would become. It is today the oldest surviving endurance race and hailed by many as the greatest test of man and machine.

The nation of France is universally accepted as the birthplace of motor racing and, in fact, the city of Le Mans holds the honor of hosting the first *Grand Prix* in 1906. A decade earlier, the marathon Paris-Bordeaux-Paris race attracted hundreds of entrants and was watched by several million spectators along its route. The popularity of the sport is perhaps best illustrated by the following prophetic quote by John Douglas-Scott-Montagu, 2nd Baron Montagu of Beaulieu, a motoring pioneer from the turn of the twentieth century, "What is the future of automobilism? That it will replace nearly every other kind of traction upon the surface of the earth, I have but little doubt." This quote formed part of an article he wrote in 1906 that predicted how the automobile would positively influence industry, agriculture, international tourism, as well as the social and political scenes around the world. These were surely the words of a true motoring visionary, and how accurate this statement would prove to be.

The inaugural *Grand Prix d'Endurance* was held in 1923 on the *Circuit de la Sarthe* and was to be contested over a 24-hour period. The event was structured so as to give recognition to production vehicles and to test the reliability and performance of those motor vehicles that could be bought off the showroom floor. Modifications were not permitted, and various stringent regulations were imposed that ensured that each competitor maintained its performance against a predetermined distance allocation throughout the event.

In keeping with the aim of the event, all cars had to be standard four-seater production models, except for those under 1,100cc that could be two-seaters. Cars had to be road legal and were required to carry 132.5 pounds (60 kilograms) in each of the unoccupied seats, representing the approximate weight of a passenger, serving to emphasize the production nature of the entries. Only

the driver was allowed to carry out repairs either by the roadside or in the pits. The task of the mechanics was simply to hand tools over the wooden counter that served as the car's pit garage to the driver. The regulations also specified two drivers per car, and so it was decided for practical reasons that the incoming driver would refuel the vehicle while the replacement driver prepared himself for the drive ahead.

Due to a complex regulation created by the race organizers, the Triennial Cup would be awarded to that car that over three consecutive years (1923, 1924, and 1925) attained the greatest average distance against its target distance, calculated according to engine size. This was done to ensure the continued participation of competitors. The Triennial Cup was, however, awarded on a rolling basis, so the following race in 1924 would be averaged over the events in 1924, 1925, and 1926, and so on. This whole process would unfortunately become quite unmanageable as the years progressed.

In the regulations was the requirement that all competitors driving convertible cars needed to call into the pits after five laps to carry out the task of erecting the hood. This was in keeping with the standard production state of these cars, as this task was something that the owner would need to do in the ordinary course of driving such a car. Bentley driver, John Duff, practiced this task relentlessly, and he got the process down to just 40 seconds. Then, after a further two laps, the cars had to come back into the pits to have the erect hood checked for strength and stability before the driver was allowed to lower it again and set off once more. Failure to comply or if the hood did not pass this test would result in immediate disqualification. In 1925, this regulation was changed, and while the drivers were still required to erect the convertible hoods on their cars, it was decided that the best time to do this would be at the start of the race.

1923

MAY 26-27

The first *Grand Prix d'Endurance* in this hundred-year journey was held over the same weekend in May on which the French authorities changed the clocks forward 1 hour to signify the start of Daylight Saving Time. This meant that the race that started at

4:00 p.m. on Saturday finished at 5:00 p.m. on Sunday. This was the only time that the Automobile Club de l'Ouest (ACO) had to accommodate the change of the clocks as the event was pushed forward to its now traditional June date.



▲ The first lap of the first race, *Grand Prix d'Endurance*, marks the beginning of a legend that has continued for 100 years, the 24 Hours of Le Mans. The No. 2 Excelsior and the No. 8 Bentley would finish joint fourth, while the No. 1 Excelsior would finish in ninth place. *Alamy*



▲ The supercharged No. 8 Bentley 3-Liter Sport calls into the pits during the first 24 Hours of Le Mans. They would finish in fourth place. *Getty Images*



▲ The winning No. 9 Chenard-Walcker of André Lagache and René Léonard rounds the Pontlieu turn during the first 24 Hours of Le Mans. *Getty Images*

Lined up at the start were 33 cars (2 of the 35 entrants did not arrive), of which all but three were French. The only cars blotting the otherwise all-French lineup was a single Bentley and a pair of Belgian cars. Amazingly 30 of these 33 gallant starters would finish the race. That is a 91 percent finishing rate, the highest in the 100-year history of this great race!

The race got underway in stormy conditions on roughly surfaced roads that doubled as general public roads for the rest of the year. The circuit length at this time was 10.726 miles (17.319 km), and as the event progressed, the road surface deteriorated and ruts emerged, making the conditions increasingly dangerous.

The incessant rain played havoc with the rudimentary headlamps and electrics of the cars, and stones thrown up by cars when overtaking broke the glass of some headlamps and caused other damage. The No. 8 Bentley of Duff/Clement was one such car to suffer in this

way. A stone halted the Bentley's race with a ruptured fuel tank just before midday on Sunday; however, with the tank repaired, the green car continued on its way. One component that affected every competitor was the frequent need to replace the tires that wore out and suffered on the rough and uneven road surface, but Duff's Bentley completed the race on the same set of tires it had started with 24 hours earlier.

At the finish, the first two cars across the line were a pair of 3-liter Chenard-Walckers, followed by a 2-liter Bignan 11CV Desmo Sport. However, it was indeed the little 1,100cc Salmson two-seater that was deemed the real winner, as it covered a greater distance against its calculated target.

Despite the inclement weather and the strict rules regarding participation, the die had been cast. With man's nature being inherently competitive, this would prove to be the first of many, many great races to follow.

1923 Race Results

Pos	Car/Model	No.	Drivers	Class	Laps
1	Chenard-Walcker Type U3 15CV Sport	9	André Lagache (FR)/René Léonard (FR)	3.0	128
2	Chenard-Walcker Type U3 15CV Sport	10	Christian Dauvergne (FR)/Raoul Bachmann (FR)	3.0	124
3	Bignan 11CV 'Desmo' Sport	23	Raymond de Tornaco (BE)/Paul Gros (FR)	2.0	120

1924

JUNE 14–15

14

LE MANS 100

With the experience of the inaugural event to draw on, several important changes were put forward by the ACO for the next year's race. Firstly the event was rescheduled for June, thereby anticipating better weather. Secondly the Triennial Cup was scrapped and replaced by a Biennial Cup, which was less complex, even though the ACO was committed to seeing the first Triennial Cup through to its end in 1925.

Not all of the cars that qualified in 1923 took up their options for this year's race, and so the field took on a different look in 1924. Forty of the increased field of 41 cars were French made, the single exception on the entry sheet was the Bentley 3-Liter Sport entered by the factory. Having learnt from the previous event, the target distances for the competitors were made far tougher, and the cars had to be pushed harder to achieve their target.

In order to draw spectators to the circuit, the ACO put on a range of attractions and entertainment for the family to enjoy. In addition to the cafés and jazz-band, a new dance hall, boxing ring, and a chapel were built to keep the fans at the circuit. For those who had traveled from afar, a campsite area was marked out to enable visitors to stay on-site overnight.

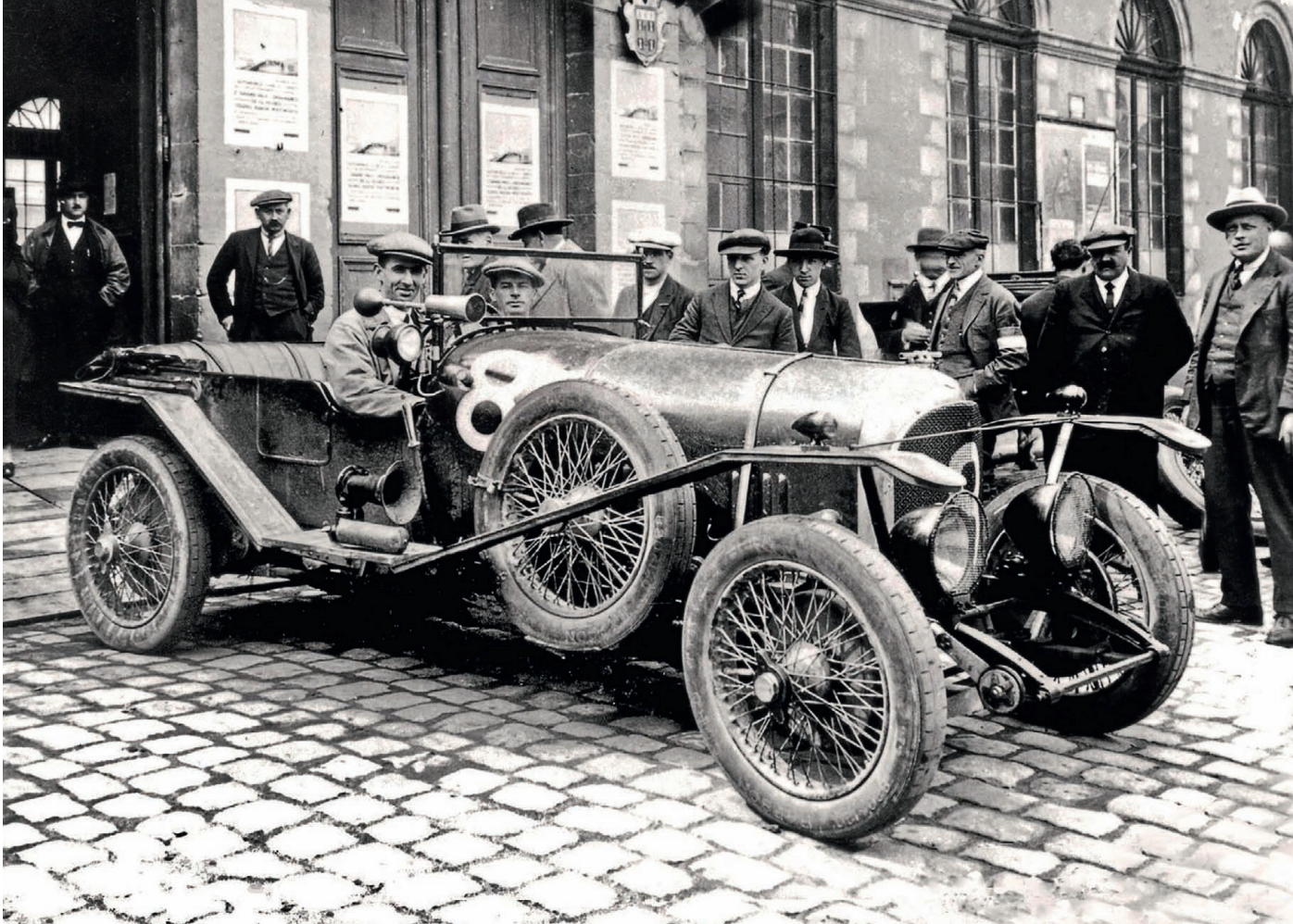
There was no official practice session allowed, so many of the teams arrived during the week, which allowed the competitors to drive along the route together with the general public. Although it didn't rain during the race, it was much hotter than the previous year, and this presented its own challenges with dust being the problem, not rain and mud. At the start, it

was the Chenard-Walcker Type U 15CV Sport of André Lagache, followed by the Lorraine-Dietrich B3-6 Sport of Robert Bloch, who set the early pace, but neither of these two cars would finish.

Lead Bentley driver, John Duff, enjoyed full factory backing, and the additional support really paid off. Following their win in 1923, Chenard-Walcker arrived with a squad of six cars, while Bignan doubled its entry to four. Against such formidable competition, Bentley entered just a single 3-Liter Sport model. As it happened, that was the only car Bentley needed, as they ran out the victors in 1924, although it was a close run affair in the end.

With a substantial lead in hand, Bentley called into the pits for a precautionary change of rear tires, but a stubborn rear wheel would not come off. It took half an hour to change the errant wheel, a task that had to be carried out by the driver alone, and in this time, the pair of following Lorraine-Dietrich B3-6 3.5-liter cars closed the gap to just a single lap. While the Lorraine-Dietrich cars achieved exactly their 119-lap target distance, the Bentley finished five laps ahead of its 115-lap target, completing 120 laps. This year, only 12 of 41 cars finished the race.

The winners, Duff/Clement, actually completed 125 laps in total, but the rules stated that the final laps had to be completed within a specified minimum time per lap, and as the Bentley had not complied with this ruling, it had five laps deducted from its total. However, due to the gap to the second-placed car, this correction had no impact on the overall race classification for the winners.



▲ The No. 8 Bentley 3-Liter Sport (straight four-cylinder) of John Duff and Frank Clement poses in the town center of Le Mans before the race. *Alamy*

◀ The winning No. 8 Bentley 3-Liter Sport (straight four-cylinder) of John Duff and Frank Clement crosses the finish line, securing the first of Bentley's six Le Mans wins. *Alamy*

1924 Race Results

Pos	Car/Model	No.	Drivers	Class	Laps
1	Bentley 3-Liter Sport	8	John Duff (CA)/Frank Clement (GB)	3.0	120
2	Lorraine-Dietrich B3-6 Sport	6	Henri Stoffel (FR)/Édouard Brisson (FR)	5.0	119
3	Lorraine-Dietrich B3-6 Sport	5	Gérard de Courcelles (FR)/André Rossignol (FR)	5.0	119

1925

JUNE 20-21

For the first time, the ACO introduced official practice sessions on closed roads on the Friday before the race, consisting of two 3-hour sessions: one in the early morning and one late at night. The roads had been resurfaced, which was great in one sense, but many of the teams miscalculated their fuel usage as the speeds were consequently higher, while the hot weather plagued the cooling systems of numerous cars.

In an effort to avoid the temptation for drivers to jump the gun at the start, the cars *sans* drivers were lined up in herringbone formation with their backs to the pit counter and hoods already erected. The drivers meanwhile were lined up on the other side of the track opposite their cars. On the starters signal, they were to

sprint across the track to their car, start their engine, and pull away, establishing the famous “Le Mans starts,” which remained a tradition until 1969.

Entries were up to 49 cars in 1925, which was no doubt the result of increased international attention, with the American manufacturer Chrysler appearing on the entry list for the first time. Two Chryslers were entered, but unfortunately only one started, the surviving Chrysler 70 falling just short of its 119-lap target distance, completing 117 laps.

The Sunbeam of Henry Segrave/George Duller was expected to do well with its top rate driver lineup. Sir Henry Segrave was by far the best known “celebrity” driver, but at 9:00 p.m., their car was retired with a



broken clutch. Putting up a gallant fight though was the Sunbeam of Jean Chassagne/Sammy Davis, and despite a bent rear axle, the pairing finished second.

In the early running, the competition between the Sunbeams, Bentleys, and Chenards was fierce, but the six-cylinder 3½-liter Lorraine-Dietrich B3-6 Sports benefitted from a significant reduction in weight and improved reliability. The Bentley of John Duff, the 1924 winner, ran out of fuel just shy of the 20th lap, which was critical because of the ACO rule forbidding fluid replenishment inside of 20 laps.

But in endurance racing, it is the teams that have done their preparation thoroughly, that have a clever race strategy, and who stay out of trouble that win in the end. This is what two of three Lorraines did, being separated by the remaining Sunbeam when the

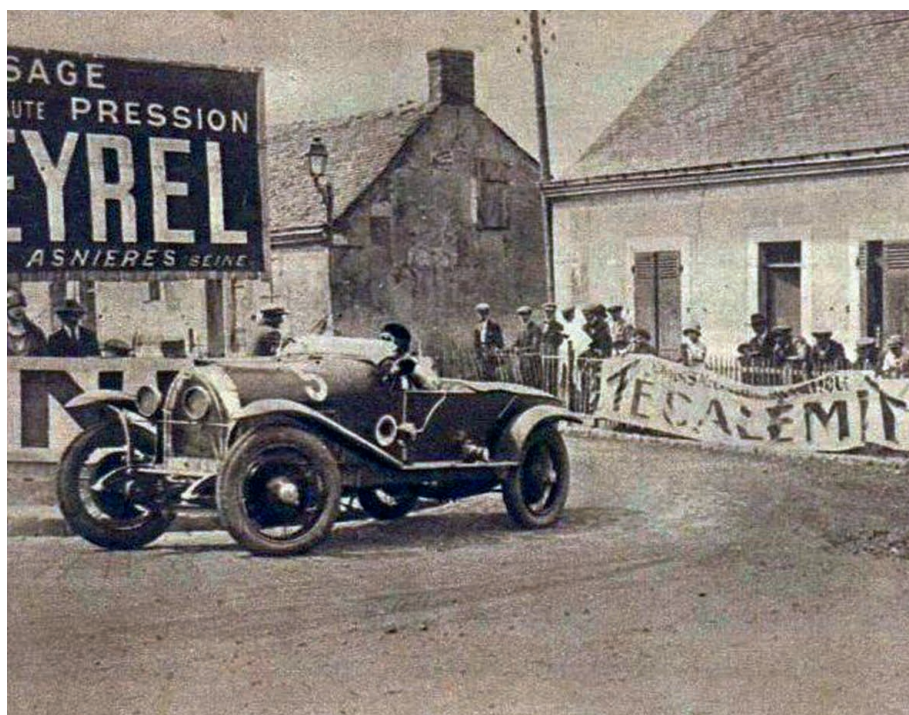
checkered flag came down. The distance separating first and second places was no less than 44.98 miles (72.38 kilometers).

But in keeping with the event rules, there were no prizes for the car that covered the greatest distance on the day. The laurel went instead to the winners of the Triennial and Biennial Cups, emphasizing consistency and reliability. In this case, Chenard-Walcker was adjudged the winner of both the Triennial Cup (1923/1924/1925) and the inaugural Biennial Cup (1924/1925).

Sadly the *Grand Prix d'Endurance* recorded its first fatality this year, when not one but two competitors lost their lives. The first was a mechanic, André Guilbert, who was testing a car during practice on the Friday evening before the race, and the second, a driver, Marius Mestivier, during the race itself.

► The victorious No. 5 Lorraine-Dietrich B3-6 driven by André Rossignol and Gérard de Courcelles completed 129 laps, exceeding its target by 10 laps. *Alamy*

◄◄ Jean Chassagne at speed in the No. 16 Sunbeam 3-Liter Super Sports, which he shared with Sammy Davis, finishing second. *Alamy*



1925 Race Results

Pos	Car/Model	No.	Drivers	Class	Laps
1	Lorraine-Dietrich B3-6 Sport	5	Gérard de Courcelles (FR)/André Rossignol (FR)	5.0	129
2	Sunbeam 3-Liter Super Sports	16	Jean Chassagne (FR)/Sammy Davis (GB)	3.0	125
3	Lorraine-Dietrich B3-6 Sport	4	Édouard Brisson (FR)/Stalter (FR)	5.0	124

1926

JUNE 12-13

In holding the fourth *Grand Prix d'Endurance*, the ACO was now better organized and showing signs that come with staging multiple international events of this stature. A flag-signaling system was introduced where marshals stationed around the track could convey a safety message to the driver via blue and yellow flags.

The day after the 1925 race, the landowners on the Les Raineries side of the track approached the ACO with an offer to sell their land. Once the deal was done, the organization began a comprehensive building program including permanent wooden pits and a 3000-seat grandstand. The race-control tower was rebuilt, and the pits equipped with telephones, electricity, and running water. Several cafés were set up, and the car parks were extended to accommodate more vehicles.

A French manufacturer that would be seen many times in the future, Peugeot, appeared for the first time in 1926. Bentley arrived with a three-car lineup, as did

Lorraine-Dietrich and the Italian manufacturer Officine Meccaniche (OM), but Chenard-Walcker was a notable absentee. The number of starters was slightly down from the previous year with 41 cars, but after a very wet prerace week, the race was run in fairly dry conditions. It became obligatory for a fire extinguisher to be carried in all cars.

The Triennial Cup was run only once, and as the calculation for the Biennial Cup was still proving difficult, the ACO came up with a new competition, the Index of Performance, that used the ratio by which a car exceeding its designated target distance instead of the absolute number of laps.

From the start, the Peugeots set the pace, chased by the Bentleys and Lorraines. After the driver-changes at the first round of pit stops, it was the Bentleys that took the fight to the Boillot/Rigal Peugeot. By 8:00 a.m. there were only 23 cars left running, the Rossignol/Bloch



◀ The No. 3 Peugeot Type 174 Sport was driven by the French pairing of Louis Wagner/Christian Dauvergne. Unfortunately the car did not finish, being disqualified for an electrical infringement. *Alamy*

▶▶ Rounding a corner on its way to a ninth overall placing was the No. 46 Salmson Grand Sport in the hands of the French pairing of Georges Casse and André Rousseau. *LAT*

▼▼ (FOLLOWING) The No. 6 Lorraine-Dietrich B3-6 Le Mans of André Rossignol and Robert Bloch passes the pits on its way to victory. *LAT*



Lorraine holding a two-lap lead over his teammate who was three laps ahead of the two Bentleys, followed by the other Lorraine and the two Oms.

As the others encountered mechanical issues, the experienced Lorraine drivers built a strong 1-2 lead that was never headed. A late charge by Bentley ended in the last hour when Sammy Davis could not stop in time and put the car into the sandbank at the end of the Mulsanne Straight.

Finishing first on distance was the Robert Bloch/André Rossignol No. 6 Lorraine-Dietrich, the French manufacturer finishing with an emphatic 1-2-3 result, giving André Rossignol back-to-back victories on distance. The two Oms were fourth and fifth, also winning the lucrative 1925-1926 Biennial Cup by the slimmest of margins.

Although the race was established as an endurance trial to improve the technology and reliability of touring cars, it also benefitted motoring in general. Improved road resurfacing had greatly increased overall race speed: the three Lorraines all exceeded an average speed of 62 miles per hour (100 kilometers per hour) over the 24 hours. Tire technology was also improving with virtually all the cars finishing on their same set of tires they had started on.

It was the first Le Mans race where the winner's average speed was over 62 miles per hour (100 kilometers per hour), in the process setting a long-distance record of 1,585.99 miles (2,552.40 kilometers). Lorraine-Dietrich became the first constructor to win two consecutive victories (1925 and 1926), also being the first to score a 1-2-3 finish in the 24 Hours of Le Mans.

1926 Race Results

Pos	Car/Model	No.	Drivers	Class	Laps
1	Lorraine-Dietrich B3-6 LM	6	André Rossignol (FR)/Robert Bloch (FR)	5.0	148
2	Lorraine-Dietrich B3-6 LM	5	Gérard de Courcelles (FR)/Marcel Mongin (FR)	5.0	147
3	Lorraine-Dietrich B3-6 LM	4	Édouard Brisson (FR)/Stalter (FR)	5.0	139



