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Carroll Shelby has died

Lead

The great Texan racing driver, entrepreneur and creator of the Cobra legend, died on Friday, 11 May. Without Carroll Shelby, his Cobras, tuned Mustangs and the vital input he gave to the Ford GT programme, 1960s motor racing would have looked very different.

The former chicken farmer, famous for his striped bib-and-brace overalls, made his name in Ferraris, Maseratis and Listers in American races in the late 1950s, driving for wealthy team owners such as John Edgar.

In 1959, Shelby co-drove with Roy Salvadori to give Aston Martin its only Le Mans win. Their DBR1 headed an Aston one-two at the famous 24-hour race.

With health problems leading to Shelby's retirement from the driving seat, he turned his hand to creating a world-beating sports car, the Shelby Cobra, in conjunction with British manufacturer AC and the financial might of the Ford Motor Company, eager to snatch racing headlines from arch-rival GM.



As a Daytona Coupé, the Cobra was to win the World Championship for GT cars in 1964 and 1965. Shelby International also made race-competitive the British-designed Ford GT40 (subsequently installing a big-block 7-litre V8 at Ford's behest). The Shelby GT350 was a competition version of the Mustang, extensively raced into the 1970s and also available for hire at Hertz. Towards the end of the 1960s, the company fielded a Mustang team in the Trans Am, although by then it was just one of several works-supported Ford teams.

Carroll Shelby died aged 89 at a hospital in Dallas, Texas.

Photos: Aston Martin

Gallery

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