

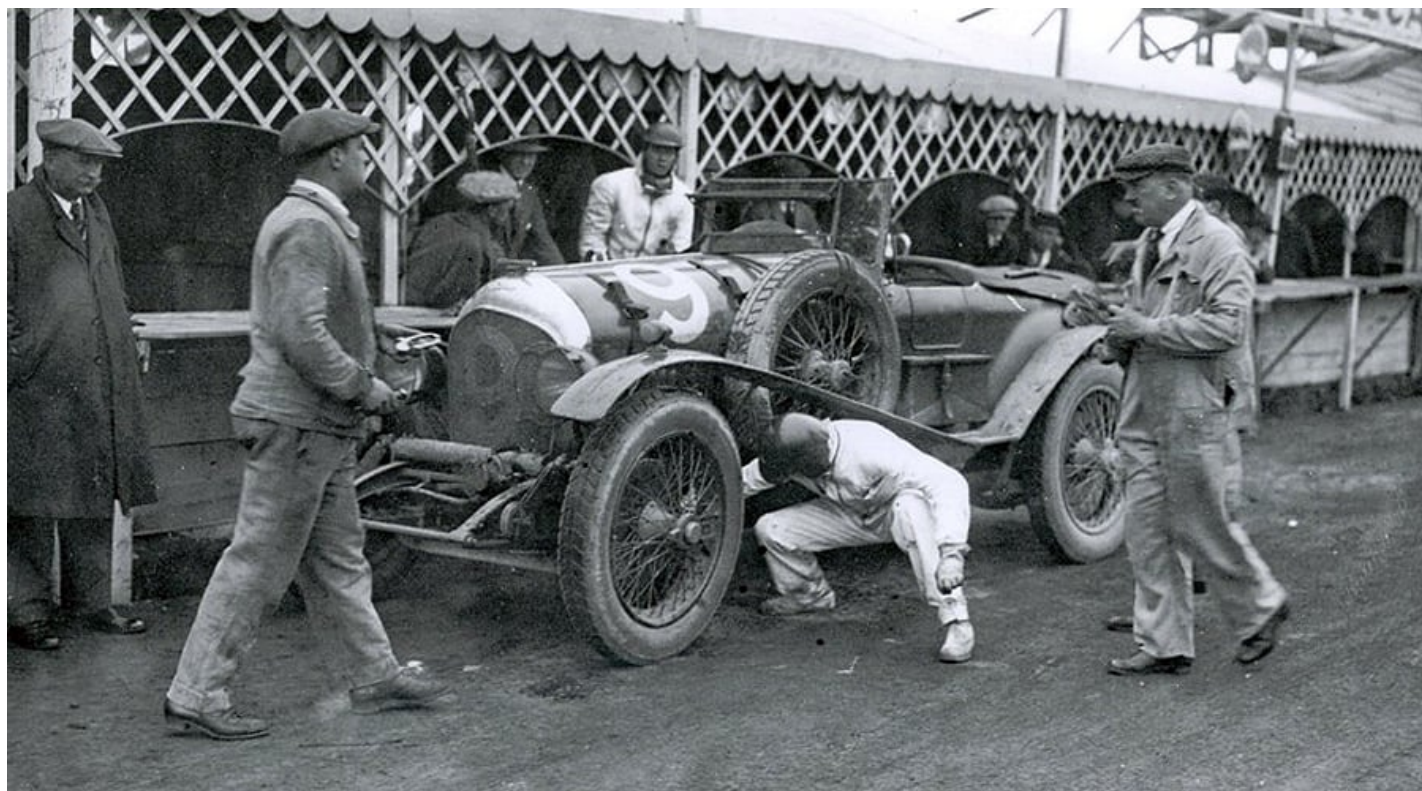
CLASSIC DRIVER

Lasting the Longest: Five decades, five Le Mans challengers

Lead

Although the last 90 years have seen the Le Mans 24 Hours develop into a cutting-edge spectacle of high technology, it remains – above all – about just one thing: endurance. We've selected five cars on sale today that were up to the ultimate challenge...

Out after 16 hours: Bentley 3 Litre Le Mans



No listing of Le Mans cars would be complete without a pre-War Bentley. And this car, this *very* car, note, actually competed at Le Mans in 1926. Its owner, the generously named Tommy 'Scrap' Thistlethwayte, was paired with professional 'Bentley Boy', experienced racing driver, war hero and preparation expert Capt. Clive Gallop.

Sadly, after over 16 hours of hard running, mechanical maladies forced it to retire at 08:30 on Sunday morning.

[To see this Bentley 3 Litre Le Mans in the Classic Driver Marketplace >>](#)

Failure with victory in sight: Lotus 17

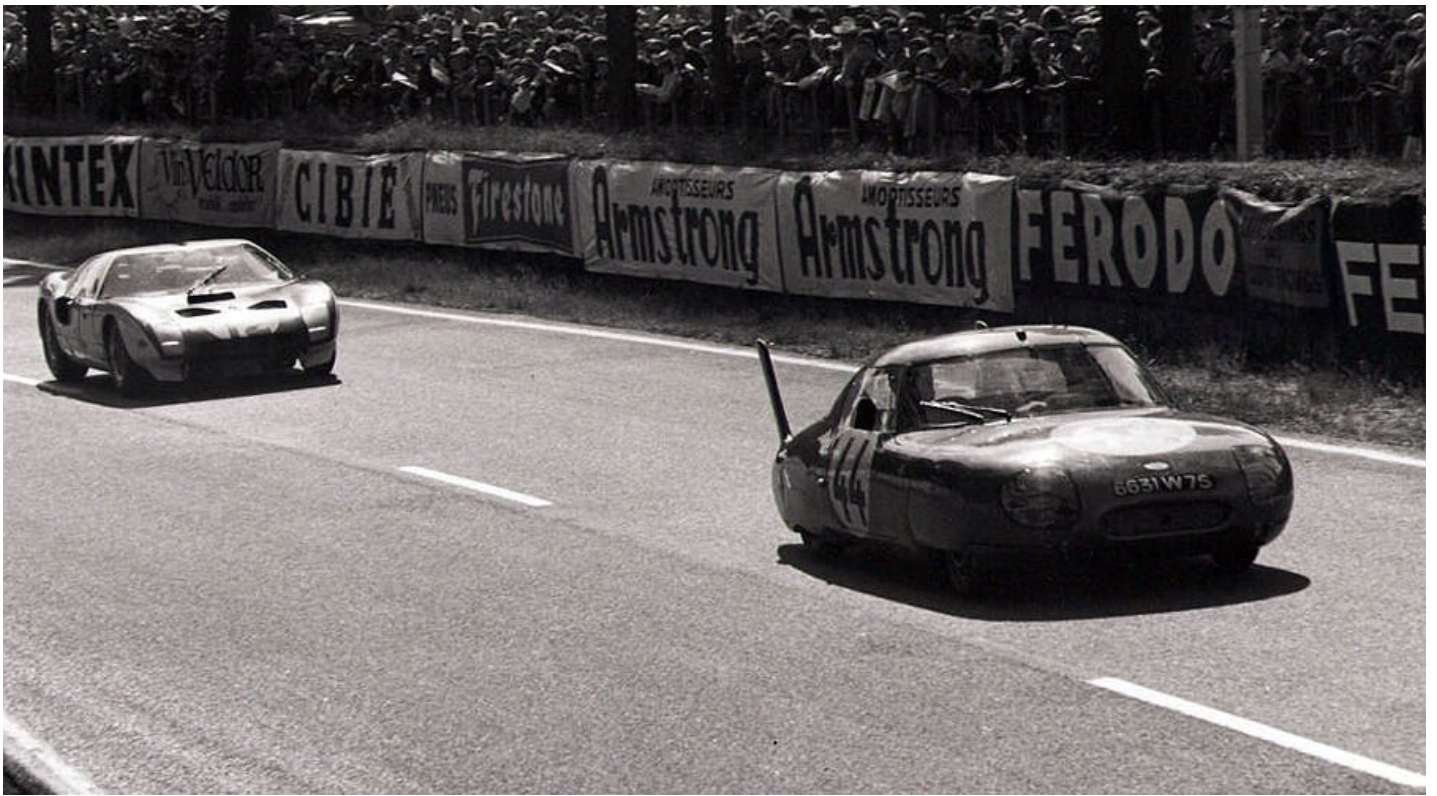


There's no denying the genius of North Londoner Colin Chapman. With the Lotus 17, his final front-engined car, he pulled out all the stops to 'add lightness' with glassfibre bodywork (a first, for customer cars) and other extensive weight-saving measures that saw the small racer tip the scales at a dry weight of just 340kg.

Two factory entries, fitted with tiny 750cc Coventry Climax engines, and driven by Stacey/Green and Taylor/Sieff, ran strongly at Le Mans in 1959, sadly retiring before a likely class victory.

[To see this Lotus 17 in the Classic Driver Marketplace >>](#)

Flying Frenchman: CD Panhard Le Mans LM64



'CD'? That's not for 'Classic Driver', is it? No, the letters stand for the man behind these small, superlight and very aerodynamic cars, the Frenchman, Charles Deutsch. *Vive la France!*, we say, as for many years the small Panhards and Deutsch-Bonnets (DBs) carried the hopes of the host nation at the annual day-long race.

After success in the 1930s with Bugatti, and just a single win in the 1950s (Rosier and Rosier in a Talbot-Lago T26 GS), it wasn't until 1972 that a French car crossed the finishing line first. Up till then, the home crowd had to support these pattering CDs and DBs, winning the small-capacity classes year after year.

[To see this CD Panhard Le Mans LM64 in the Classic Driver Marketplace >>](#)

Best of the 1997 privateers: Porsche GT1-96



“No listing of Le Mans cars would be complete without a...” Whoa! Haven’t we been there before? It’s fact, though, that Porsche’s name in the 70s, 80s and 90s was as synonymous with the French 24-hour race as Bentley in the inter-war years.

Was the 993-based GT1 of the late-90s any more related to a road car than the outrageous 935 K3 that won in 1979, Porsche’s very first 911-based winner? The jury is out. This 600bhp car, chassis 102, is the ex-Team Schübel entry that finished fifth overall at Le Mans in 1997.

[To see this Porsche GT1 in the Classic Driver Marketplace >>](#)

Dutch courage: Spyker C8 Laviolette GT2-R



The plucky Dutch manufacturer was up for anything: super-expensive sports cars of extravagantly different design, a bit of Formula 1, even a tilt at the Le Mans 24 Hours. This car (an orange-free zone, carrying sponsorship not from an aid to a better night's sleep, but from the now-bankrupt Lithuanian bank Snoras) raced at Le Mans in 2008.

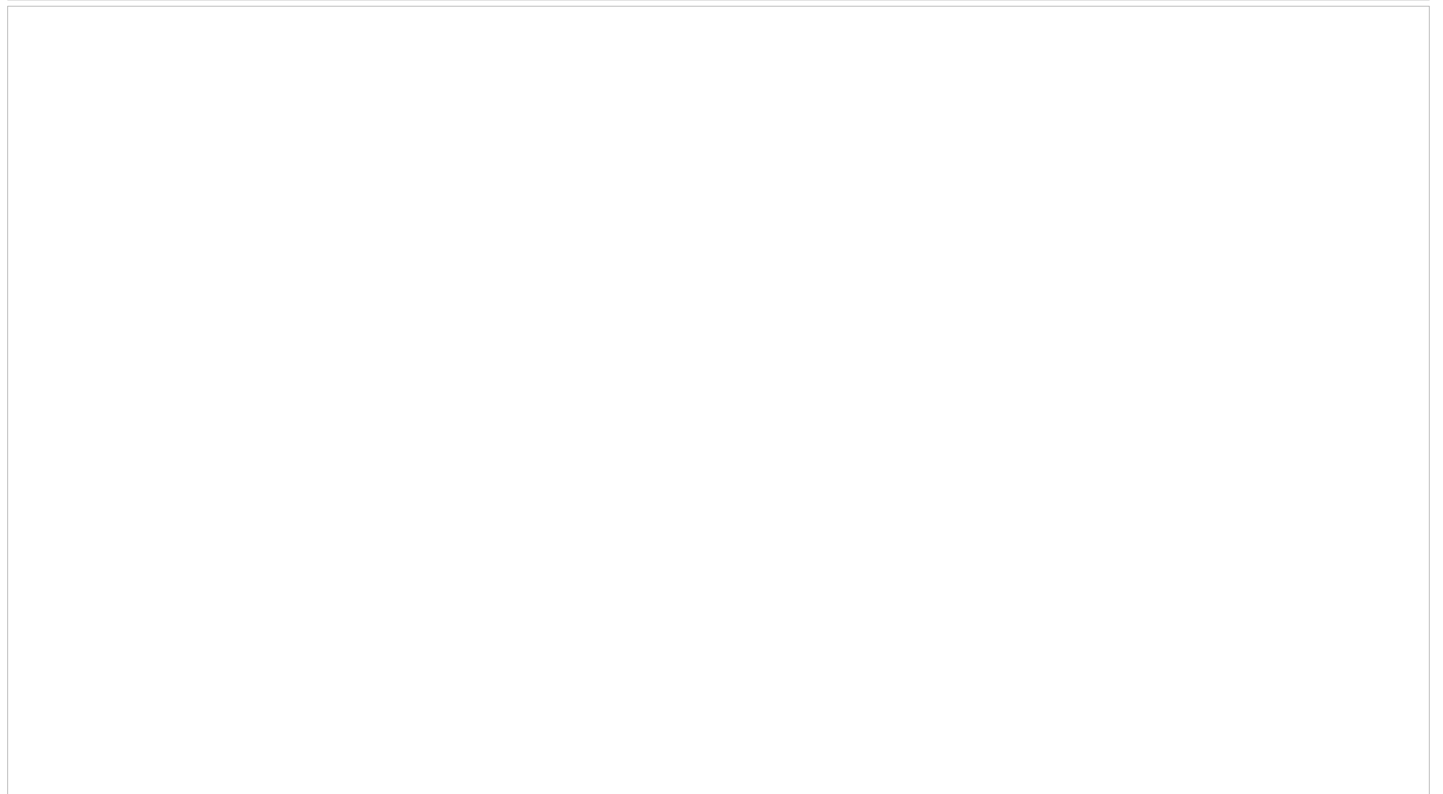
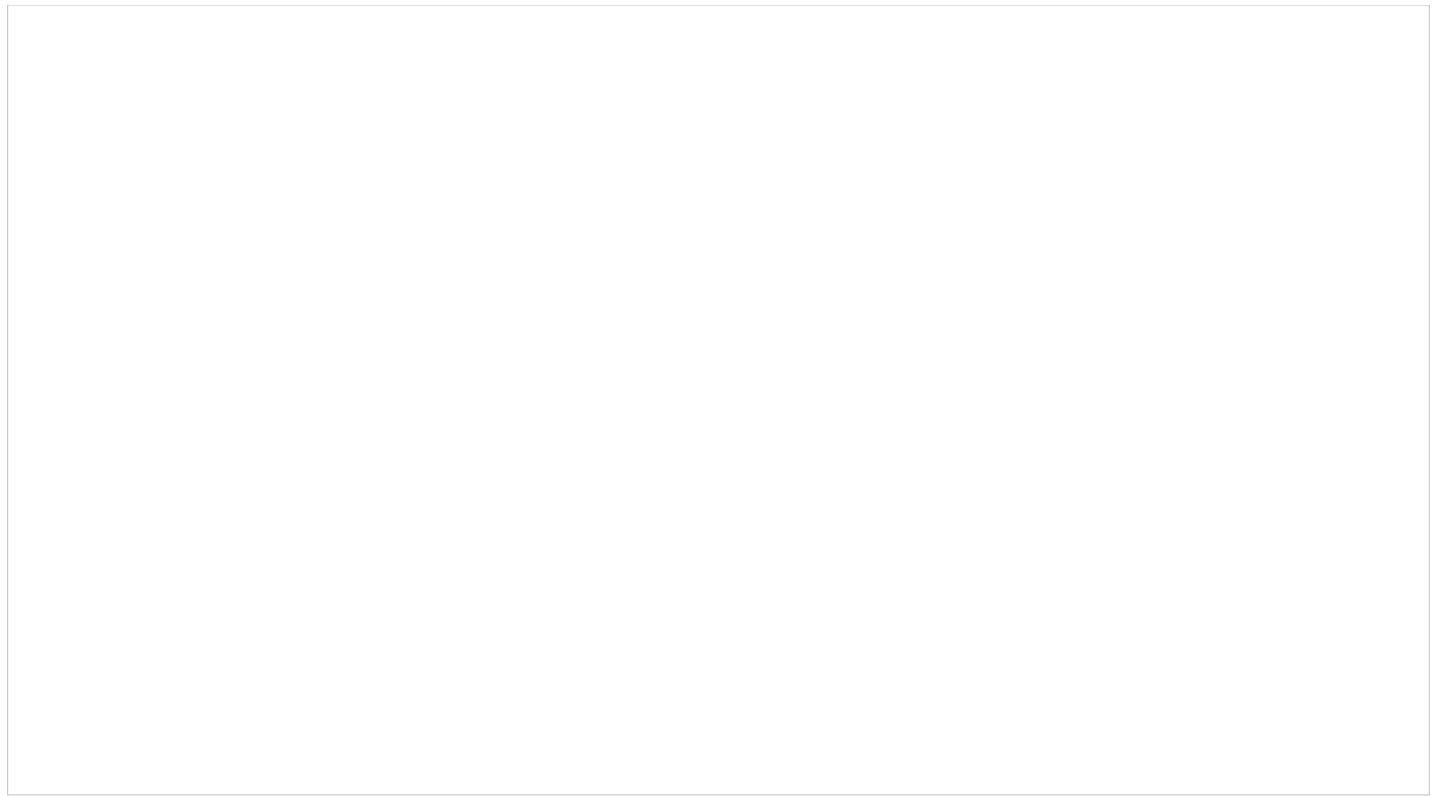
[To see this Spyker C8 Laviolette GT2-R in the Classic Driver Marketplace >>](#)

Photos: Classic Driver Dealers

Gallery







Source URL: <https://www.classicdriver.com/en/article/autos/lasting-longest-five-decades-five-le-mans-challengers>
© Classic Driver. All rights reserved.