

CLASSIC DRIVER

Moynet LM75: Three angels for Le Mans

Lead

In 1968, André Moynet tried his luck at Le Mans – and failed. In 1975, he returned to the Circuit de la Sarthe with refreshed prototypes and an all-female trio of racing drivers. But this was just the start of the surprises...

Okay, so the United Nations proclaimed 1975 as the Year of the Woman – but that was unlikely to worry Jacky Ickx, Derek Bell and the other veterans of Le Mans. Nevertheless, on 14 June 1975, there was an unknown, blue-painted prototype in the pit lane, with a surprisingly feminine team: Christine Dacremont, Marianne Hoepfner and Michèle Mouton, the latter lady revered today as the most successful female rally driver of all time; but in 1975, her career was in its early stages.

The life of an action hero



The blue race car with the orange muzzle was a looker, built by André Moynet – a man whose life history, even before 1975, read like an adventure novel. As a successful fighter pilot in the Second World War, he was decorated with military honours and, in 1968, promoted to the rank of Colonel in the French Air Force. When the War had ended, however, he had sought plentiful new challenges: as a test pilot, in politics, and as an ambitious creator of aeroplanes, boats – and eventually racing cars.

Return to Le Mans





As early as 1968, Moynet wanted to compete in the 24 Hours of Le Mans with his own prototypes, but only qualified as a reserve and did not make it to the starting grid. On his second attempt in 1970, his entry again failed to qualify but finally, in 1975, André Moynet was determined to succeed. His trump card was that he had managed to infect the president of Esso SAF with his sporting enthusiasm, plus he also had a new racing car... with a 2-litre, four-cylinder engine from Chrysler Simca putting out 190HP at 7,000 rpm. Simca wasn't officially involved and the company allowed Moynet to remove the logo from the cylinder block just before the race. The five-speed gearbox was from Porsche and, more relevant than all this were the aerodynamics. The new Moynet LM75 was aiming for success.

An unexpected victory



Dacremont, Hoepfner and Mouton were entered in the Group 5, under two-litre class – in direct competition with female duo Marie-Claude Beaumont and Lella Lombardi in the Alpine A441 of Elf-Switzerland. But just one and a half hours into the race, the Moynet started to suffer technical problems and, by the middle of the night, the rev-counter failed. The mechanics had no spare cable so, from then on, the drivers had to judge everything by ear – a real feat when driving on the edge, hour after hour. The legend says that André Moynet had already retired to the bar to drown his sorrows when an excited teammate ran to fetch him: the Moynet LM75 had taken the class lead, in front of the Lola T292. Contrary to all expectations, and seemingly against all odds, Moynet's car went on to win the two-litre class. It was yet another victory in the life of Moynet.

After the triumph came forgetfulness: for 35 years, the Moynet LM75 slept in a warehouse, before it was gently awakened and carefully made fit for racing. Today, the prototype sits at Atelier 46 in Paris, and is up for sale. This is a unique opportunity to own not just a Le Mans legend with a troubled history, but also the perfect race car for the Le Mans Classic 2014. As for choosing the three-member team of drivers, that will be down to the new owner.

Gallery

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