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Le Mans-winning Porsche 956 to star at Gooding & Co's Pebble Beach sale

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At its 2015 Pebble Beach Auction, Gooding & Company will offer the factory Porsche 956 in which Vern Schuppan, Hurley Haywood and Al Holbert won the 1983 24 Hours of Le Mans...

Chassis 003 might not have been a new car prepared especially for Le Mans in 1983, having scored victories the previous year at Sebring, Brands Hatch and Fuji (and second place at La Sarthe), but it *was* very well sorted. Though Derek Bell and Jacky Ickx - both gunning for their third Le Mans victory together - put the number one car on pole position, an early collision, resulting in an agonisingly long pit-stop, put them out of contention... until the very last laps, at least.

War of attrition



Suffering serious temperature issues in the final 15 minutes (after prior damage), Holbert was being quickly reeled in by Bell – who had un-lapped himself in what was to be arguably the most dramatic finish at Le Mans since 1969. Fortunately, Holbert's mechanical sympathy came to the fore and he was able to nurse the car home, stopping millimetres over the line with an almost entirely seized engine but, crucially, a minute ahead of Bell. Porsche 956s took nine of the top 10 positions in that race – a feat attesting to the car's superb durability and performance.

Belonging to several collectors since, the first of whom was Schuppan himself 956-003 is one of the most successful 956s in existence. It will cross the block at Gooding & Company's Pebble Beach sale on 15-16 August, estimated at 7-9m US dollars – an intriguing sum given that the car failed to sell at auction in 2007; at just 2m dollars...

Photos: Porsche, DPPI, Mathieu Heurtault

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