
1959 DB Type HBR - HBR4 Coach Surbaissé "Le Monstre"

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Lot sold	USD 164 920 - 212 040 EUR 140 000 - 180 000 (listed)	Drive	LHD
Year of manufacture	1959	Condition	Used
Competition car	Yes	Location	
Drivetrain	2wd	Fuel type	Petrol
Lot number	36	Exterior colour	Blue
		Car type	Coupé

Description

French title

Chassis no. 1110

Engine no. 102380

- Exceptional record in competition
- Clear history
- Unique model
- 2nd in the Index of Performance at Le Mans in 1961

Fast and extremely light, the D.B. Coach was a remarkably agile car in competition. At the time, the D.B. stood out in different disciplines in motorsport: in endurance racing, hill-climbs and, of course, in rallying. An experienced racing driver and Panhard agent in Chambéry, André Guilhaudin competed in a huge number of events at the wheel of special Panhards and Panhard-engined D.B's. Guilhaudin was convinced of the potential of the D.B. Coach and believed that a drastic programme of development would improve its performance still further. He therefore persuaded his friend, the racer Jacques-Edouard Rey, to order a new HBR4 Coach from D.B., to be modified in line with his ideas. Rey took delivery of the car in June 1959. Finished in a bright shade of blue, it was registered 765 CM 73 on 28 August 1959. Guilhaudin's project aimed to achieve the greatest possible weight-saving and a

considerable improvement in the drag coefficient by reducing the frontal area.

The car was modified in accordance with his instructions by the Chalmette bodyshop in Grenoble. The first stage consisted in lowering the roofline by about 12cm (4.7in). Work to cut into the body continued by getting rid of the original windscreen frame and replacing it with a rear window frame from a Panhard Dyna Z1. The doors were formed from aluminium in a sweep extending the angle of the front section. For the brakes, Guilhaudin had some drums machined and modified by L'Aluminium Français, based on those fitted to production Panhards. They were fitted with extra cooling fins, making them similar, at least in terms of their appearance, to the Alfin models which would be used by D.B.

The modified Coach made its first appearance in competition in September in the Tour de France Automobile (no. 111). For this event, Guilhaudin & Rey had a 747cc engine. The car proved very quick and finished 8th overall, winning the Index of Performance in the GT category. On 11 October, the same crew took part in the Critérium des Cévennes, where they won their class and came 5th overall. The performance and the results achieved by this privately entered car inevitably came to the attention of René Bonnet. If certain accounts are to be believed, it was at this time, and within the D.B. team itself, that the car acquired its nickname of "The Monster". In the wake of this, Bonnet asked Jacques Hubert to develop a lowered version of the Coach, which led to ten or so cars being built.

At the end of the season, "The Monster" underwent some changes at Chalmette. The front wheelarches were substantially modified and shaped from aluminium, with the aim of improving their aerodynamic efficiency. Along the way, small rectangular grilles made from steel were mounted on the top of the wings, replacing the side air vents which had been eliminated with the new wheelarches, in order to improve the airflow. As part of these changes, the bumpers were done away with at both front and rear, leaving only the very ends of the rear bumper. At the same time, the underside of the car was entirely streamlined, using an aluminium sheet. The rear wheels also gained a streamlined covering, with the addition of plywood spats.

The 1960 season opened with the Monte-Carlo Rally, in which the car competed as no. 4. Guilhaudin & Rey were forced to retire. On 5/6 March, the pair took part in the Lyon-Charbonnières Rally, and then, from 15-23 September in the Tour de France (no. 109), where they finished 4th in the Index of Performance in the GT category and 12th overall. "The Monster" made its début in endurance racing in the 1961 Le Mans 24 Hours race. It was fitted with an 848cc works engine prepared by D.B. A true featherweight, the car weighed in at just 559kg, split 367kg/192kg front-to-rear. A copy of the weighing records will be given to the buyer. Driven with gusto by Guilhaudin and Jean-François Jaeger, the car performed brilliantly, coming 2nd in the Index of Performance and 20th overall, after covering 3268.86km (2031.18 miles) at an average speed of 136.203kph (84.633mph). From 14-23 September, it competed in the Tour Auto for the third time in a row, driven as always by Guilhaudin & Rey, and powered by a 695cc engine. The crew were forced to retire. On 22 October, the car was entered in the 1000km de Paris. Driven by Jacques-Edouard Rey and Marcel Picart, it competed as no. 42. The pair were forced to retire after coming off the track. The left front wing was damaged. Once the car had returned to the Savoie, it was refurbished and the wing repaired using sheet aluminium.

The car's last racing season came in 1962, when it was entered in the Tour de France Automobile as no. 102. Driven by Jacques-Edouard Rey and Guy Druguet, it was fitted with a 695cc engine. The crew was forced to retire. On 2 September, the car was entered for the Chamrousse hill-climb (no. 64), equipped this time with an 848cc engine. The result is not known. Then, on 2 December, "The Monster" started the Critérium des Cévennes, still in the hands of Rey and Druguet. It finished 11th overall, 2nd in its class and 9th in the GT category. Rey was very fond of the car and kept it lovingly in his garage.

For the Le Mans 24 Hours race in 1973, the car once again returned to the circuit in the Sarthe for a retrospective event. Rey kept the car until 19 September 1989, when he sold it to Alain Lacheze and Bernard Morel. The car was registered 230 AEG 91 on 4 October 1989. It was subsequently purchased by Moïse Ohayon. Stored in a Paris car park, the car was involved in a collision, resulting in some damage to its bodywork. Its current owner acquired it in this condition on 12 October 1994, and it was registered 998 QM 41 on 9 December 1994.

Immediately afterwards, he undertook its restoration, as is evident from a file of photographs. The works 848cc engine was overhauled. It features a lightweight flywheel, steel timing gear, a polished conrod and a special camshaft. The bodywork was restored with the help of Jean-Paul Humbert, a leading specialist in the Matra V12 and composite bodyshells. When the restoration was complete, the car was driven for the first time at Monthéry on 14 September 1996 during the "Damiers sur l'anneau" meeting, at which Panhard-engined sportscars were honoured. Guilhaudin moreover had the chance to drive it on this memorable day.

In February 1997, visitors to the Rétromobile show were able to see "The Monster" in its 1961 Le Mans configuration, which it retains today. After the show, and for more than 20 years, its owner drove the car on many circuits, but only for demonstration sessions, in order to preserve to the full this authentic piece of history. Still wearing the same livery as it did for the Le Mans 24 Hours race in 1961, the car reflects an exceptional degree of authenticity. The engine fitted today remains the works unit we referred to earlier. The steering wheel, aluminium dashboard and bucket seats are those installed in the car throughout its career. In running order and having undergone an older restoration, "The Monster" is a remarkable machine. It will be supplied with a high-ratio gearbox and an inlet manifold with two twin-barrel carburettors.

Aimed at a discerning enthusiast, this car is inseparable from the history of the Le Mans 24 Hours race and represents a unique opportunity on many levels. Eligible for the Le Mans Classic and Tour Auto, its light weight and outstanding performance are typical of a bygone age when motorsport left plenty of scope for small teams and cars with more modest engines.

Guillaume Waegemacker

For more information and photos: <https://www.artcurial.com/fr/lot-1959-db-hbr4-coach-surbaiss-le-monstre-3980-36>

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