


CLASSIC DRIVER

1952 Aston Martin DB3

- Lot sold
USD 3 436 771 - 4 050 480
GBP 2 800 000 - 3 300 000 (listed)
Year of manufacture 1952
- **Chassis number** DB3-5
- **Lot number** 375
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- **Condition** Used
- **Location** 
- **Exterior colour** Other
- **Engine number** DP10133
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Description

1952 Aston Martin DB3 Sports-Racing Two-Seater
Registration no. UPL 4
Chassis no. DB3-5
Engine no. DP10133

This beautifully-presented and - within its Historic racing category - provenly competitive Aston Martin DB3 sports-racing car is none other than the legendary marque's contemporary works team-entered winner of the 1952 9-Hours race right here at the Goodwood Motor Circuit, driven on that occasion by the fine pairing of future Ferrari Grand Prix winning driver and so very nearly the 1956 Formula 1 World Champion - Peter Collins and Pat Griffith.

This two-seat sports-racing car design with its muscularly-handsome Frank Feeley-styled light-alloy bodywork, was introduced by the Feltham-based company in 1952 as its first sports racing prototype. It's 'DB'-series model title derived from the initials of northern-English gear and machine-tool industrialist David Brown, who had bought the already famous Aston Martin sports car marque for £20,500 in 1947.

The Aston Martin DB3 was designed for David Brown by German engineering director Dr Robert Eberan von Eberhorst. He was a leading proponent of welded chassis-frame design using large-diameter parallel main frame tubes from which the front and rear suspensions could be hung, the engine and gearbox installed and a lightweight aluminium enveloping body attached. 'Eberan' as he was known had been a leading engineer with the epochal Auto Union Grand Prix team through the late 1930s when he had been principally responsible for the good-handling 3-litre V12-engined, de Dion rear-axled GP cars of 1938-39, in which none other than the Italian champion Tazio Nuvolari had won the Donington and Italian Grand Prix races, defeating

the better-funded might of Mercedes-Benz.

Laurence Pomeroy, highly respected Technical Editor of 'The Motor' magazine, then recommended the Austrian engineer to David Brown who engaged him initially as a design consultant but then as full-time chief engineer.

Eberan would recall: "At Auto Union we looked at our work from a national viewpoint. But David Brown had bought Aston Martin as a hobby, in order to build special cars to his own ideas and to race them accordingly."

"I was given the task of designing a completely new competitive sports car, new except for the engine which was to be the 2.6-litre Lagonda unit, and which was to be known as the DB3".

"Like the Auto Union it had a tubular, girder-type frame with trailing link front suspension and transverse torsion bar springs. I also gave it a de Dion rear end with transverse torsion bars" but von Eberhorst was to find that Aston Martin's racing budget was much more restricted than the State-backed Auto Union team's had ever been. "At Aston Martin it was an adventure to build even one standard car- we were always changing the prototype which had to be ready to race immediately." While the methodical Austrian was troubled by such 'Racer' attitudes, he much admired some of the team's contracted drivers, and especially Peter Collins whom he described as "a sort of English Bernd Rosemeyer, a very daring driver. Reg Parnell was very solid and stable but I would leave Aston Martin when I was invited to join the board of directors of the newly-formed Auto Union company in 1953...".

Meanwhile his Aston Martin DB3 sports-racing car's definingly simple yet well proportioned and sleek bodywork, fronted by that distinctive 'portcullis' nose intake grille, proved to be extremely efficient aerodynamically when wind-tunnel tested by the Vickers aircraft company. It was certainly very well thought out, even its underside being carefully faired-in by undertray panelling unusual for the time.

These DB3 cars were powered initially by the twin-overhead camshaft 2580cc 6-cylinder Aston Martin Lagonda engine, later replaced by an enlarged 2922cc version. While the initial power unit developed some 138bhp, the later, larger variant could deliver up to 163bhp.

The new model made its debut at the BRDC May Silverstone race meeting of 1952, Aston Martin entering four team cars there and seeing drivers Reg Parnell, George Abecassis and Lance Macklin finish 1-2-3 in their 3-litre class.

The Aston Martin DB3 offered here chassis DB3/5 was the car driven that Silverstone Saturday by Lance Macklin son of Sir Noel Macklin, pre-war Invicta sports car manufacturer, then mastermind of the wartime Fairmile motor torpedo boat and gunboat programme. Stylish, always sophisticated and cosmopolitan and very much a young man about town whether it be London, Paris, Rome or particularly Cannes and Nice on the French Riviera, debonair Lance had become very much a mentor to the young Stirling Moss. He would drive Aston Martin 'DB3/5' again in that year's Monaco GP on June 2, run for sports cars instead of the Formula 2 single-seaters which that year qualified for the Drivers' World Championship competition. He recalled how all the DB3 works entries there "...were equipped with the new 2.9-litre engines for the first time and we arrived with high hopes, feeling that we really had a good chance. In practice, even using just 6,000rpm, I was not very far behind the Ferraris, and I felt that by using peak revs we could do very well".

"However, in the race the cars ran very hot and each threw a rod at some stage" his after 73 punishing laps.

In the Le Mans 24-Hour race on the weekend of June 14/15, Macklin then co-drove the repaired 'DB3/5' with the fast-developing and increasingly exuberant British newcomer Peter Collins. Lance remembered how: "...we got up to third place behind the Mercedes 300SLs with only about three hours to go (but) we both knew the situation was dicey because they'd moved the rear brakes inboard, where they generated so much heat that the oil in the axle was practically turning to water. After practice Peter and I arranged with the mechanics to slacken off the rear brakes, having decided to drive as much as possible without braking and to do what was necessary with the front brakes only. This paid off, as we managed to keep going until about mid-day on the Sunday. I handed over to Peter for the last stint, but he was back again after five or six laps...there was nothing they could do and the Aston was retired. It was a real shame, because we could have finished third." This car had completed 230 long laps in the Le Mans 24-Hour race....

Veteran team driver Reg Parnell then took over 'DB3/5' for the Jersey Road Race around the houses in St Helier, Channel Islands, on July 10, finishing fourth overall, and second in Heat three.

At Boreham aerodrome, on August 2, 1952, 'Uncle Reg' then won the 3-litre class and finished third overall, at an average speed of 86.35mph which provides a clear idea of the car's racing capabilities on a fast, though winding aerodrome course rather similar to Goodwood itself.

While these team cars had proved consistently competitive through that year it was only in their final outing of the season in the Goodwood 9-Hour race on August 16, 1952 that they finally won overall, the strong driver team of Peter Collins/Pat Griffith taking the chequered flag in 'DB3/5' as now offered here.

In its preview to the day-into-night race the British weekly magazine 'Autosport' described how: "Tomorrow, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, 30 sports cars, British and Continental, will begin a nine hours' drive on the 2.4-mile Goodwood circuit in the BARC/'News of the World' International long-distance sports car race. They will range from 1½-litre Cooper and Lester-MGs, HRGs and a Jowett Jupiter to Frazer Nashes, Ferraris, Allards, works-entered Aston Martins and Jaguars, and a lone French Talbot".

"The event will continue until midnight and when darkness falls spectators will witness true Le Mans-style racing, with cars passing at high-speed, headlamps full on, and the pits, paddock and stands bright with innumerable lights."

This preview described how the prize fund totalled £2,500, 1,000 guineas of which would go to the car covering the greatest distance in the nine hours of racing. In its full report the following week, 'Autosport' described how: "At no time was the race devoid of interest. First surprise was when Reg Parnell took the lead from Tony Rolt's Jaguar, with the 2.9-litre Aston Martin of the type (DB3) which raced at Monaco. This fast car's run ended when the rear axle overheated, and ignited spilled fuel during refuelling operations. In a moment the car was enveloped in flames, and it was touch and go whether or not the fierce fire would spread to the other pits, and to many hundreds of gallons of 80 octane fuel stored nearby. Unfortunately, three of the David Brown pit staff were injured in attempting to beat out the flames".

The fire had erupted shortly before 6pm after 93 race laps completed with the Parnell/Eric Thompson car 'DB3/3' lying third behind two works-entered Jaguar C-Types. Aston Martin's illustrious team manager John Wyer sustained particularly serious burns to his face and arms and, as he was hurried off to hospital, Reg Parnell who took over management duties, reorganised the Aston Martin pits and urged on Collins and Griffith in 'DB3/5'. Dennis Poore brought in the third team car 'DB3/4' which he was co-driving with George Abecassis, reporting that only top gear remained. Upon an attempt to restart the car's starter motor jammed, and Abecassis only succeeded in rejoining the race after losing much time.

By 7.30pm that evening the two leading Jaguars had completed 145 laps, but 'DB3/5' lay third only two laps adrift and running well. One report read: "It was evident that the two Ferraris co-driven by Tom Cole/Peter Whitehead and Bobby Baird/Roy Salvadori were out to catch the Collins/Griffith Aston Martin. Roy Salvadori caught and passed 'DB3/5' and with three hours to run both Jaguars had completed 194 laps, the Stirling Moss/Peter Walker car leading, while the Salvadori Ferrari was third four laps adrift. But shortly after 9.30 the Duncan Hamilton/Tony Rolt Jaguar went missing; a half-shaft broke. Soon after 10pm the Moss/Walker Jaguar came touring slowly to the pits, where it stopped with a broken rear axle locating arm.

"This put the Baird/Salvadori Ferrari in the lead with 229 laps completed, one ahead of the Collins/Griffith Aston Martin. At 10.23pm Salvadori came in to refuel and hand over to Baird. The Belfast man pressed the starter, there was a click and silence!". After frantic work, "Baird took off like a scalded cat, with the Ferrari's one-lap lead altered to three in arrears".

"The Aston Martin was circulating steadily, albeit with an odd-sounding exhaust note due to a blown gasket. Salvadori took over the Ferrari...rocketing out of the pit road, only to revolve at Madgwick and stall his motor. Unable to restart owing to the dud battery, he had outside assistance, which cost him one lap docked".

"By 11pm, with one hour to go, the DB3 had turned in 252 laps, the Cole/Whitehead Ferrari 248, the Baird/Salvadori Ferrari 246".

"Then it was all over. Peter Collins crossed the line to win the Nine-Hours Sports-car Race at an average of 75.42mph. Victor's laurels were hung round his and Pat Griffith's necks, and there was a triumphant ceremony in front of the stands, to the accompaniment of many brightly-coloured rockets fired from behind the paddock. For hours after the event, lines of cars still wended their way towards homes and hotels, with the occupants fully determined to repeat the dose in 1953".

Into that new year, Aston Martin's factory team relied upon these proven DB3s for its first three events, the Sebring 12-Hours in Florida, USA, on March 8, the mighty 1,000-mile round-Italy Mille Miglia on April 26 and the Silverstone International on May 9.

Yet again Aston Martin DB3 chassis serial 'DB3/5' excelled, this time in the punishing Floridan enduro at Sebring, team drivers George Abecassis/Reg Parnell driving this car home into a fine second place overall, and winners of the 3-litre category. The car completed 177 laps, 894 miles in the 12-hours, having averaged 74.58mph for the duration...69 long years ago. And finally, in the Mille Miglia 'DB3/5' again driven by the always exuberantly on-the-limit 'Gorgeous George' Abecassis - had to retire after a crash due to steering failure, as he later explained: "We had shock absorber problems... All the Italian roads that year had a very bad surface not so much pot holes as ripples, which set up such a high-frequency movement in the shock absorbers that they overheated and became inoperative. You'd go into a corner and the front wheels would start dancing and bouncing and the car would go straight on, in spite of the fact that it was on full lock!"

But George Abecassis was always a particularly brave driver who would never back off. His own HWM team had become such an honoured name between 1949-53 with its Continental Formula 2 racing exploits, that he was most decidedly another great name to be associated with this wonderful Aston Martin DB3. Not least

when given a fearful dressing down in the Goodwood pits by team manager Wyer for having bent one of the other works cars, George celebratedly took his cigarette holder from his mouth to remark, reprovingly "I say, John - steady on... When I crashed my Stirling bomber they gave me the ----- DFC".

It was after this Mille Miglia incident that 'DB3/5's damaged open body was removed and the rolling chassis then sold to established Aston Martin enthusiast and private customer Nigel Mann who had it fitted with a distinctive closed-cockpit grand touring body. He raced the car five times in that configuration, sharing it most notably with Brooklands veteran Charles Brackenbury, best result being sixth overall in the Hyères 12-Hour race in France. With the car returned to open-cockpit form with single-cowl windscreen and a Jaguar D-Type-like headrest, Nigel Mann reappeared at Hyères in 1955, finishing sixth for the second consecutive year.

This historic Aston Martin was subsequently retired from active duty, UK road registered ' UPL 4 ' and subsequently sold to Preston Hopkins, a US military officer based in Japan. Shipment was via Hong Kong as in the Register. The vendor had the pleasure of meeting his son Riley Hopkins at Pebble Beach when UPL 4 was invited to the 2013 Concours. Apparently, DB3/5 made a major sports racing impact in 50's Japan as evidenced by the contemporary publicity. Hopkins returned to the US in the late 1950's and continued his racing activities on North West And East Coast tracks. Around 1979 it was acquired there by Tony Goodchild, retaining its somewhat DB3S lookalike open-cockpit 'spider' body. Fitted with a twin-plug cylinder head, the car proved itself a strong performer in American 'Vintage' events, with Goodchild campaigning it at Road Atlanta, Pittsburgh and Road America, as well as at his local track - Lime Rock. He even shipped 'DB3/5' to the UK in 1985 to race at Silverstone.

British collector Hugh Taylor eventually returned the car to England in 1990, when he commissioned a full restoration including an authentic Feeley-style 'works' DB3 body.

Working from a wealth of historic photographs sourced by arch-Aston Martin stalwart Brian Joscelyne, Crailville Coachworks did a superb job of remaking the two-piece bodywork while Peter Watts rebuilt the chassis and engine. Later owners have included Aston Martin connoisseur Simon Draper, US based Scott Rosen and, for the past 15 years, the current vendor in whose hands it has been raced extensively at Historic level including multiple Le Mans and Monaco events. DB3/5 won the prestigious RAC Woodcote Trophy for the 2010 racing season and has been a particularly welcome feature of the annual Goodwood Revival Meeting's Freddie March Trophy races for sports cars of that early-'50s 9-Hour race era. The vendor was advised on the purchase of this historic Aston Martin by seasoned specialists Rick Hall and son Rob of Hall & Hall, both most accomplished racing drivers in their own right. Hall & Hall have prepared and maintained DB3/5 throughout the vendor's racing ownership with excellent reliability and competitiveness being achieved.

"When the DB3 became available it seemed a rarer and more interesting option", Rob told writer Mick Walsh of 'Classic & Sportscar' magazine. "With the car's history it was eligible for all the top events, and with just 10 built and DB3/5 being an ex-works car, it was more likely to guarantee an entry. The downside was all the period performance limitations, particularly the weight and small brakes."

Hall & Hall were convinced that the DB3's performance could be transformed without resort to modifications that would spoil its originality. A new engine was built around an original spare block with a lighter crank and pistons. The original engine was also rebuilt by Hall & Hall and more suitably used for the Mille Miglia and similar events. The original engine, DP10133 is supplied with the car.

"It now revs a lot easier with plenty of low-down torque, which makes it very tractable," explained Rob, who won the 2017 Revival Meeting's Freddie March Memorial Trophy race in 'DB3/5'".

"It's a nice historic race with very neutral handling. With our stiffer front and softer rear set-up, the turn-in is good through fast corners and you can control it nicely on the throttle. The steering is heavy, but I prefer it that way because it gives more feel. The car seems to suit Goodwood."

And in return Goodwood Motorsport has repeatedly invited this magnificently Britannic sports-racing car, with its 9-Hour race-winning, Sebring 12-Hours second-place history and close connections with so many great British racing heroes of the 1950s back, year after year.

DB3/5 has recently been sympathetically restored by the vendor-owned MRM Motorsport and is now presented in its original 1952 racing colours with distinctive yellow nose. The dark green colour was used on all of the DB3 works team cars during the 1952 and 1953 seasons. The paint was sourced from renowned Aston Martin Specialist Chris Woodgate who had previously used the colour to restore XMC 76.

The car is accompanied by an extensive documentation file including details of not only its contemporary international competition career in both works and private hands but also of its many Historic event appearances and performances within more recent years. The car is supplied with HTP valid to 2025 along with its competition roll hoop and extensive wheel and spares package. We very much recommend this lovely car as being worthy of the very closest

Title Mr

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