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1939 TALBOT LAGO SPORT BIPLACE

1939 Talbot Lago T26 GS ex-Le Mans

- Built in 1939 as a *monoplace centrale* to race in the 1939 season, debuted with Raymond Mays
- Four successful post-war seasons with Louis Chiron including a 1948 win at the Grand Prix de l'ACF
- Recommissioned as a *biplace sport* in 1951 by the factory
- 4 appearances at Le Mans including 2nd overall in 1951
- Previous owners include Jean-Pierre Bernard and Paul Bignon

This Talbot Lago T26 GS offers superb competition history across two racing lives in single seater and sports car form. Second overall at the 1951 Le Mans and piloted by the likes of the great Louis Chiron and Raymond Mays, this important Talbot Lago offers astonishing heritage and a slice of French racing glory.

Constructed to challenge the Grand Prix formula of 1938, the *monoplace centrale* was intended to accept a V-16, but was launched instead with the 4.5L single cam six. After a debut in 1939 with the great Raymond Mays, she enjoyed four post-war seasons piloted mostly by the legendary Louis Chiron, under the ownership of the *Ecurie France* of Paul Vallée. 1948 was their most successful season, winning the Grand Prix de l'Automobile Club de France and collecting three other outright victories.

Commissioned as a two-seater *biplace sport* in 1951, the factory incorporated the historic single-seater *monoplace centrale* of 1939 on the instruction of customer Guy Mairesse, who had acquired it in 1950. Effectively the prototype T26C, the reborn sports car featured the uprated post-war twin cam six with preselect box, and was given chassis number 110059. A tough and self-made haulier with a big heart, Mairesse had his day in the sun, placing a heroic second overall at the '51 Le Mans with co-pilot Pierre Meyrat, just behind the works C-Type Jaguar making its debut at *La Sarthe*.

The Paris *garagiste* Jean Blanc acquired 110059 from Mairesse in 1952, competing her extensively through 1956. Entered at Le Mans twice more in 1953 and 1954, she raced on picturesque circuits of France and further afield, with a goodly share of victories and podiums to cheer her owner's heart. All the while, her sports car body evolved from cycle wings to a fully-enveloped *barchette*, following the rule changes and fashion of the time.

For years the fate of this single-seater lay hidden under the 1951 coachwork. In his reference work on the racing Talbots, historian Pierre Abeillon recounts the two days in 1987 when he inspected the chassis of 110059, authenticating the *monoplace centrale* beyond any reasonable doubt. With key components carried over and distinctions apparent versus other T26 GS examples, the author's excitement at this rediscovery remains obvious.

In later years 110059 has passed through the ownership of a select group of collectors, including French vintage car pioneer Jean-Pierre Bernard and Paul Bignon who first restored the car, then later with Pierre Bardinon (founder of the Mas du Clos circuit), Fred Chandon (of the Champagne house), and René Mauriès, whose great Alfa collection resided at Albi.

Tremendously historic and restored to its 1951 Le Mans specification, this competition Talbot Lago offers a superb driving experience, sounds tremendous, and in recent years has starred at Le Mans Classic and Spa Historic. Recalling a heroic sporting age of racing *pour la gloire*, she will be welcomed with open arms at the world's most selective events.

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