

David Brabham – Biography

David Brabham is one of the world's elite sportscar racers – outright Le Mans 24 Hours victor and triple class-winner, double American Le Mans Series Champion and former Formula One driver.

Son of triple Formula One World Champion Sir Jack, David has created his own powerful legacy befitting the Brabham name in an illustrious 30-year career spanning the highest echelons of global motorsport, from karting through single-seaters to F1 and across the sportscar spectrum.

The Early Years

Born in England and raised in Australia, David first got behind the wheel at the age of eight, driving an EH Holden on the family farm in Wagga Wagga. Despite being the youngest son of triple Formula One World Champion Sir Jack Brabham, David didn't catch the racing bug until much later. After making his karting debut aged 17, he got his first taste of success winning the Canberra Cup en route to the 1984 New South Wales Country Championship crown.

His first car race victory in the Australian Ford Laser Series at Amaroo Park preceded inevitable progression in to single-seaters, David immediately underlining his potential in the Australian Formula Ford 1600 Championship with the 1987 Australian Formula 2 Gold Star title.

Keen to pursue international success, David returned to England in 1988 initially to contest the Formula Vauxhall Lotus Series with Derek Bell Racing. But a mid-season switch to British Formula 3 Class B produced more rewarding results, with third overall gained through five victories and five pole positions.

A step up to Class A with Bowman Racing in 1989 promptly delivered the British F3 title in convincing fashion, with six race wins, seven pole positions and 13 front row starts from 15 races. Add to that the Jewson Scottish Superprix crown and beating Michael Schumacher to victory at the Macau Formula 3 Grand Prix, it's not surprising that Formula One swiftly beckoned.

F1 Beckons

David made his Formula One debut in 1990 with Brabham, the team originally founded by Sir Jack in 1961, but the timing was less than ideal. With the team struggling to keep pace with better-funded rivals he was afforded only a single season.

After a year outside the F1 fold, David secured the test driver role for Footwork in 1992 and 1993 before returning as a fully-fledged entrant with Simtek Grand Prix in 1994. Although he qualified for every race, his second F1 attempt proved equally frustrating with the new and under-funded operation.

The loss of teammate Roland Ratzenberger in qualifying for the San Marino Grand Prix devastated the entire team, but it was David who provided the motivation to continue racing in Roland's memory and he lifted the team to see out the season, which would be his last in F1.

Sportscar Dominance

David's first step into sportscars with the Tom Walkinshaw Racing-run Jaguar team in 1991 came with instant success. He won the Jaguar Sport Intercontinental Cup, FIA World Sportscar Championship Nürburgring race, and Sugo 800km in the Silk Cut Jaguar XJR-14, while also taking Spa 24 Hours victory for Nissan.

Dovetailing his Footwork F1 test drive duties with sportscar commitments in 1992, David sealed GTP class honours and second overall in the Daytona 24 Hours for Jaguar. With F1 firmly behind him, David contested the 1995 British Touring Car Championship with BMW Team Motorsport before taking the 1996 Japanese GTC GT500 Championship title in the McLaren F1 GTR and his first Bathurst 1000 win alongside his brother Geoff, for BMW Australia.

His sportscar prowess soon attracted the attention of Panoz Motor Sports and a six-year partnership was born. During his time with the American marque, David's notable achievements amongst a string of accolades included the 1998 USA Professional Sports Car Championship title with seven wins, outright victory at Petit Le Mans in 1999, and five American Le Mans Series race wins against the all-conquering Audis.

Branching out into the Grand-Am Rolex Sportscar Series, he claimed his first Daytona Prototype class crown in 2003 aboard the Multimatic Ford. Global success continued at the 2004 Bahrain GT Festival in the Prodrive Ferrari 550, but the ALMS remained his spiritual home. He captured the Sebring 12 Hours GT1 class crown for Aston Martin in 2005 and, on returning to Multimatic Team Panoz, recorded another Sebring upset the following year.

ALMS Legend

The opportunity to return to the ALMS prototype classes with Highcroft Racing in 2007 could not be passed-up. A stellar second season with the Patrón-backed team returned him to the top of the podium, amassing four wins including outright victory - the first for Acura and Highcroft – although he narrowly missed out on the LMP2 title.

David's blistering form and characteristic charges to the chequered flag ensured he was voted 'Most Popular Driver' by ALMS fans and Motors TV viewers, and was placed as a first team choice by the American Auto Racing Writers & Broadcasters Association for road racing.

A dream 2009 season saw David not only make history with Peugeot's outright win at Le Mans, but also claim the ALMS title in his 11th year racing in the series. Patrón Highcroft Racing and Acura's first LMP1 campaign produced three pole positions and a trio of victories, including the first LMP1 win for Highcroft and Acura at St. Petersburg, while five second-place finishes helped secure the title.

With the newly combined LMP class for 2010, David delivered a podium perfect record of four wins, including P2 victory at Petit Le Mans, four seconds and a third place finish sealing back-to-back titles.

He continued to race in the series until its final swansong at Petit Le Mans 2013, when David sealed an astonishing ALMS career with P2 pole and second in class with ESM Patrón.

As the ALMS drew to a close after 14 years, David can be credited as one of the most successful drivers in series history. With two championship titles, 24 race wins, 62 class podiums and 14 pole positions in 105 ALMS starts since 1999, he is the only driver to boast pole positions and wins across LMP1, LMP2, GT1 and GT2.

Making Le Mans History

Since his 1992 24 Heures du Mans debut in the Gulf Racing McLaren F1 GTR, David has attempted the world-famous endurance race an astonishing 18 times. But it was in June 2009 that David rightly earned his place in the annals of motorsport history with outright victory for Team Peugeot Total.

Ending Audi's reign of domination, the hallmark win in the Peugeot 908 HDi FAP sealed a consecutive hat-trick of class titles, joining back-to-back GT1 plaudits gained in the Aston Martin Racing DBR9 in 2007 and 2008. It also marked the French manufacturers' first success in 16 years, when older brother Geoff etched his name on the hallowed trophy.

David returned to La Sarthe to help Highcroft Racing record a race finish on its 2010 debut, despite a cooling issue sidelining the car for much of the final four hours and, in the HPD ARX-03A, delivered sixth overall on JRM Racing's maiden Le Mans outing in 2012.

Return To The World Stage

A switch to the FIA GT1 World Championship with Sumo Power GT offered a new challenge for 2011 and David delivered a quartet of podiums in the Nissan GT-R, with two third-place finishes at the Algarve and two more at Navarra and Ordos.

In 2012, David returned to the trusted HPD fold with JRM Racing's ARX-03A in the FIA World Endurance Championship. Despite a steep learning curve for the privateer team, the outfit showed continued progress to end the season on a solid note with two consecutive second-place LMP1 privateer podiums in Japan and China.

The Power Of One

Unquestionably one of the most outstanding drivers of his generation, David is renowned for his unrivalled experience, motivational energy and focused driving force. His unique ability to gauge and direct the team dynamic in such a way that inspires every member to break boundaries has helped deliver outstanding results for decades.

The foundation of his unique skill set dates back to Simtek F1 and the loss of friend and teammate Roland Ratzenberger when, amidst the sadness, David helped pull the team together. Gaining a deeper understanding of the driver's role extending far outside the cockpit, he learnt how to get the best from himself and the people around him.

Fast forward three years and David's team mentality was cemented at Panoz, when it was never more important for the privateer team to work in unison for the front-engined roadster to take on the might of Audi – and win.

A decade later and David's motivational force helped Highcroft Racing to make the epic rise from debutants to back-to-back ALMS Champions in four years. Leading from the front by delivering his own outstanding performances, David's philosophy filtered through the entire programme, including partners HPD, Wirth Research and Michelin.

The resulting energy of self-belief empowered Highcroft to challenge the vastly more experienced and resourced teams of Penske and Porsche, and dominate the ALMS in 2009 and 2010.

David has repeatedly proved the 'power of one' – that when a team is united in a common goal, great things can be achieved. Like winning the 24 Hours of Le Mans. His instigation to create a core team chemistry, unfaltering focus and balance with teammates Alex Wurz and Marc Gene at Team Peugeot Sport in 2009 helped the French manufacturer secure its first Le Mans title in 16 years.

Nurturing The Next Generation

Through his Brabham Performance Clinic, David uses his global ethos and winning mentality to motivate others, from young drivers and students to professional organisations, through special groups and workshops.

Founded in 2004, the company developed the MSA's young driver development and education programme, of which David was National Race Coach for six years. He continues as a consultant as the MSA manages Team UK in-house from 2013.

Supporting Environmentally Friendly Racing

David is a strong advocate for environmentally friendly racing. His 2004 letter to the American Le Mans Series, urging organisers to seriously consider the strategy of introducing alternative fuels, helped found the Michelin Green X Challenge two years later – a competition held within each ALMS race that scores all cars on overall performance, fuel efficiency and emissions.

Up until his final season with Highcroft Racing in 2010, he remained a Green Racing ambassador for the Green Dream Team, the first sports initiative of its kind addressing the concerns of global warming, the environment and reducing dependence on foreign fuels and energy sources.

Green Racing remains at David's heart, engaging with leading industry representatives, from engine builders and manufacturers to tyre suppliers, to help develop a sustainable motorsport strategy for the future.

MSA Go Motorsport

David is an ambassador of the MSA's Go Motorsport initiative, which encourages people to get involved in motorsport as a competitor, spectator or volunteer. Visit www.gomotorsport.net

Driving The Message Home

David's charity work with Racing4Charity and long-time friend Bill Williams helped generate more than £350,000 in 15 years.

A strong believer in the spiritual movement to embody the timeless truth of oneness, which is essential for responding to the world's most acute challenges and vital to creating a sustainable work of peace and harmony, David is a proud supporter of Humanity's Team www.humanitysteam.org.uk

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