

WELCOME HOME!



Welcome Home!

When I first came to live in America, twelve years ago now, the late Bob Akin's lovely Lola T70 Mark IIIB coupe was a fixture at all the notable vintage racecar events I attended, such as Daytona, Sebring, Watkins Glen and the Monterey Historics.

As an historian (and past owner/driver) of these beautiful cars, it was a particularly interesting car to me. Chassis number SL76/149 had belonged, first of all, to Mike de Udy, who had bought her to replace the second of his T70 Mark III coupes, SL73/112 in 1969. What made this coupe so distinctive was that Mike had that noted Australian racer, Frank Gardner, race her and (as usual with Frank) he won races, almost despite whatever he was driving. In the last seven races of 1969, in which Frank drove her, SL76/149 won three and came second in the other four.

Lola T70 coupes, despite their beauty and despite their winning many National races, only ever won one major International race, the 1969 Daytona 24 Hours, with Mark Donohue and Chuck Parsons driving Roger Penske's SL76/139 to Victory Lane there. The problem was a lack of development in the ability of the Chevrolet small block engine to last out the major grinds; this can now, with hindsight, be put down to the poor quality of fuel used in Europe. In America, no problem with aircraft grade octane levels!

SL76/149, after her first-line racing time was over (see below for full details) was, during 1970, leased to Solar Productions to take part in the Steve McQueen epic "Le Mans". After this (and having suffered no damage!) she took part in International races right up to 1971 and has the distinction of being the last T70 to race in an International in 1971 (Watkins Glen 6 Hours).

SL76/149 was then sold to that doyen of English car dealers, Rod Leach of "Nostalgia" fame, who quickly sold her to American vintage racer and author, Joel Finn. Joel raced /149 for many years and then succumbed to an offer by Terry Jones, who I knew whilst living in San Diego. Terry told me that he had Jim Chapman (who had himself worked at Lola in the mid-1960s) re-skin the monocoque for him and, after racing it himself a few times, he then sold her to Reg Howell, another well-known American vintage racer.

It was at this juncture that the late Bob Akin came into the picture. He bought SL76/149, had her gone through by his very talented and experienced crew, headed up by Gordon Eggleston, put a "bubble" in the driver's door to accommodate his height and then Bob blitzed all opposition with her for six years, finally relenting and selling /149 to his friend and customer, John Littlechild. I supplied a Charlie Agg modified and strengthened gearbox to John for the Lola and then, after three seasons, John sold her to Frank Gallogly and he had

Symbolic Motorcars of San Diego sell her to the last owner, enthusiastic racer Rob Sherrard of Australia, in 2003.

Rob spared absolutely no expense to keep SL76/149 in the condition that she was accustomed to and had her transported to Europe so that he could take in some races there. I vividly remember 149 hurtling past me at Spa in the CER race there in 2007 and, later that season, Rob's co-driver won a streaming wet race at Brands Hatch, beating all the other "English" T70s on a track they knew well.

Just a couple of months ago, Rob Sherrard called me to ask if I could sell her. He had bought a Sauber-Mercedes C9 and now wasn't using the T70 any more. At almost the same time, David Hinton called me, saying that a good customer of his wanted to buy "a really good T70 coupe", as that was the car he'd always wanted. The deal was done immediately and this morning, I went up to Predator Performance's shop where SL76/149 had just been rolled out of David's trailer, after he'd been to Miami to pick her up from the port.

There she was, gleaming in the sunshine, a breathtaking looking car. How I love T70 coupes. The new owner has promised me a few laps in her at Sebring and I can't wait! What is really nice, I feel, is that this great Lola has gone to the right man, who is going to enjoy her greatly.

SL76/149

Delivered 7th March 1969 to Michael Grace de Udy/Robin Ormes (Bahamas Racing).
Wet sump Bartz Chevrolet 5 liter engine. Gearbox no: LG600-182. Light green.

1969

04/4: Guards International Trophy, Snetterton, RAC Gr. 4 Championship, round 2: Frank Gardner. DNS (suspension failure in practice).

07/4: Thruxton, RAC Gr. 4 Championship, round 3. F. Gardner whilst leading, DNF (clutch).

01/6: Nurburgring 1000 km: Mike de Udy/F. Gardner, #59; DNA.

06/6: Vila Real, Portugal: Frank Gardner; 2nd. (Set lap record of 104 mph.)

13/7: W.D. & H.O. Wills Trophy, Croft: Frank Gardner; 2nd in 1st heat. DNF in 2nd heat (out of fuel whilst leading).

10/8: Thruxton: F. Gardner, #1; 2nd.

18/8: Oulton Park: F. Gardner; 1st.

08/11: Rand Daily Mail 9 hours, Kyalami: F. Gardner/M. de Udy; 2nd.

23/11: Cape International 3 hours, Killarney: M. de Udy/F. Gardner; 1st.

1/12: Lourenco Marques 3 hours: M. de Udy/F. Gardner, #7; 1st.

13/12: Roy Hesketh 3 Hours, Pietermaritzburg: M. de Udy; DNF (differential).

1970

21/3Sebring 12 hours: M. de Udy/M. Hailwood; DNF after one lap (brakes).

Possibly:

12/4: BOAC 500, Brands Hatch: M. de Udy/F. Gardner, #7; DNF with broken camshaft.
Fitted Bartz tuned Chevrolet. (This MAY have been SL76/138.)

July: Leased to Solar Productions for the film "Le Mans".

1971

04/4: Brands Hatch 1000Kms: R. Allen/T. Trimmer/T. Stock, #5; DNQ.

09/5: Spa-Francorchamps 1000Kms: R. Ormes/T. Stock, #30; DNA.

24/7: Watkins Glen 6 Hours: R. Orme/B. Brown/B. Bondurant, #60; DNF (stuck throttle).

Sold to Rod Leach of "Nostalgia".

Sold to Joel Finn.

1986: Sold to Terry Jones of Cerritos, California. \$18,000.00.

Totally restored with re-skinned tub by Jim Chapman. 5.7 liter engine built by Dennis Fischer.

1990: Sold to Reginald Howell, USA.

1993. Sold to Bob Akin, raced extensively in historic events.

1999: Sold to John Littlewood.

2001: For sale due to acquisition of Spice GTP car.

2003: Symbolic Car Company (Frank Gallogly).

2003: Sold to Robert Sherrard, Australia.

2008: Sold to present owner, America.

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