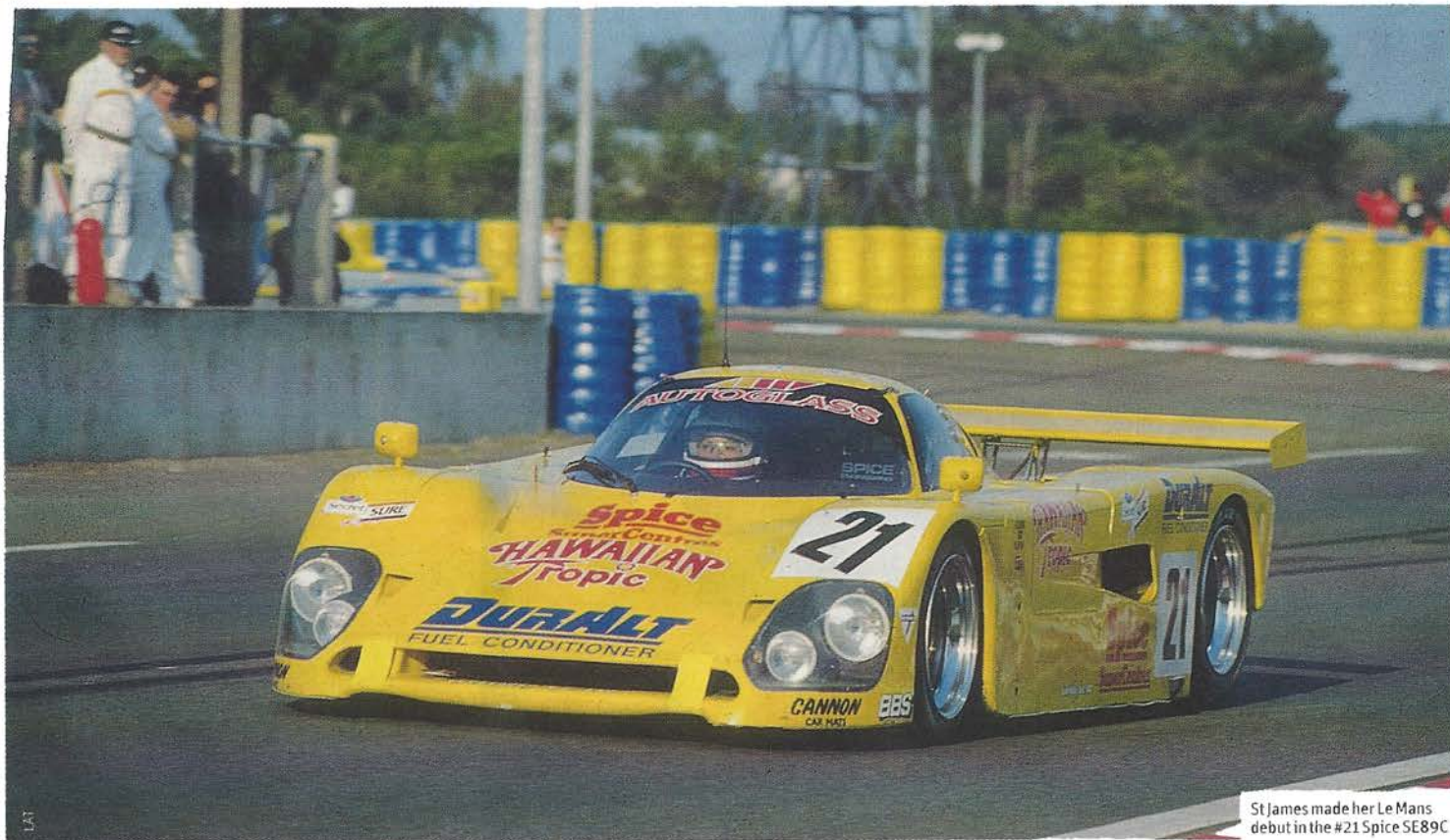


LYN ST JAMES

■ Le Mans 24 Hours ■ June 10-11, 1989 ■ Spice SE89C-Ford ■ Sharing Gordon Spice's last-ever race



St James made her Le Mans debut in the #21 Spice SE89C

MY FIRST exposure to road racing was the 24 Hours of Daytona, so I developed a love for endurance events, and to eventually win it twice was very special. Then I started thinking: "What are the things I want to do before my racing career is over?" You're always fearful that it's going to be over sooner than you wish!

For many years I wanted to race at Le Mans. I just *had* to do Le Mans. In 1989 some friends helped make that happen, especially with all the politics at Le Mans back then, and the deal I had for my debut was fantastic: to co-drive with Gordon Spice, the four-time C2 world champion in a Spice C1 chassis, and Ray Bellm, another veteran with multiple world titles to his name. Not only were they experienced drivers, Gordon was the developer of the chassis and owner of the team.

I have to admit I was a little concerned about what they were going to think of me. We were part of a two-car team but only had three drivers, so it wasn't like I was just added as a fourth driver. But both Gordon and Ray pretty much

"The rising sun was literally a ball between the track and the Dunlop Bridge - it was a true oh-my-God moment!"

said to me: "We're the old guys on this team, so you can drive as much as you want!" They gave me loads of good advice, and I got lots of seat time and developed my confidence — I drove well. I was in heaven. I don't think my feet ever touched the ground the whole week, I enjoyed the experience so much.

The race also included the only

moment in my life when I've wanted to stop a healthy car on a racetrack. As I exited the first corner, the rising sun was literally a ball between the track and the Dunlop Bridge. It was a true oh-my-God moment! I'll never forget that image as long as I live.

It was also the last year when the Mulsanne Straight was still a

straight, with no chicanes. Some drivers were spooked, and would ask: "What if a tyre blows at that speed?" That's not a good deal wherever you are, or whatever speed you're doing, why would you even think about that?

Sadly, the car retired after 18 hours. I arrived at the garage and saw the look on Gordon's face, and knew we were out. The engine was done. What I didn't know then was that it was Gordon's last race; he announced soon after that he was retiring. That made it an even more emotional experience, to have been a part of Gordon Spice's last-ever race. After that, we ended up playing ping-pong for hours; he was a fanatical player, and such an energetic guy! ✨

Lyn St James was talking to Charles Bradley

IN PROFILE



LYN ST JAMES is best-known for being the first female racer to win Rookie of the Year at the Indianapolis 500 in 1992, when she finished 11th; she raced in seven Indy 500s and qualified sixth there in '94 — famously one spot ahead of Nigel Mansell. She also boasts two GTO class victories in the Daytona 24 Hours and also won GTO at the Sebring 12 Hours. In 1994 she founded the 'Women in the Winner's Circle Foundation' and created a Driver Development Academy to train female racers in the sport, and is also a noted motivational speaker.

NEXT WEEK

Joginder SINGH

