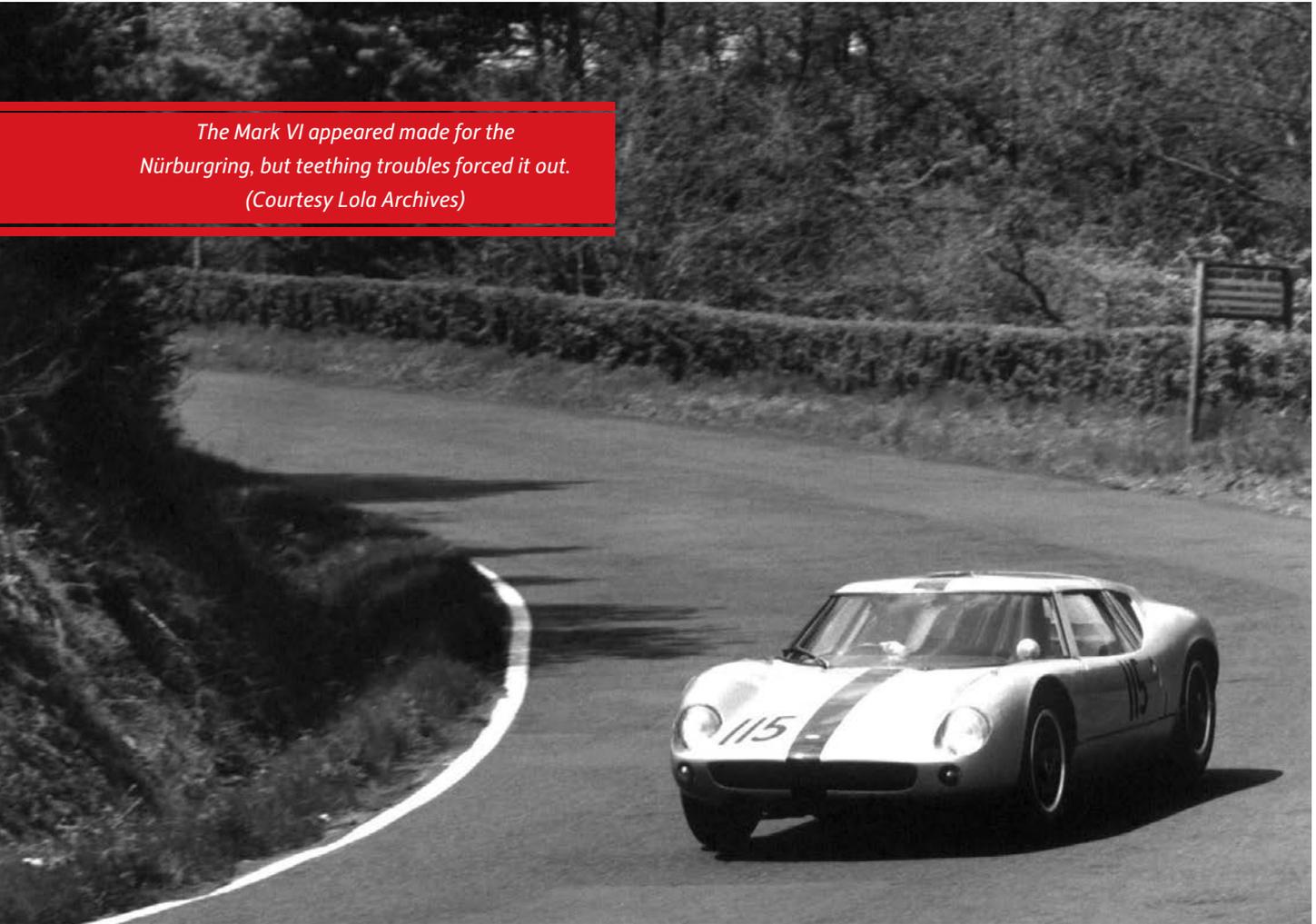


*The Mark VI appeared made for the Nürburgring, but teething troubles forced it out.  
(Courtesy Lola Archives)*



Donald that he wanted the Lola to enter, and would make concessions to allow it to do so. Donald's good French, and the fact that Raymond knew one of Donald's relatives, helped the situation. Under the Le Mans rules, all cars should have passed scrutineering by 4pm on Wednesday June 12.

That morning, after Tony Southgate had finished hacksawing the front wheelarches, Eric loaded the car onto the Midland Racing Partnership transporter for the team to take across the English Channel between Ramsgate and Dunkirk. However, fog delayed the crossing, and the transporter was severely delayed.

To get around the delay, while the transporter had no alternative but to go by sea, Eric decided to

take the Lola entry by air ferry. Heart in mouth, Eric watched as a ferry employee drove the Lola onto the plane, mastering the Colotti box and parking it with precision. Eric later said: "We should have taken him on as a race driver on the spot!"

From Dunkirk, Eric himself drove the Lola entry a further 280 miles to Le Mans, with team mechanic Don Beresford in the passenger seat, and a toolkit on Don's lap. On the French leg of the journey, there were problems with the gear change, which did not bode well for the race, and Eric and Don had to undertake running repairs when the suspension they had adjusted for the road came loose, further delaying their arrival.

4pm arrived and still the Lola had not shown up.

By 1966, that spoiler had become four-and-a-half inches high, and a new, Len Bailey-designed nose had added 8mph to the top speed, making the car much more stable at high speed.

The GT40's first race was at the Nürburgring on May 31 1964. Just one car was entered, to be driven by Phil Hill and Bruce McLaren, both experienced long-distance racers.

Phil Hill was a conundrum. He grew up as part of the hot rod craze in Southern California, but then went to England to serve his apprenticeship at the Jaguar factory, before returning to America and swiftly being recognized as the driving talent that he was. Not at all an aggressive man, he won the F1 World Championship for Ferrari in 1961, and also won the Le Mans 24 Hours and Sebring 12 Hours three

times each. By 1964, he was a very experienced long-distance driver.

Bruce McLaren had been a cripple when young, suffering from Perthes disease and, as a boy, had spent months having a shortened leg stretched to match its companion. Overcoming these problems, Bruce had raced from the very early age of 14. His father owned a car repair shop in New Zealand, and built, with Bruce, a modified Austin 7 Ulster that Bruce raced with success before graduating to faster cars.

Bruce made his way to England, and was the youngest F1 driver to start a race when he became a works driver for the Cooper Car Company in 1959. At age 22, he won the US Grand Prix. Leaving Cooper in 1965, Bruce founded his own car building company,

*The first GT40, being shown to the press.  
(Courtesy Ford Motor Company,  
John S Allen collection)*



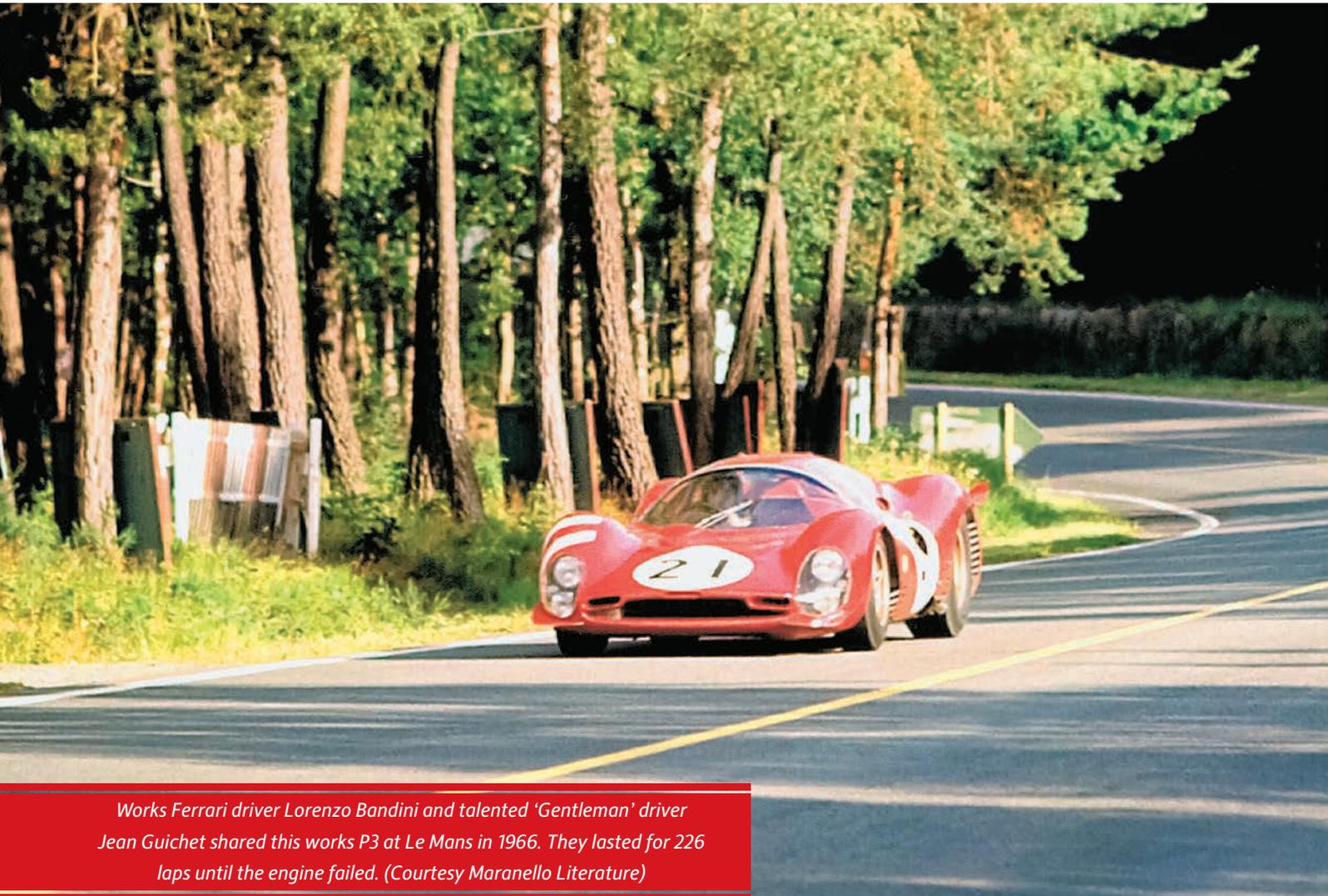
## *Ford versus Ferrari*

running first, second and third, whilst Pedro Rodriguez's 330P3 Ferrari was fourth. Ken Miles had had to pit with a door that wouldn't close: this was fixed in seconds. Then Paul Hawkins brought his stricken car in: a half shaft had broken at the start and he'd had to limp all the way around the over 8-mile long circuit to get back to the pits. Mark Donohue, his co-driver, ground his teeth in frustration at the hour it took for the mechanics to replace the half shaft, realizing that this had cost him any chance of a good result.

Sir John Whitmore had also pitted, and lost over ten minutes whilst mechanics repaired a leaking brake line. Whitmore then had to make another long pit-stop with the GT40 suffering a slipping clutch.

During the early hours, the Fords were first and second (Dan Gurney and Ken Miles), with Rodriguez in third. During this time, the fastest speed of a Mark II on the Mulsanne Straight was recorded – 206.1mph. Mark Donohue had climbed into his Mark II after Paul Hawkins had driven his first stint, but the tail had flown off almost immediately. Amazingly, he was able to recover it, tape and wire it back on and get back to the pits, though the car had by now lost so much time that it was withdrawn.

By 7pm Ken Miles was first but, three hours later, the Ferraris were first and second (Rodriguez/ Scarfiotti), followed by four Fords. Then Mario Andretti was forced into retirement when his engine failed. The Chaparral went out after some



*Works Ferrari driver Lorenzo Bandini and talented 'Gentleman' driver Jean Guichet shared this works P3 at Le Mans in 1966. They lasted for 226 laps until the engine failed. (Courtesy Maranello Literature)*

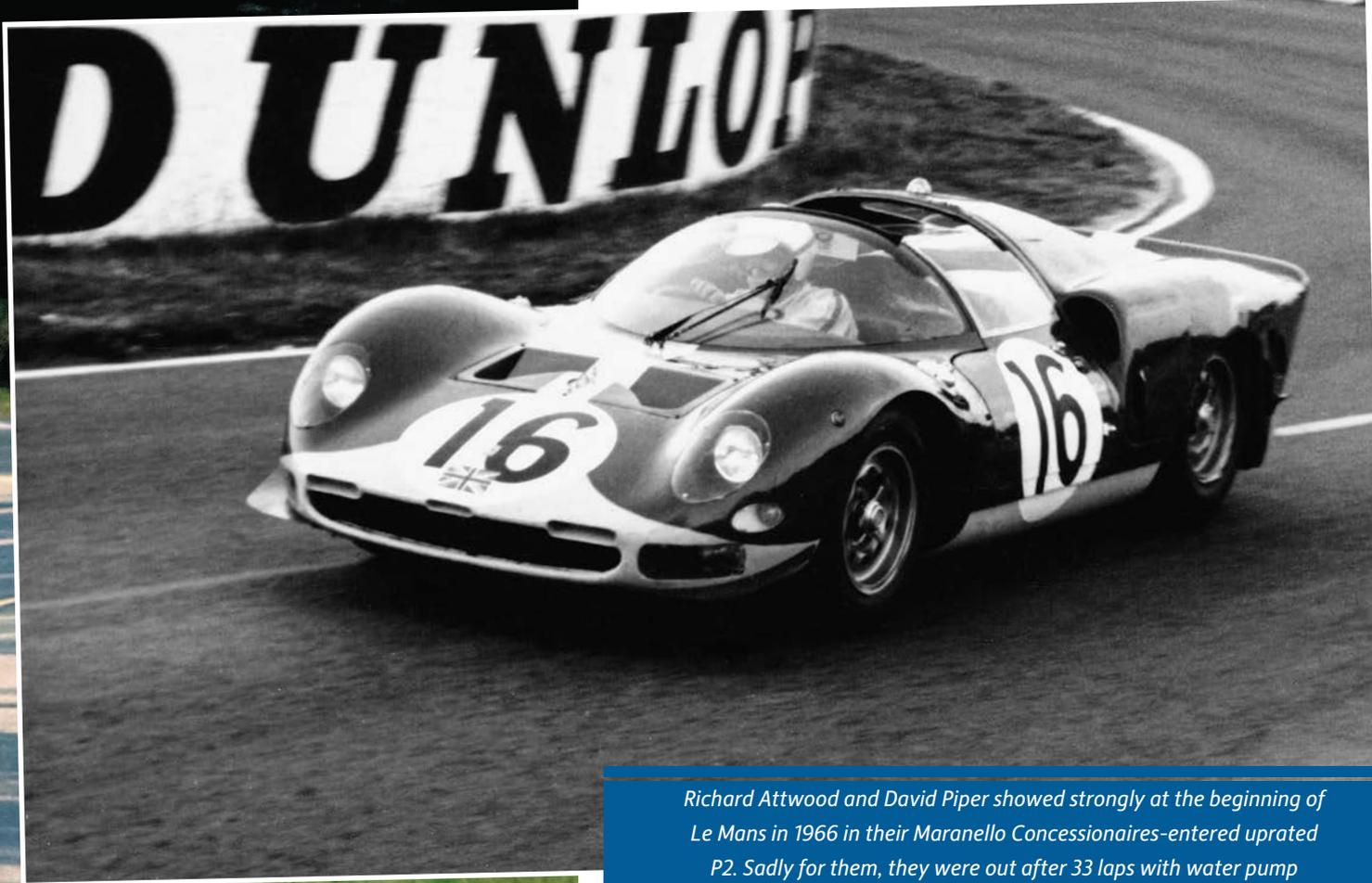
seven hours with what was described as a ‘flat battery.’

This was about 11pm, and now Ken Miles was leading ahead of Dan Gurney. Scarfiotti, in one of the leading P3s, now had an accident when trying to avoid two cars that had crashed at the esses. He was okay but his Ferrari wasn’t ... Then the Ford GT40 driven by Graham Hill and Brian Muir retired when a front upright failed.

It was now that the Ferrari team began to suffer real troubles. Pedro Rodriguez and Richie Ginther’s P3 broke its gearbox in the early morning and retired. Out, too, went Masten Gregory and Bob Bondurant’s updated 330P2. Willy Mairesse and Herbert Muller retired their updated P2 at this time, too.

As dawn approached, four works Fords led, with two private GT40s – those of the Essex Wire entry of Peter Revson/Skip Scott, and Peter Sutcliff in his open GT40 teamed with Dieter Spoerry, in fifth and sixth places. The GT40 of Skip Scott had retired by 8am, its gearbox having failed. By this time the leading four Fords had slackened their pace as the first Ferrari was in 11th place and was no threat to them.

Now the Ford Mark IIs suffered a loss, when Jerry Grant brought the car into the pits, saying that the engine was overheating. The mechanics did what they could, draining and refilling the radiator, and adding Bars Leak filler in the hope of stopping the leak, but in vain, and the car retired nearly an hour later with the coolant boiling.



*Richard Attwood and David Piper showed strongly at the beginning of Le Mans in 1966 in their Maranello Concessionaires-entered updated P2. Sadly for them, they were out after 33 laps with water pump failure. (Courtesy Maranello Literature)*

The very next week the teams were at Sebring, but their only real opposition came from Chaparral. Enzo Ferrari did not enter, claiming he had nothing more to prove before Le Mans. Even then, he said, if he could score enough points in the races before Le Mans, which Ford had not yet entered, he might not even go to Le Mans ...

At the start of the Sebring 12 Hours, Bruce McLaren took an immediate lead in the Mark IV, now able to go to 7000 revs through the gears and 6600rpm on the straights. The Chaparral took over 90 seconds to get going, but then charged off in pursuit and, over six hours later, was up with Mike Spence trying everything he could to get ahead of Bruce McLaren in the Ford. This continued for almost a quarter-of-an-hour, before grey smoke issuing from the Chaparral's automatic gearbox, signaled the end of the chase.

“The Mark IV was now also a very stable car: drivers reported that it could be driven almost ‘hands-off’ on the Mulsanne Straight, where it reached 213.1mph at its best.”

With half-an-hour to go before the end of the race – and the Mark IV having a big lead – A J Foyt, in the Mark II in second place, pulled into the pits to report engine trouble. The mechanics diagnosed that a con rod was failing, and predicted that the engine would shortly fail completely. The Porsche now sitting in a lonely third place was ten laps behind, and could not make up the distance in time.

That's the way it worked out, and McLaren/Andretti won the Sebring 12 Hours race, incidentally showing Ferrari that its main challenge at Le Mans would not be last year's Mark II but this year's Mark IV.

April saw the Fords at the Le Mans test days, and here, too, was Ferrari with the P4s and also the Chaparral. There was another Lola, too: the T70 Mark III coupe with a new V8 engine by Aston Martin.

The first real major test of the Lola-Aston Martin, and its first appearance at an FIA international meeting, was over the weekend of April 10 for the traditional Le Mans Trials. Lola took chassis number SL73/101 to the Sarthe for John Surtees and David Hobbs, and pitted it against the rest of the new cars.

Ford, fresh from the win at Sebring with the Mark IV, arrived with chassis J3 for Bruce McLaren and Mark Donohue. Mark Donohue: “Bruce McLaren was there for Shelby's cars, and I was there for Holman and Moody. I considered it quite an honor to be sent to France for a weekend of testing.

“About the only thing we had time to try were some new anti-roll bars with serrated ends, that made it easier to change them in a hurry. Really, we only worried about that and the brakes. It rained most of the time, and we didn't get much practice on a dry track. Based on previous experience, we knew that the suspension was already proper for the track, and the aerodynamics had been worked out at Ford's proving ground at Kingman, Arizona. The cars had been around.”

JWA had entered two of its GT40-derived Mirage M1s for David Piper and Richard Attwood. Ferrari had entered the new P4, both in coupe and open-topped spider spec for Lorenzo Bandini, Mike Parkes, and Ludovico Scarfiotti. Bandini set fastest time at 3:25.5; a new lap record. Mike Parkes in another P4 was second fastest in 3:27.6, both these times posted on Saturday, which was dry.

The only ones missing from the tests were Chaparral with its 2F, but it would be at the 24 Hours in June. John Surtees, driving the Lola T70 coupe, posted the third quickest time of the weekend behind the two Ferraris, but had been quicker than the Mark IV, even if by only a scant seven-tenths of a second.