

1989 ALD C289 Group C2 Sports Prototype  
Chassis no. C289-02  
Colour: blue

Cylinders: 8; 3,500cc  
Gears: 5 + reverse  
Power: not quoted

Produced: 1989  
Production: (see text)

Regarded by many as a modern 'golden age' of sports car racing, the FIA's Group C category for roofed prototypes lasted from 1982 to 1993. Rather than being based on engine capacity and weight, the traditional parameters of motor racing formulae, Group C placed a limit on the amount of fuel permitted but otherwise allowed constructors virtually a free hand in design. As interest in the class grew, the world's major motor manufacturers joined the fray, with Ford, Porsche, Jaguar, Aston Martin, Lancia, Mercedes-Benz, Mazda, Nissan and Toyota all fielding works entries.

With costs increasing, the C2 class for smaller manufacturers and privateer teams was introduced, which placed further restrictions on fuel consumption. The Cosworth DFL V8 and BMW M1 inline 'six' were the most popular engines among the C2 contestants, which included Alba, Tiga, Spice, Ecurie Ecosse and ALD.

In recent years there has been an upsurge of interest in Group C prototypes, which in 2007 saw the biggest ever gathering of cars at the Bonhams' Silverstone Classic, and in 2008 Group C GTP cars will stage the supporting event at the Le Mans 24 Hours Race.

ALD was the creation of Louis Descartes, a keen motor racing enthusiast who had begun his career in the French Hill Climb Championship driving such diverse cars as a Renault 8 Gordini and a Lola. The director of a public relations company from Levallois-Perret in Northwest Paris, Descartes formed his own racing team, 'Automobile Louis Descartes' (ALD) in 1984.

Jean-Paul Sauvee was recruited to design and build a new Group C2 car for the team. Based around a conventional sheet-aluminium monocoque with triangulated front and rear suspension, the first ALD was powered by an ex-Schnitzer BMW M1-style, M80 3.5-litre 440bhp six-cylinder engine. The ALD '01' made its debut at Le Mans in 1985 driven by Louis Descartes himself, Jacques Heuclin, (the mayor of Seine-et-Marne) and Daniel Hubert, who had designed the car's bodywork. As a small private constructor, one of the last in sports car racing, the team did well to make the finish of the 24-hour race.

Between 1986 and 1988, ALD continued to develop the original car and produced chassis '02', '03' and '04'. All were BMW-powered and most of the C2 WEC/WSC rounds were entered. In 1989, chassis numbers '05' and '06' were built as customer cars for Didier Bonnet while a new works car was constructed using a carbon-fibre/honeycomb chassis powered by a 3.3-litre Cosworth DFL V8. Designated 'C289', the car represented a quantum leap forward technologically and was campaigned in all the WSC rounds of 1989 including the 24 hours of Le Mans.

In 1990 with the demise of the C2 class, a 3.5-litre Cosworth DFZ was installed and once again the team undertook all rounds of the championship. With four fulltime employees, a plastics moulder and a dozen volunteers, Descartes and his team's return on their huge investment of effort, enthusiasm and cost was always likely to be small against the likes of the works teams of Mercedes-Benz, Porsche, Jaguar, Nissan and Toyota. Although adept at attracting a myriad of small sponsors, Descartes was never able to secure a really large backer to finance his efforts on a long-term basis. Drivers of the calibre of Francois Migault were ALD regulars, but often less experienced *pilotes* had to be taken aboard in order to fund the team and leader-board results were always going to be hard to come by.

ALD C289 chassis number '02' - believed the only example manufactured despite the nomenclature - was campaigned throughout 1989 with competitor number '177', taking in the entire World Sportscar Championship plus Le Mans, and similarly in 1990 as '106' (Le Mans) and '35' (WSC). ALD then built a new Cosworth-powered car for Philippe de Henning and 'Gigi' Taverna to drive in the WSC and sold C289 '02' at the end of 1991. Powered by a 3.0-litre Peugeot engine, C289 '02' returned to Le Mans for the final time in 1992 when it was driven by Caradec, Touroul and Pachot. The car was kept by its owner until 2001

before being sold.

Between 2001 and 2006, C289 '02' was professionally fully rebuilt from the bare tub upwards and returned to the exactly the same livery in which it appeared at Le Mans in 1989, complete with the original scrutineering and entry stickers still on the car. The complete restoration has included all new suspension, NAS bolts and Rose joints; rebuilt Hewland DGB gearbox by JP Race; new water, oil and fuel systems including a new bag tank; new, custom-built engine and car wiring looms, with a Pi dash and data acquisition system; and uprights and braking system completely overhauled with new bearings, discs, bells, master cylinders and fully rebuilt calipers. The car has been fitted with a very good period-specification Cosworth DFR by Nicholson, enabling it to run in the C1 class. (C289 '02' ran in period in the C1 and C2 categories, so both options remain open for the future). We are advised that a sum in excess of £86,500 was spent on the restoration, and the car comes complete with a spares package which includes the Le Mans twin headlight nose, several sets of wheels and a complete set of suspension jigs.

A comprehensive file accompanying the car contains copies of invoices, a list of drivers/events contested, a detailed record of the restoration and race preparation, and its original FIA logbook.

- Believed the only example manufactured
- 3 times Le Mans entry
- In-period race history
- Fully rebuilt to correct period specification
- An ideal entry for the 2008 *24 Heures du Mans* support race.

€190,000 – 220,000