

= Michèle Mouton =

Michèle Mouton (born 23 June 1951) is a French former rally driver . Competing in the World Rally Championship for the Audi factory team , she took four victories and finished runner @-@ up in the drivers ' world championship in 1982 . She is still the last woman to compete in top @-@ level rallying .

Mouton debuted in rallying as a co @-@ driver but quickly moved to the driver 's seat , steering an Alpine @-@ Renault A110 in national rallies . In 1975 , she competed in circuit racing and won the two @-@ litre prototype class in the 24 Hours of Le Mans . After being signed by Fiat France for 1977 , Mouton finished runner @-@ up to Bernard Darniche in the European Rally Championship . She went on to win the 1978 Tour de France Automobile and record consistent results in her home events in the WRC ; the Tour de Corse and the Monte Carlo Rally . For 1981 , Audi Sport signed Mouton to partner Hannu Mikkola . In her first year with the Audi Quattro , she took a surprise victory at the Rallye Sanremo .

In the 1982 season , Mouton finished a close second overall to Walter Röhrl , after wins in Portugal , Brazil and Greece , and helped Audi to its first manufacturers ' title . Her campaign the following year resulted in fifth place . With the team having four top drivers for 1984 , Mouton 's participation on world championship level became part @-@ time . In 1985 , she won the Pikes Peak International Hill Climb in the United States , setting a record time in the process . In 1986 , she moved to Peugeot and won the German Rally Championship as the first female driver to win a major championship in rallying . Soon after securing the title , Mouton retired from rallying due to the ban of Group B supercars . In 1988 , she co @-@ founded the international motorsport event Race of Champions in memory of her former rival Henri Toivonen . Mouton became the first president of the FIA 's Women & Motor Sport Commission in 2010 and the FIA 's manager in the World Rally Championship in 2011 .

= = Career = =

= = = Early life and career = = =

Michèle Mouton was born 23 June 1951 in Grasse , a town on the French Riviera known for its perfume industry , close to the mountain stages famously featured in French rallies . Her parents grew roses and jasmine on their large property . After graduating from high school , Mouton began law studies , but would soon drop out and concentrate on a career in rallying . Although Mouton began driving her father 's Citroën 2CV when she was 14 years old , she did not turn her interest to rallying until 1972 , when her friend Jean Taibi asked her to practise the Tour de Corse with him . Mouton later co @-@ drove for him in the 1973 Monte Carlo Rally , the first @-@ ever World Rally Championship (WRC) event . After a few more rallies , Mouton 's father suggested a switch to driving if she wanted to continue in rallying , and promised to buy her a car and give her one @-@ year to prove herself . Driving an Alpine @-@ Renault A110 , she debuted at the Critérium Féminin Paris @-@ Saint @-@ Raphaël and then tackled the Tour de France Automobile . In the Île de Beauté , a complementary event to the Tour de Corse at the end of 1973 , Mouton finished eighth overall .

In the World Rally Championship , Mouton made her driver debut in 1974 , finishing 12th in the Tour de Corse in an Alpine A110 . It was rumoured her good performances were the result of a special engine , however her car passed inspection by WRC scrutineers . At the end of the year , Mouton was crowned both French and European ladies ' champion . Re @-@ entering the Tour de Corse the following season , she took seventh place . Mouton successfully defended her ladies ' titles , and also competed in circuit racing : In an all @-@ female team with Christine Dacremont and Marianne Hoepfner , she won the two @-@ litre prototype category of the 1975 24 Hours of Le Mans . Recalling the race in 2008 , Mouton said : " It started to rain I remember , and I started to pass everybody . I was running on slicks . In the pits they were saying ' Michele you must stop ' , but I did

not want to because I was passing everyone . " Her results attracted a major sponsor in the form of the French oil company Elf . In 1976 , Mouton drove the A110 to 11th place in Monte Carlo and retired at the Rallye Sanremo . At the Tour de Corse , her debut in the newer A310 also ended in retirement .

== Fiat ==

For the 1977 season , Fiat France signed Mouton to partner Jean @-@ Claude Andruet . She was not impressed by the handling of the Fiat 131 Abarth , stating it was " like a big truck , not a car " and " terrible to drive " . However , the car would prove successful and Mouton put in very consistent results , finishing eighth in the Tour de Corse in 1977 and fifth three years in a row from 1978 to 1980 . In 1980 , she had been running as high as second before her engine died for a time . In Monte Carlo , she drove the car to seventh place in 1979 and 1980 , equalling the result she had achieved in the event in a Lancia Stratos HF in 1978 .

Outside the World Rally Championship , Mouton drove a Porsche Carrera RS to victory in the 1977 RACE Rallye de España and to second place in the 1977 Tour de France Automobile . She also finished runner @-@ up to Bernard Darniche in the overall European Rally Championship (ERC) . Mouton went on to win the Tour de France with the 131 Abarth the following year . At the Rallye d 'Antibes , she finished third behind the Stratos drivers Darniche and Attilio Bettega . She placed fifth in the ERC standings and fourth in the Fédération Internationale de l 'Automobile (FIA) Cup for Drivers , the predecessor to the drivers ' world championship . In 1979 , Mouton finished second in the French Rally Championship , behind Porsche 911 SC driver Bernard Béguin .

== Audi ==

==== 1980 ====

In 1980 , Audi Sport , Audi 's new factory team , called Mouton and signed her for a World Rally Championship programme for the 1981 season . Mouton described Audi 's call as " a complete shock " . Audi 's decision to nominate her instead of established male rivals attracted a great deal of publicity . As the Audi Quattro , the first rally car to have over 300 bhp and both a turbocharger and four @-@ wheel @-@ drive , had not yet gained FIA homologation , Audi could only enter rallies as zero cars and not as competitive entries . Hannu Mikkola debuted the car in the Algarve Rally in October , and would have won by about thirty minutes had his times been officially registered . Mouton joined Freddy Kottulinsky for the final round of the Finnish Rally Championship , the Northern Lights , and also showed encouraging pace on the slippery surfaces . Mouton initially found the car understeering , but became more comfortable after switching to left @-@ foot braking , as advised by Mikkola who was in charge of developing the car . Audi announced their participation in eight events in 1981 , although Mouton would not be entered in the Swedish Rally due to her lack of experience on driving on ice and snow .

==== 1981 ====

Mouton 's first competitive run in the Quattro in Monte Carlo ended before it had even begun . She withdrew from the event before the start due to apparent engine problems . The team later discovered that dirt had got into the fuel system . At the Rally Portugal , she started her long partnership with the Italian co @-@ driver Fabrizia Pons . Mouton won seven stages and took a career @-@ best fourth place , despite suffering from electronic problems . This ended criticism of Audi for signing a female driver . After a retirement due to a broken camshaft in the Tour de Corse , Mouton set several fastest times at the Acropolis Rally in Greece . While Mikkola was leading and Mouton fifth , the stewards excluded the Quattros citing homologation infractions . Although Audi protested , the stewards upheld the decision . In her debut in the high @-@ speed 1000 Lakes Rally

in Finland , Mouton found it hard to get used to the rhythm changes . She recorded a few top @-@ ten stage times and finished 13th . She was satisfied with her performance , and the local newspaper Keskisuomalainen described her debut as successful . At the Rallye Sanremo in Italy , a mixed surface event with tarmac and gravel , Mouton took the lead when the local star Michele Cinotto crashed and held off Henri Toivonen and Ari Vatanen to take the victory . This marked the first time a female driver had won a world championship event in rallying . Mouton 's male rivals were left speechless . Earlier during the weekend , Vatanen had been confident : " Never can nor will I lose to a woman . " Mouton recalled her debut win in a 2008 interview for RallySport Magazine :

I remember not just because it was a win , but also because it was a big fight right into the last night . Fabrizia reminded me the other night that we had a problem with the brake pads , so we lost a lot of time . We finished three days rallying (with one day to go) , night and day , 32 seconds in front of Ari Vatanen . We drove the last special stage for the night , came back to the hotel and I could not sleep at all , four hours in front of me and no sleep . Then I arrive at the special stage , it 's about 42km long , and I look at Fabrizia and I said " OK , we forget everything , and we are at the first stage of the rally again , because one of us will crash . " And so Ari hit a rock , and we won the rally .

In the season @-@ ending RAC Rally in Great Britain , Mouton continued her good performances by running third at half distance , despite having been uncomfortable about competing in a rally where pacenotes and practice are not allowed . However , her Quattro later incurred gearbox problems and she retired from fifth place after sliding off the road into a snow @-@ filled ditch . Mouton would later state : " For me , rallying is England . No pacenotes ? just you in the car having to do the fastest time . This , to me , is rallying . OK , it was not easy for me because I did not have experience there of the British championship , but it is really rallying . I like it very much . " Mouton finished the season in eighth place in the drivers ' championship , while Audi was fifth in the manufacturers ' standings .

= = = = 1982 = = = =

Mouton 's 1982 season started with a big accident at the Monte Carlo Rally . On stage twelve in the small town Briançonnet in Provence , she missed a patch of ice and slid off the road , crashing into the stone wall of a large house at 110 km / h (70 mph) . Mouton injured her knee while Pons suffered a concussion . She had been in third place , and had set the fastest time for the difficult Col de Turini mountain pass . The pair 's injuries were not serious and Mouton went on to make her debut in the Swedish Rally . She was running third when she slid into a snow bank , and crashed into the Quattro of teammate Hannu Mikkola who had gone off at the same place . She eventually finished fifth . In Portugal , Mouton recorded 18 stage wins on her way to a clear victory ahead of Toyota 's Per Eklund . She once admitted that to be competitive in the rally , she tried to think of the large crowds right by the side of the route as trees . At the Tour de Corse , she could not match the pace of the leaders and finished seventh . At the Acropolis Rally , Mouton won ahead of the Opel duo Walter Röhrl and Henri Toivonen , and closed to within 20 points of the championship leader Röhrl . The event was overshadowed by two serious accidents , one of which killed a spectator . Mouton had commented : " I 'm afraid that something might break in my car and I can no longer avoid hitting a spectator . "

In New Zealand , Mouton continued her good performances and traded the lead with Mikkola , Röhrl and Björn Waldegård . Soon after regaining the lead on stage twelve , she retired with a broken oil pump . After seven rounds , Mouton was second in the championship , 32 points behind Röhrl and 12 ahead of Eklund . The Rally of Brazil was marred by the fatal accident of Brazilian driver Thomas Fuchs , and featured chaotic conditions as parts of the course were not successfully closed for competition . Although only five teams made it to the finish , Mouton improved her title hopes by winning her duel with Röhrl after the German lost a wheel on the last day . At the 1000 Lakes , she clocked in the eighth fastest time for the famous Ouninpohja stage and placed seventh after the first day . On the following leg , Mouton drove too fast into a jump and damaged her

Quattro while landing . After the next jump , her front wheels locked up and she rolled the car . Mouton was next locked in a tight battle for the win in Sanremo . Although she recorded nine stage wins and Audi took a one @-@ two , she had to settle for fourth behind Röhrl .

Audi had not originally planned to participate in the African marathon events , but now found it necessary to enter the penultimate round , the Rallye Côte d'Ivoire , due to their title battles with Opel . Just before the start of the event , Mouton received news that her father had succumbed to cancer in his house in Nice . His last wish was that Mouton start the rally . After a first day of over 1 @,@ 200 kilometres (750 miles) of racing in temperatures over 30 ° C (86 ° F) , she was eight minutes clear of Mikkola and nearly half an hour ahead of title rival Röhrl . Mikkola said that he had never been in such a hot car , and Röhrl estimated that the temperature inside his car reached an " almost unbearable " 70 ° C. With just over half of the 5 @,@ 000 km (3 @,@ 100 mi) behind , Mouton led from Röhrl by over an hour despite losing 25 minutes due to transmission problems . On the third day , both Mouton and Röhrl struggled with several reliability issues and her lead over Röhrl shrank to 18 minutes . The Toyota Celica GT2000s of Eklund and Waldegård were still over two hours behind . Should Mouton go on to hold off Röhrl , she would reduce Röhrl 's lead in the championship to just two points . As a driver 's seven best results counted towards the championship at the time , Mouton would only need a third place in the RAC Rally to take the title even if Röhrl would win . On the final day , she continued to suffer from mechanical problems and had the complete fuel injection system changed . For the next time control , Röhrl and Mouton arrived almost simultaneously . With only 600 km to go , Mouton went off the road and rolled her car . She drove the severely damaged Quattro for five more kilometres before giving up .

Röhrl inherited the win and became the first two @-@ time world champion in rallying . Having lost her father , Mouton did not dwell on losing the title . Röhrl had earlier conceded that he " would have accepted second place in the championship to Mikkola " , but not to Mouton : " This is not because I doubt her capabilities as a driver , but because she is a woman . " He believed that defeat would have devalued his performances . At the RAC , Mouton edged out Toivonen to take second place behind Mikkola . This result made Audi the first German marque to win the manufacturers ' world title . At the inaugural Autosport Awards gala , Mouton won the International Rally Driver of the Year award .

== = 1983 == = =

The 1983 season started the Group B era of the WRC and Mouton was now at the wheel of the Audi Quattro A1 . She also had a new teammate ; Audi had signed Stig Blomqvist as their third regular driver . For the third year in a row , Mouton had a bad start to her season in Monte Carlo . She went off the road on a stage not far from her home town , and again hit a stone wall at over 100 km / h (60 mph) . The car was destroyed , but Mouton and Pons were unharmed . Mouton explained to her team boss Roland Gumpert , later of Gumpert supercar fame , that she had had to dodge a photographer . Mouton went on to record successive points finishes . She finished fourth in Sweden in a quadruple win for Audi , after an early driving error that had sent her Quattro into a snow bank . In Portugal , Mouton finished second to Mikkola , ahead of Lancia 's Röhrl and Markku Alén . After the first section of the Safari Rally , totaling over 1 @,@ 600 km (1 @,@ 000 mi) , Mouton arrived to the finish on three wheels and said she was " totally exhausted " from the effort . She eventually placed third behind Opel 's Ari Vatanen and her teammate Mikkola . After four events , Mikkola and Mouton were first and second in the drivers ' championship .

At the Tour de Corse , Audi debuted the Quattro A2 , which was 70 kg (155 lb) lighter and had an engine producing 30 more horsepower . Mouton 's rally ended when her engine caught on fire . On the first stage in Greece , she rolled her car on a hairpin turn 18 km (11 mi) from the start . Rally New Zealand was for Mouton a repetition of the previous year ; she took the lead on the seventh stage and held on to it until her A2 's engine failed , with only six of the 33 stages to go . The three retirements in a row dropped Mouton to fifth place in the championship . She then finished third behind Mikkola and Blomqvist at the Rally Argentina , but this would remain her last podium finish of the season . At the 1000 Lakes in Finland , Mouton finished the first day in seventh place after

setting two top @-@ five stage times . Her car later caught on fire , but she was able to continue in the event by following Mikkola 's advice and driving into a lake . With a string of top @-@ ten times , she eventually finished 16th . In the Rallye Sanremo , the tarmac stages were dominated by the Lancia 037 and Mouton finished seventh after suffering from fuel injection problems . In the season @-@ ending RAC Rally , she started well and held second place after the first twelve stages . An Audi mechanic later accidentally refilled Mouton 's fuel tank with pure water which resulted in time @-@ consuming repairs . She eventually retired after crashing out , and placed fifth overall in the drivers ' championship . Although Mikkola beat Lancia 's Röhrl and Alén to the drivers ' title , Audi had lost the manufacturers ' title to Lancia after the latter 's triple win in Sanremo .

= = = = 1984 = = = =

For the 1984 season , Audi added two @-@ time world champion Walter Röhrl to their star line @-@ up and Mouton now had a part @-@ time role , competing in five WRC events . For the first time in nine years , she did not enter the Monte Carlo Rally . However , Mouton signed up to commentate the event for Radio Monte Carlo . She started her year well by finishing second at the Swedish Rally behind teammate and home favourite Blomqvist . Mouton later stated that " finishing second was fantastic . When you are out rallying on ice or snow in country like that it is like dancing . From one side to the other side . My dancing background helped my rallying . As soon as I started on gravel I liked it because of that . It was so nice to feel and move the car like that . Sweden , in ice and snow , like ballet ! " This would remain her last podium position in the World Rally Championship .

In the Safari Rally , a rotor arm in Mouton 's Quattro failed and caused the turbo to break down as well . She retired after falling victim to the team 's ranking order ; as the repairs were expected to take too long , Gumpert ordered championship leader Blomqvist 's Quattro to be fixed by using Mouton 's sister car as spares . Her debut in the new Sport Quattro at the Acropolis Rally ended with engine overheating problems . In the 1000 Lakes , Mouton placed ninth after the short first day . She later crashed and continued without a windscreen , but the damage to her Quattro could not be repaired in service . Mouton retired and left Finland pointless for the fourth year in a row . In late October , she signed a contract extension with Audi . At the RAC Rally , a slight mistake led to a puncture and Mouton dropped from third to fifth . She went on to narrowly lose the final podium spot to Toyota 's Per Eklund . Mouton 's results placed her 12th in the drivers ' world championship , a point behind Röhrl . Outside the WRC , Mouton debuted in the Pikes Peak International Hill Climb in the United States , driving an Audi Sport Quattro together with her usual co @-@ driver Fabrizia Pons . After her main opponent Martin Schanche got hampered by a flat right front tyre she won the open rally category (now known as unlimited) in a record time and placed second overall , leaving behind several specialised V8 single @-@ seaters that had normally dominated the race .

= = = = 1985 = = = =

Audi 's WRC programme was limited for the 1985 season due to the recent defeats to Peugeot Talbot Sport , Peugeot 's factory team headed by Jean Todt . Mouton and Mikkola were assigned to testing and development duties . She drove both the Sport Quattro and its follower , the Quattro S1 (Sport E2) . Mouton considered the S1 the most difficult rally car she had driven : " For rallying on asphalt , I agree the limit had gone too far . We did not have the reflexes to control it properly . It was tough to drive the car , but not the short Quattro before . "

Although Mouton competed in only one world championship event during the season , she contested a full six @-@ round British Rally Championship . Her campaign was plagued by reliability problems and she recorded only one finish . In the National Breakdown Rally , Mouton stopped after damaging her Quattro in a jump . After technical problems led to an early retirement at the Circuit of Ireland , she finished second at the Welsh Rally behind Malcolm Wilson in another Quattro . At the Scottish Rally , Mouton had been closing in on the leading Wilson until a transmission problem forced her to retire . At the Ulster Rally , she set the fastest time for the first stage but then dropped

out with a mechanical failure . In the season @-@ ending Manx International Rally , Mouton struggled to start her Quattro and then crashed out five stages later .

Mouton 's only WRC event of the year was the long @-@ distance Rallye Côte d'Ivoire . She was co @-@ driven by Arne Hertz as Pons was ill at the time of the start . Mouton started well and tied the lead with Toyota 's Juha Kankkunen after the first day . Her Quattro incurred severe engine problems on the next day , but was seemingly repaired by Audi mechanics off the route in the jungle . At the same time , the Sport Quattro " chase car " , a high @-@ speed service car , retired and Audi faced accusations of swapping the cars . The team withdrew Mouton just before the finish and the controversy remains unresolved ; the stewards did not find proof but the media published evidence afterwards . Although her rallying year was a disappointment , Mouton made a successful return to the Pikes Peak , winning the event overall in her Sport Quattro . Despite slippery conditions caused by a hailstorm , she broke Al Unser , Jr . ' s 1982 record by about thirteen seconds . The Frenchwoman 's win irritated some of her male rivals . Bobby Unser was reputedly quite vocal about his loss , to which Mouton is said to have replied : " If you have the balls you can try to race me back down as well . "

= = = Peugeot = = =

Mouton broke off her contract with Audi in late 1985 to join Peugeot for the coming season . She contested the German Rally Championship and two WRC events in a Peugeot 205 Turbo 16 , with which the marque had captured last year 's world titles . To replace the newly @-@ wed Pons , Mouton recruited Terry Harryman who had been left jobless after Ari Vatanen 's accident . Mouton , nicknamed " der schwarze Vulkan " (The Black Volcano) due to her temperament and long black hair , won six of the eight events in the German championship , including the Rallye Deutschland . Although the Hessen Rallye was stopped after the severe accident of Formula One driver Marc Surer , which claimed the life of his co @-@ driver Michel Wyder , Mouton was declared the winner . She secured the German national title on the seventh and penultimate round , the Sachs Baltic , after taking her fifth win of the season . She became the first female driver to win a major championship in rallying .

Mouton 's WRC outings were her home events : Monte Carlo Rally and Tour de Corse . In Monte Carlo , she was running in eighth place after eleven stages , but soon retired with oil pump problems . For the Tour de Corse in May , Mouton was given the second evolution of the car . She quickly showed good pace and held third place behind Lancia 's Henri Toivonen and teammate Bruno Saby . However , she ran into gearbox trouble on the tenth stage and was forced to retire . During the next day , Toivonen and his co @-@ driver Sergio Cresto crashed out from the lead and died in their seats . Mouton was still in Corsica and remarked to her boyfriend that " if they stop the Group B now , it will be the end for me . " Within days , FISA announced new regulations and banned the Group B supercars for the following year .

In October , two weeks after securing the German Rally Championship title , Mouton announced her retirement from rallying . She cited the end of the Group B era as the reason behind the decision , and stated that it was " a good time to stop . " Later in the same month , Mouton crowned her career by winning the last event of the German championship , the Drei @-@ Städte @-@ Rallye (Three Cities Rally) , ahead of Armin Schwarz 's MG Metro 6R4 .

= = = Later career = = =

In 1988 , Mouton co @-@ founded the international motorsport event Race of Champions with Fredrik Johansson , in memory of Toivonen and to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the world championship for rally drivers . The event originally included the world 's top rally drivers , but now features stars also from other disciplines , such as Formula One , NASCAR , Le Mans and MotoGP , competing against each other in identical cars .

In 1988 and 1989 , Mouton participated in rally raids as part of Peugeot 's service team for Ari Vatanen and Jacky Ickx . At the 1988 Rally of Tunisia , Mouton drove a 205 T16 Grand Raid chase

car and transported spare parts for Vatanen and Henri Pescarolo , but also classified sixth overall . She later took part in the Dakar Rally as a press driver in 2004 and 2009 . In 2000 , Mouton finished second in the London ? Sydney Marathon driving a Porsche 911 , behind former teammate Stig Blomqvist . After 22 years , Mouton and Fabrizia Pons reunited to compete in the 2008 Otago Classic Rally in New Zealand . In 2010 , Mouton competed with a 911 in the Rallye du Maroc and finished second to Grégoire De Mévius .

In 2010 , Mouton became the first president of the FIA 's Women & Motor Sport Commission . She stated that " for many years people have asked me why there have been no women following in my footsteps . I really hope the Commission can help answer that question and that we can attract and support women in all areas of our sport . " Having already headed a working group on the future of rallying , Mouton was appointed FIA 's manager in the World Rally Championship in 2011 . Mouton also serves in the nomination committee of the Rally Hall of Fame . In March 2012 , she recused herself after becoming a candidate for nomination . Mouton was inducted into the Hall of Fame along with two @-@ time world champion Carlos Sainz .

= = Personal life and legacy = =

While announcing her retirement from rallying , Mouton stated her intention to start a family with Corsican sports journalist Claude Guarnieri . She had her daughter Jessie (Jessica) in 1987 . Mouton credited her father Pierre 's support as the secret for her success : " He loved driving . He loved fast cars . And I think he would have loved to do what I did . He was a prisoner of war for five years and when he came back he never had the opportunity to compete . But he came to all the rallies I did . And my mother came , too . "

Mouton states that in her mind she did not try to beat her male rivals , but to be at their level . She noted that in rallying the time is the most important thing . David Evans of Autosport described her as " motorsport 's most successful ever female driver . " Rally journalist and historian Graham Robson credits Mouton , along with Pat Moss , as " the driver by whom all other females measure their skills and achievements . " Mouton and Moss were of different eras and did not compete directly against each other , although they both appeared at the 1973 Monte Carlo Rally where Mouton co @-@ drove . In 1985 , they swapped cars in a private test session with Moss driving the Quattro and Mouton an Austin @-@ Healey 3000 . Stirling Moss regarded Mouton as " one of the best " , and Niki Lauda described her as a " superwoman " .

In 2011 , Mouton was made knight of the Legion of Honour (Légion d 'honneur) by French President Nicolas Sarkozy .

= = Complete WRC results = =