

GOODMAN DERRICK LLP

Press Release: 21 May 2015

Father vs. son court case on ownership of Lancia Stratos collection: statement from Chris Hrabalek

A High Court dispute between Ernst Hrabalek and his son Chris, over the ownership of a collection of four Lancia Stratos cars, went to trial in London in February this year and the decision has been handed down by the High Court today (21 May). Ernst Hrabalek claimed that he had merely allowed his son repeatedly to borrow the cars over a 15-year period, whereas Chris Hrabalek believed that his father had gifted the cars to him in 2000, when Chris had completed his first degree. The Court accepted that Ernst Hrabalek had led people to believe that he had made a gift of the cars to Chris, but felt that Ernst had misled those people. The Court then went on to find in favour of Ernst Hrabalek that in fact no gift of the cars had been made to Chris.

Comments Chris Hrabalek, "Court cases are always upsetting, but ten times more so when it involves close family members. I am very disappointed at the outcome of the trial. This dispute between my father and I has been ongoing for over 4 years and has spanned three countries. The fact that the outcome was favourable to me in Austria and Germany makes this High Court ruling in England particularly hard. While my overriding feeling is one of deep, personal sadness over the rift this has caused with my father, I still believe that I am the rightful owner of these cars and will continue to pursue my claim to the cars - starting first by seeking permission to appeal the High Court's decision and then with consideration of possible remedies abroad."

Nigel Adams of Goodman Derrick solicitors, chosen by Chris Hrabalek to defend his case, added, "It was always going to be a very close case – one that turned on witness evidence. In a case like this, where father and son have a different understanding of whether the collection of cars was a gift or a loan, it is particularly hard for the losing side. As well as the emotional pain, there is also the fact that Chris expended significant time, effort and money over the years, first in helping to assemble the collection of cars and later – when he believed his father had gifted him the collection – in increasing their value by publicising the cars and by exhibiting them at numerous classic car events".

Meanwhile, Carl Troman of 4 New Square, the barrister who represented Chris Hrabalek, comments that disputes over classic car ownership are becoming more common: "With the recent escalation in classic and historic car values, Nigel and I are seeing an increase in the number of disputes we are asked to advise on. We now see a variety of cases that involve questions of ownership, disagreements over the identity or provenance of a car or – more frequently – claims arising from racing incidents, where damage has been done to highly valuable historic racing cars. "

NOTES TO EDITORS

Distributed on behalf of Goodman Derrick LLP, 10 St Bride Street, London EC4A 4AD

For more information please contact:

Nigel Adams, Partner, Goodman Derrick at nadams@gdlaw.co.uk or on +44 (0)20 7421 7958; or

James Caulfield, Head of Business Development, Goodman Derrick at jcaulfield@gdlaw.co.uk or +44 (0)7815 846 124

Goodman Derrick is a leading commercial law firm in the City of London. We are recognised for providing high quality legal advice and for our distinctive, client-focussed service.

- The firm is made up of 30 experienced partners managing a team of 90, organised into specialist practice and sector groups.
- Recommended as leading lawyers by the independent guides to the legal profession, Chambers & Partners and Legal 500.
- “The kind of firm that gains your trust and never loses it”, Chambers and Partners Guide to the Legal Profession.
- A member of the worldwide Legal Netlink Association, a network of independent law firms.