

JAGUAR RACING CARS

A MONTHLY SERIES - Part 12

By Neville Barlow

Although Tom Walkinshaw had retired his European touring cars, the XJ5s in 1985 he was set on higher achievements. After the domination of Group A by his racing XJ5s his eyes were now set on Group C, which meant of course a chance to produce a car that could race at the 24 Hours of Le Mans. The FIA's Group C was designed primarily for the World Endurance Championship which included the 24 Hours at Le Mans. It limited cars to a minimum weight of 800kgs and a fuel capacity of 100 litres. With competitors restricted to five refuelling stops within a 1000-kilometre race. The cars were effectively allowed 600 litres per 1000 kilometres. The hope was that manufacturers would not concentrate solely on engine capacity.

Jaguar was asking for increased co-operation between the two sports car teams, the new team now in America and Tom Walkinshaw Racing, as they were paying for much of the engineering for both teams. It became increasingly difficult trying to support Group 44 and also being involved with TWR who felt they were the major supporter of Jaguar.

A few weeks after the testing of the American XJR-5 at Silverstone in the UK, TWR announced they would not be competing at Le Mans in the Group 44 car. Walkinshaw said his efforts would be focused on the new car Tony Southgate was developing. This was a carbon fibre glass Group C car which would be designated as XJR-6. This caused much discord with Bob Tullius because he said Tom had stolen his identification system and what was about to happen next?

New Zealander Allan Scott was appointed Chief Engineer and he had many modifications in mind for the Jaguar 6.3 litre V12 engine. Two cars were built during May and June in 1985. They debut at Mosport in America in August. I believe it was a show of strength by Tom Walkinshaw and to let Bob Tullius know that he had competition. At the start Mike Brundle shot the XJR-6 to the front and lead for nine laps however a front wheel bearing shattered and the car was retired. The second car had brake problems. Brundle was switched to this car and he managed to bring it home in third place.



Jaguar TWR-XJR-6

At SPA on 1st of September Brundle and Thackwell finished fifth with only 11 cylinders working because of a broken valve spring. The second Jaguar retired with handling problems. Brands Hatch produced the retirement of both vehicles but it was a learning experience. Fuji in Japan was really a non- event with race delays because of torrential rain and the Jaguars not having wet weather tyres. Tom Walkinshaw was not in attendance in Japan as he was in Australia racing at Bathurst with his two XJSs. A bonus was a great win and a third that perhaps made up for the problems in Japan.

The races for these XJR cars were all over the world and the next race was in Malaysia in December. Again, torrents of rain but a second for the Jaguar XJR-6 made the long journey worthwhile.

The 1987 package was greatly improved, with a weight reduction of 80 kilograms and power and torque lifted by 7% without any increase in fuel consumption. The main opposition this year was Porsche and they had had their own way for the last few years. The new car was designated as XKR-8. The TWR team now had a different look now that Silk Cut was the main sponsor. The British racing green and white colours were replaced by purple and white.



In the first race at Monza the Jaguars were right up the front most of the way but they disappointed again as both retired. Was this 'shades' of the Broadspeed debacle? However, at Silverstone the car driven by Cheever and Warwick took the lead early and lapped every Porsche by quarter distance. They lasted the full distance and won by two laps. The second Jaguar had battery problems and finished seventh.

The first attempt by TWR at Le Mans started on June the 1st. Three cars took part and they all qualified in the top ten. The first car was out after just three hours with major fuel problems. At about ten hours in a major accident that occurred, the race was slowed for 2.5 hours which was greatly detrimental to all the cars. The second Jaguar was out with over- heating but the third car at 20 hours was second overall. Unfortunately, soon after it hit some debris on the track, left after the accident and it too was retired. The postscript to the many British and Jaguar fans was 'We will be back' Norisring in Germany in late June, saw Cheever come home in second even though the gear knob broke and provided him with a bloodied hand by the races end. Warwick flat spotted the tyres but finished third.

Brands Hatch in July the 1000Km race attracted 100,000 British fans but several problems with the cars and full yellow flags were detrimental to the Jaguars, so they finished fourth and sixth.

At Jerez on August the 3rd the race was there for the taking, so they thought but a comedy of errors with two of the Jaguars in a coming together, so they could only score a third. Nurburgring was a total disaster. At SPA in September Warwick was beaten by only 0.08 of a second after 1000ks. Nurburgring in September however Cheever in the XJR-6 won by 54 seconds after the leading Porsche had fuel problems on the last lap. The final race of the season was at Fuji and was a time Keepers nightmare and even though Warwick finished second he was relegated to 3rd and thus missed the Driver's Championship by one point. The Jaguars competed in 15 races with two wins and 5 podiums. Not bad for a start.

During 1987 it was announced that TWR would take over from Group 44 and run Jaguars IMSAs race programme from 1988. TWR had won 30 races out right for Jaguar, an average of 5 victories per year. It made sense because Group C and IMSA regulations were drawing closer in concept.

The XJR-9, the new car for 1988 was an evolution of the XJR-8. It was another of Tony Southgate's designs for TWR. He also designed a variant, the XJR-9LM specifically for the high straight-line speeds on the Mulsanne straight at Le Mans.



The Castrol sponsored XJR-9 debuted at the Daytona 24 hours in America. Driven by Brundle/Boesel/and Niesen they won convincingly and Lammers/ Cheever/ and Sullivan came home in 3rd. Luck somewhat deserted the XJR-9s throughout the American IMSA championship, but they did win the last race of the season in the two hour Del Mar. Rather disappointing

Jaguar had to settle for third in the construction Championship.

In the 1988 Worlds Sports Prototype Championship the XJR-9 running Silk Cut sponsorship, met with great success. It was able to take six victories including the 360 km at Jarama with 1st and 3rd. Cheever and Brundle won the 1000ks at Silverstone and then the big one, Le Mans. Jaguar sent three cars but only the (Johnny Drumfrie, Andy Wallace and Jan Lammers) XJR-9 finished the race travelling 5332.97ks to win by only 2 minutes after 24 hours. This was Jaguars first success at Le Mans since 1957and the first time since 1980 that Porsche had been beaten. Other wins included Monza, Brands Hatch and Fuji. Silk Cut Jaguar won the years Constructors Championship and Brundle the Drivers' Championship.

In 1989 the XJR-9 was entered in the IMSA and WSPC, but it was now very dated and was repeatedly beaten.

This led to Jaguar introducing the XJR-10 which had two wins and usually placed higher than the XJR-9. At season end Jaguar finished second in the Constructors Championship.

A similar story occurred in the

Worlds Prototype Championship with Jaguar not winning a single race with only a few placings. Jaguar therefore only finished fourth in the Championship.

Because of these poor results, team boss Tom Walkinshaw recognised that significant changes were required if TWR wished to continue to have further success. For the 1990 IMSA GTP season the much-altered XJR-10 competed in 12 races. Tony Southgate and Ross Brawn had re developed this car with a new chassis and a light compact JV-6 twin turbo 3 litre engine to comply with the new IMSA regulations. It finished in the top 10 eight times and won at Lime Rock. This gave Jaguar second in the constructors Championship. It raced twice in 1991 before being retired. However, in 2001 with Justin Law driving no 389 Jaguar XJR-10 running in Historic Group C races gained 17 podiums including 10 wins in England and the Continent,

A further variant of the XJR-10 was designated XJR-11. It was powered by the 3 litre V6 of its forerunner but produced 750Bhp with the aid of twin Garrett turbo chargers. It finished sixth on debut but won only one race. It raced only in England and was regarded as the most disappointing car of the XJR series.

Probably the most famous of all the XJRs was XJR-12 which raced in 1990. At its very first start three cars were placed 1st, 2nd, and 5th, in the Daytona 24 Hours race. This was regarded as a successful test for Le Mans later in the year. So, in 1990 a race at Sebring was the only race contested before four cars lined up in France. The result was, of the four, two retired and the other two were 1st and 2nd. This was Jaguars seventh win at Le Mans.



Jaguar XJR-9LM winning 1988 at Le Mans



Jaguar XJR-12 Silk Cut

There was still animosity between the American Jaguar racing group and TWR. In this 1990 historic race two cars were provided by each team. While fundamentally the American cars, while raced, managed and crewed by their people, they were very much under the UK's team boss Tom Walkinshaw.

The American crew discovered a fuel leak on one of their cars as they were wheeled out on to the grid. It was a disaster as the cars at this stage were not allowed to be touched until after the start. Only by using some Hawaiian grid girls to crowd around the car, was it possible to have a mechanic nip in and repair it. They had the advantage of running and winning with their cars at Daytona, so knew they would require hard compound tyres, unlike those that TWR had brought for all the cars.

Tom found out and demanded some. At a time during the race a car on the circuit caught fire and the safety car came out. Straight away the American car was brought in for brakes and fuel, while TWRs slowly circulated around for many laps. That was the master stroke that put the American car into the lead which they never relinquished. Brundle's car which was fighting a water leak and was finally retired and the other UK car crashed. Because of heat strain in the leading car driver Price Cobb retired. John Nielsen had already done a triple stint so English man Brundle took his place, so the winning car had both TWR and American drivers. The fourth Jaguar driven by Jan Lammers, Andy Wallace, Frank Konrad finished 2nd 4 laps back and 3rd place went to a Porsche a further 3 laps back.

To summarize for the years from 1986 to 1991 the TWR cars won the World Sports Prototype Championship 3 times and they won the two most important 24-Hour Endurance races, at Daytona and at Le Mans.



The best they could do in the IMSA competition was a second placing.

However, Tom Walkinshaw was not yet finished!

Neville

Left - 1990 Winners: John Nielsen, Price Cobb, Martin Brundle & Tom Walkinshaw