

JAGUAR RACING CARS

A MONTHLY SERIES - Part 14

By Neville Barlow

Jaguar in Formula One

In the 1980s Fords strategists surveyed the luxury car market and decided they should buy a global brand. They looked at those that were successful in Europe and found Alfa Romeo was available but they were beaten to them by Fiat. Next on the list was Saab and Jaguar. The then Ford Chairman decided that Ford could not afford to purchase both, so Jaguar became the target.

John Egan, Chairman of Jaguar, realised that his company needed a huge injection of cash if they were to become a competitor on the world stage. He had taken Jaguar from nearly a bankrupt company and had listed it on the Share market. He was intent on getting the most money he could for his shareholders. Talks with General Motors of America were going along slowly but carefully so Ford decided to act quickly. They began by buying up Jaguar shares and when they had enough, made a takeover bid. Egan said "Fords initial take-over moves were premature because we were talking to another company. However we came to the conclusion, of all the companies that were interested, Ford was the one we thought we could work with best"

Ford paid \$2.5 billion for Jaguar, a legendary brand that had limped through the 1980s as an independent after being mismanaged by British Leyland. Bill Hayden, the new Chairman of Ford said when he visited the Jaguar workshops "With their antiquated factory and shoddy quality, it was a miracle Jaguar had survived" Ford knew how to make cars and set about replacing machinery and demanding greater quality, not only from the staff but from parts manufacturers such as Lucas, Dunlop and others. Anyone who has seen the film "Ford versus Ferrari" will understand the belligerent attitude of the Ford bosses of that day and it seems to me that it was this that got them into trouble with Jaguars Formula One team.

To be fair, they did straighten up production in the Jaguar factories and poured millions of pounds into the business. Because of their success at Le Mans with their GTO Fords, they seemed to think that Formula One would be quite easy.

After all, Ford had been providing engines to a number of Formula One teams, including McLaren, from the late 1970s up to present day, 1999. They saw Mercedes Benz garnering great business success from their Formula One victories so they thought they could do the same.



Stewart Grand Prix Car

They chose the Jaguar brand, I suppose because of their racing history, rather than the Ford name.

An obvious short cut was to purchase the fledgling Stewart Grand Prix team which was run by Paul Stewart the son of World Champion driver Jackie Stewart. The team raced successfully for three years, starting in 1997. Its biggest highlight was when they won at Nurburgring which enabled them to finish 4th in the Championship.

In 2000 the team was renamed Jaguar Racing. However while sporting the British Racing Green colours it was to be an all Ford Team.

All the engineers, pit crews, and managers were all Ford personal. There were no Jaguar people involved. In fact they were prohibited from taking any part. All that experience of the Jaguar Teams that won at Le Mans in 1988 and 1990 were over looked or regarded as not good enough!

Xavier Blackburn-Campbell wrote an article in the Motorsport Community Magazine explaining that he was appointed engineering manager of the Jaguar team. He had expertise in engineering within Formula One, having been responsible for building several such cars. When problems arose with the race cars he was eager to get involved but he was banned by the hierarchy to leave well alone!

For the first season of racing in 2000, the team was managed by Wolfgang Reitzle and the drivers were purchased at great expense, especially Eddie Irvine, who last year was runner up in Formula One. The other driver was the former Stewart team man Johnny Herbert.

This was a high powered team and showed how much money Ford had to splash around on their new show piece. The first season was very disappointing.

They scored 4 points all season courtesy of Irvine's best finish of 4th at the Monaco Grand Prix. Herbert had his worst season in the sport with no points which included eight retirements.

The car showed some promise but at times was un-driveable and also had recurring gearbox trouble. Reitzle was sacked and replaced by Bobby Rahal an American Indy car driver for the 2001 season.

Unfortunately 2001 was little better. Herbert was replaced by Luciano Burti and he in turn was dropped after only 4 races. Pedro De la Rosa became driver number four. Niki Lauda

joined Rahal, mid-season, but after several blunders he too was gone.

By the seasons end the Jaguar R2 F1 race cars started to show much improvement and Eddie Irvine scored Jaguars first podium with a 3rd at Monaco. But reliability was still a major problem.



Jaguar 2000 R1 GP Car

The 2002 season started well with Irvine finishing 4th at the Australian Grand Prix.

He also later in the year scored a 3rd at the Italian Grand Prix. Pedro retired nine times and scored no points. The old reliability problems with the R3 car raised its head again. The team scored 8 points all season and finished 7th in the Constructors Championship. Fords

board of Directors was having major issues with the costs of running a Formula One team, especially as it did not benefit the Ford name in any shape or form.



Eddie Irvine & Pedro de la Rosa

Jaguar 2002 R3



Fords ultimatum in 2003 was win or else. They made that more difficult by cutting costs and Niki Lauda and 70 members were made redundant. Mark Webber and Antonio Pizzonia were the new drivers. The new car R4 looked promising but was again unreliable. Webber and Pizzonia retired 4 times each by mid-way through the season and although there was no podiums, they finished 7th, again, in the Championship.

The year 2004 brought more changes. John Hogan became manager and John Wilson replaced Pizzonia. What a merry go-round! No stability of staff or drivers, achieved by Fords domineering management. This last season, results were much the same as the previous three years and the so called Jaguar finished 7th again.



Mark Webber & Antonio Pizzonia

Ford chose to sell the entire operation near the end of 2004. In November, the energy drink company confirmed they had purchased Jaguar Racing from Ford as a going concern. The Red Bull team used what would have been Jaguars 2005 challenger for their debut season. History will record that in a few short years Red Bull Racing rose to being the third most successful team in Formula One and last year was second behind the mighty Mercedes team.

Questions will always be asked, why Jaguar was such a dismal failure in Formula One. The first reason of course was Fords domination of the racing team and the outright refusal to involve any of the Jaguar engineers, who had great experience and expertise in Motor racing. The Ford Motor company should have owned the name of this racing team. It was obvious if all failed, as it did, the Ford name would not be tainted and that is perhaps why they did not? The swinging door policy that Ford adopted with replacing drivers and managers did little to build confidence or help their cause. They should perhaps have waited another year because the 2005 Jaguar, now simply repainted with the Red Bull decals, scored 34 points in their first year. It is surprising that the Stewart Grand Prix car performed outstandingly, for a new entrant, but when Ford got a hold of it, it became



unreliable, retiring more times that it finished.



However the Automotive world changed dramatically in

the early 2000s and Ford went from having huge cash reserves to nearly going bankrupt, helped in no small measure by the money they poured into Jaguar, at times losing \$1 million a day. Mid 2000s saw Chrysler in deep financial problems because of their involvement with Daimler Benz and Fiat. General Motors also nearly vanished. Both these companies were saved by the USA Government.

Ford was the only major American auto maker that remained solvent by selling assets, such as Jaguar and Aston Martin. Ford must be credited with the fact that the Jaguar XF model was designed and initially produced under Fords stewardship in 2007 just four months before selling out to Tata Motors on 18th of January 2008. It was generally accepted that if the XF had been a failure, that would have been the end of Jaguar. Thankfully the Jaguar XF has been a remarkable success and more than 400,000 models have been produced.

Neville