

Racing in the grand style

The JaguarSport Intercontinental Challenge is an amazing one-make mini-series; the background to this contest is outlined by Quentin Spurring

The much-revised Silverstone, spiritual and actual home of the British Grand Prix, was declared open for business in mid-January. It was Bernard Ecclestone, FISA's Vice-President, who cut the ribbon. Against his better judgement, say some, he was then shown round the new track by Derek Warwick, the former grand prix driver. Derek had recently become a member of Jaguar's 1991 Sportscar racing team, which is operated by Tom Walkinshaw, the chairman of Silverstone.

'Dell-boy' and 'Bernie' used for this purpose one of only two JaguarSport XJR-15 cars that had been completed at that time. It was the first occasion on which the XJR-15 had been seen in public and, unsurprisingly, it attracted a lot of attention.

It looked very much like a high-performance passenger car. It had two seats, interior trim, a rear view mirror, a relatively high ground clearance, an understated rear wing on the bootlid, light clusters, and traffic indicators. Yet it was not a road car.

At US \$1 million a time, it was being marketed by JaguarSport, the joint company owned 50-50 by Jaguar and Tom Walkinshaw Racing, as a race car; a car made specifically for an amazing, one-make mini-series, the grandiosely named JaguarSport Intercontinental Challenge.

The man behind the venture, Tom Walkinshaw summed up the concept like this: "We are offering a select number of car connoisseurs an opportunity to own a unique and highly



Driver: Tiff Needell
Car: JaguarSport XJR-15
Occupation: racing driver/broadcaster
Lives: Petersfield
Age: 39
Lap record: to be established

“On a flying lap, you take 6th gear just after the start/finish line and, travelling at more than 180mph, Copse rushes up pretty quickly.

It is actually faster than it used to be, and more difficult to overtake into, as there is an earlier turn-in, a quick clip of the apex and a rush out to the corner's limiting factor — a new kerb that marks the circuit's edge. When we tested these superb new machines back in April, everyone tended to use a bit of the old circuit as well!

Copse is taken in 4th, with 5th snatched at the exit, followed by a short run in 6th before the Becketts 'by-pass' beckons. This new complex should please drivers and spectators alike, with a tricky entry and a crucial exit on to Hangar Straight and a possible overtake at Stowe.

Overtaking on entry really isn't on, as you approach the complex on the right side of the road, flat in 6th, then turn in, braking, across the road to the Maggotts apex and the same line then takes you back across to the right for the entry apex.

There now follows a period of frantic activity! There is a short straight between the initial right and the final left-right, but you need to create a flowing line through all three. With the XJR-15 having limited grip — and a lot of power — over-enthusiasm means you use up a lot of road very quickly.

Too fast through that first right and you never recover before the left; too fast through the left and you ruin the final right; too greedy with the power in the final right and you ruin your exit speed on to the straight! To make matters worse, the whole area lacks features to give you a feeling for the right line.

It may be a 'single-file' part of the circuit but it's where I'll watch Senna in qualifying!

Becketts is taken in 4th, with 5th needed on the exit at Chapel and 6th just before the bridge and the charge down to Stowe is a real challenge to the XJR-15 because it now requires you to brake late, deep and into the corner. With little downforce and a



big V12 engine behind the driver, braking stability is not the car's strong point.

Again, 4th is the gear and a neat, tight exit into the Vale is the intention, but too much power too soon can cause oversteer going both right and left on the exit. Most overtaking will be done into Stowe and it would be my spot for the day's racing, standing on the exit and watching the entry to Club.

After a short blast in 5th, Club has switched from being the fastest corner to being the slowest. Tricky braking over a

crest, a chance of a snatched overtake and 2nd gear before the sharp left that leads into the long ... snatch 3rd ... long ... power oversteer ... long ... snatch 4th ... long ... power oversteer ... right-handed exit, getting 5th on the old rumble strips and 6th just before Abbey.

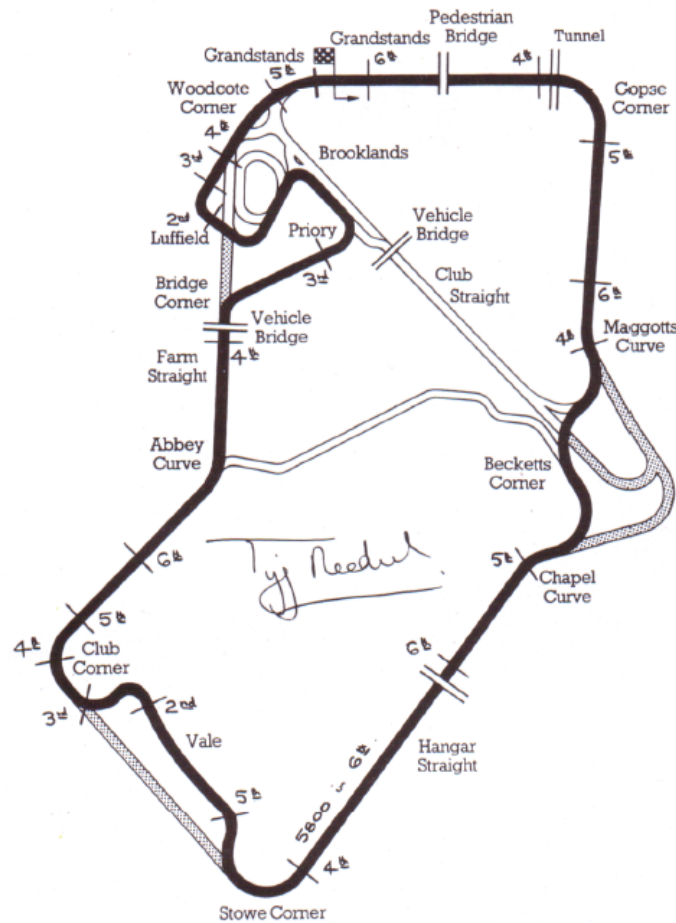
If its wet, Club should be most entertaining but, even in the dry, expect the XJR-15s to be leaving long strips of black rubber as they strive for traction. Abbey is, as it always was, flat in top — but only just although now you need to get back to the left fairly sharpish for the crested dip in to braking area for Bridge.

While grand prix drivers may only need to lift for this new ultra-fast corner, we need to brake heavily and drop to 4th for this 'eye of a needle' corner that has to be just right or its a short trip across the kitty litter and heavily into the wall. The apex kerb is high and cannot be clipped while the exit has no kerb to check any slide.

A snatch of 5th, back to the right towards a blind crest and a braking point that's tricky to judge as you enter the two new left-handers of Priory and Brooklands. Both are taken in 3rd gear with a blast of power and a dab of the brakes between the first and second.

Exiting Brooklands you try not to use all of the road on the right as you want to get back across to the left as much as possible to open up the final two right-handers of Luffield 'in' and Luffield 'out'. As with the lefts, the two rights are almost taken as one long corner but, here, the apex kerb from the old chicane entrance always seems to step out into the perfect line forcing you to straighten the car momentarily before again dabbing the brakes and getting into that final right as smoothly as you can in order to get the power on as early as possible and create the chance of an overtake into Copse.

With long braking areas and traction hard to come by, the XJR-15s should make for excellent racing around Silverstone. We were like lions in a cage at Monaco but, in the open expanses, the cats should be able to show their claws. ”



prized racing car, and to race it at three of the world's leading circuits, in front of large crowds. For the general public, we are offering a stunning spectacle, thrilling entertainment and hopefully a chance for them to cheer on their heroes past, present and future."

Just three races were to be held, supporting the 1991 grands prix at Monaco (but where else, my dear?), Silverstone and Spa-Francorchamps. The 'Intercontinental' element was to come from JaguarSport itself, Walkinshaw revealed. Eight drivers would be nominated, two each to represent Australasia, Europe, Japan and The Americas.

There had been nothing quite like this in motor racing since the fondly-remembered BMW M1 'Procars' in 1979-80. The new Jaguars — race-bred, and with a little more horsepower — looked as though they could make those seem pedestrian. Walkinshaw announced that a maximum of 50 of the chassis were to be built, that participation in the racing was a precondition of purchase of one of the first batch, and that the private XJR-15 owners could nominate their own drivers (with the necessary International competition licences) to race their cars.

Oh — and there would be big prizes.

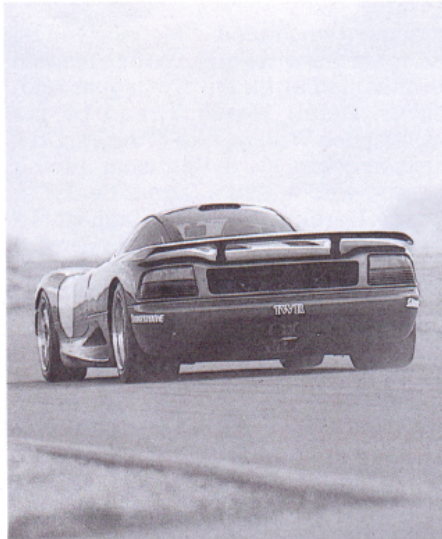
Quite a concept. Although Mr Ecclestone was able to resist the temptation to bring out his chequebook on the spot, Mr Warwick was not...

The day the new Silverstone was opened, in fact, two years had already passed since the XJR-15 project had begun, behind firmly closed doors in TWR's factory at Kidlington, north of Oxford, under the direction of Eddie Hinckley and Dave Fullerton. The XJR-15, according to TWR, evolved from its own Project R9R research car.

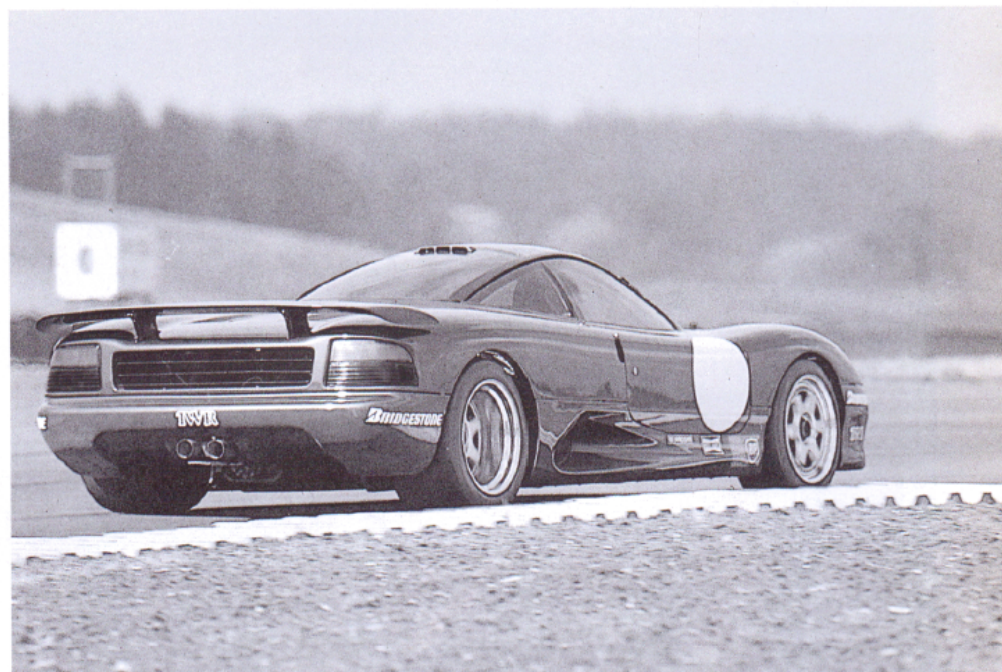
The original R9R was used as a wide-based development project for JaguarSport, primarily a high-speed testbed for the latest carbonfibre composites and plastics materials used in performance car construction. The R9R was based mechanically on the V12-engined Group C Jaguar XJR-9, the race car which triumphed at Daytona and Le Mans in 1988, and won the World Sports-Prototype Championships for both Teams and Drivers that season.

First tested towards the end of 1989, the restyled R9R 'muletta' underwent an intensive development programme, covering many thousands of miles away from the gaze of the press and public. When Tom Walkinshaw had the idea of the one-make racing series, it was a natural. Further development yielded the JaguarSport XJR-15, its name derived from the lengthening line of models deployed by Jaguar and TWR in their Sportscar racing programmes.

The styling was the work of Peter Stevens, who was responsible for the



From whatever angle you view it, the JaguarSport XJR-15 is a stunning shape. Its sporting heritage shows not only in the shape, but also the construction. Built, like its full competition brothers, using the latest high-tech composite materials, the car's weight and aerodynamics allows the 6-litre V12 engine to propel it to a maximum speed of around 185mph



latest Lotus Elan, and who is also currently engaged on McLaren International's 'supercar'. The XJR-15 looks just great, and 16 of them, on the grid at Monaco, made quite a spectacle.

It was obvious to everyone in the big crowd that some owners will be tempted to convert their XJR-15s for use on the road. From all appearances, the work involved would not be major. According to some reports, indeed, the project was initially conceived as a 'supercar', only to be put on the back burner when JaguarSport became committed to the XJ220, which is still not yet in production.

Underneath the sleek bodywork, though, the XJR-15 actually differs little from the XJR-9 concept. This evolved, of course, into the XJR-12 which achieved another 24-hour racing double for Jaguar at Daytona and Le Mans in 1990, and which recorded a 2-3-4 for Jaguar at Le Mans only three weeks ago.

There was no shortage of individual,

syndicate and corporate customers for the Jaguar XJR-15. When the JaguarSport Intercontinental Challenge began at Monaco in May, the race was won — would you believe it? — by Derek Warwick, one of the very first customers. The race was closely fought, the crowd-pleasing cars were obviously a handful, and the noise was terrific: "A glorious-sounding V12 express," was the *Autosport* description. David Brabham beat Davy Jones and Juan Fangio II to take second place, while Armin Hahne was fifth in front of Bob Wollek. Next was Tiff Needell.

To many owners, though, the races at Monaco and Silverstone are just setting the scene for the Belgian finale. The winners of both the first two events receive JaguarSport XJR-S 6.0 road cars, worth over \$90,000 each. Well and good. But at Spa, the winning owner will get his money back, because the first prize will be \$1 million...

JaguarSport XJR-15

BRITISH GRAND PRIX

► In addition, a solid silver trophy depicting the JaguarSport XJR-15 will be awarded to the national motor sport governing body of the driver who wins in Belgium next month.

At the end of the series, a winning continent will emerge, because points are earned by the eight drivers nominated to represent continents (on the scale 8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1). The driver who has earned the most points in this way will receive a replica of the trophy.

Going to Silverstone, Europe leads the series with 12 points, followed by The Americas with 11, Australasia with 10, and Japan with three. Since Monaco, each car has been reliveried, and colour-coded for both its driver and the continent he is representing.

Seven of the eight continental

nominees who raced at Monaco will be out again this weekend. Europe is again represented by the Silk Cut Jaguar team leader, **Derek Warwick**, and by the brilliant **Bob Wollek**, one of the World's most accomplished Sportscar racing drivers, who is also a Jaguar dealer in France. Derek was fourth for Jaguar at Le Mans this year, and Bob, on his debut for the team (in his 21st Le Mans), was third. But one of the American nominees, **Davy Jones**, was second in the great race.

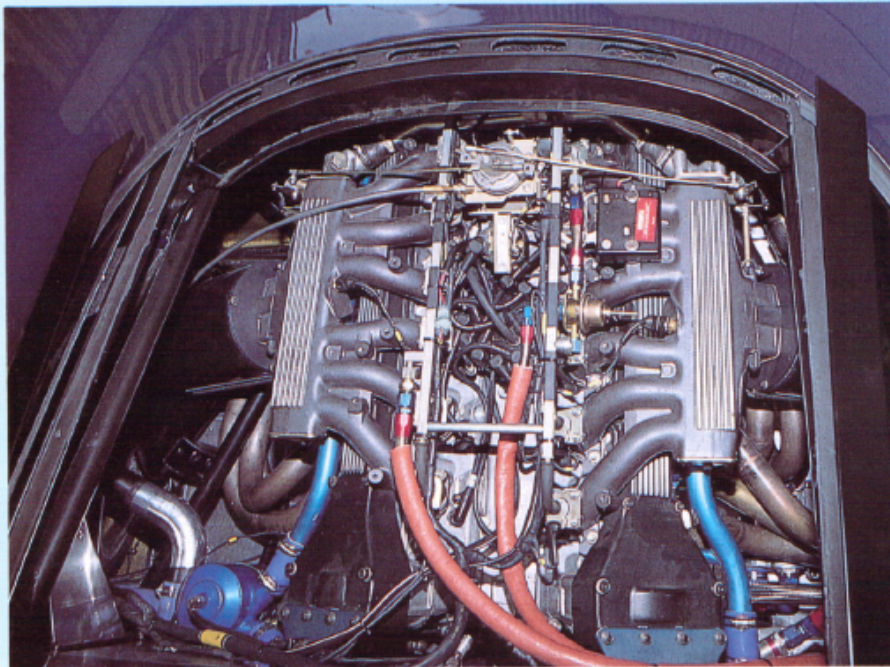
Davy and the other representative of the Americas, **Juan Fangio** (the nephew of the great man), are arch-rivals in the IMSA GT series, the former with Bud Light Jaguar, the latter with Toyota.

Australasia is represented this weekend by **David Brabham** and expatriate Briton **Win Percy**. The latter

is replacing Jim Richards, who has a racing commitment down-under this weekend, at Lakeside.

Nominated for Japan are **Matsuaki Sunada** and the jovial veteran **Yojiro Terada**, who finished eighth at Le Mans as a member of the victorious Mazda team.

Of the others, **John Nielsen** will go all-out for a clean win, having crashed his XJR-15 at Monaco. Nielsen and **David Leslie** were also members of Jaguar's 1991 Le Mans squad, while **Tiff Needell** and **Cor Euser** are more Sportscar racing regulars. The other cars will be raced by **Ian Flux**, **Armin Hahne**, **Andy Evans** and **Matt Aitken**, the record producer and amateur racer, who fulfilled a lifelong ambition when he competed at Monaco with his own XJR-15.



The chassis and bodywork of the XJR-15 are the products of the Derbyshire based company, Advanced Structural Technology (ASTEC), which is part of the TWR Group. In 1990, it was ASTEC which produced the monocoques of the turbocharged Castrol XJR-10 and Silk Cut XJR-11 racing Jaguars. Like its full competition counterparts, the XJR-15 racing car is built using the latest high-tech composite materials used in the racing car industry, which is ASTEC's speciality.

The body features a relatively low-downforce nose profile and engine cover, and a neat, understated rear wing. It is constructed from lightweight composite materials, and glassfibre reinforced with carbonfibre. Distinctive ducting in the nose houses the cooling ducts for the nose-mounted water radiator, and there are also large cooling ducts for the engine bay and rear brakes, just ahead of the rear wheels in

the waisted flanks of the car. The XJR-15 features full-size, twin ground-effect tunnels and a Group C regulation flat-bottom area.

The monocoque is manufactured in a composite of carbonfibre and Kevlar, and bears the load of the rear-mounted engine which, with the transmission casing, also carries the rear suspension loads.

The power unit of the XJR-15 also relies heavily on TWR's sportscar racing experience. The all aluminium alloy engine is the same production-based, 60 degree V12 which has been so successful in racing. The single-overhead camshaft, 24-valve motor is equipped with a Lucas/Zytek electronically managed sequential fuel injection system and weighs 240 kilogrammes, including the clutch but without the exhaust system.

With a cylinder capacity of 6 litres — like the IMSA Castrol Jaguar XJR-12 cars — the engine operates on a compression

ratio of 11:1 and produces over 450 bhp at 6250 rpm, and 420 lbs/ft of torque at 4500 rpm. The power output is more than sufficient to propel the XJR-15 to a maximum speed of around 185 mph (300 kmh), depending on gearing.

The power is transferred to the race track via TWR's own, six-speed, straight-cut gearbox, a three-plate AP carbon racing clutch, and Bridgestone radial tyres running on 17ins wheel rims all-round. Steel disc brakes are fitted to the XJR-15, with AP Racing four-pot calipers.

The suspension, of course, is fully independent all-round, with non-adjustable Bilstein shock absorbers front and rear. The front suspension is by wide-based wishbones, working pushrods to spring-damper units mounted horizontally across the centre of the car. TWR racing practice is also used at the rear, with vertical coil springs mounted in unit with the uprights actually within the wheels, so as to allow the maximum possible width of the venturi tunnels. This was one of the neatest features of the original, Tony Southgate-designed XJR-6, with which Jaguar returned to world-level motor sport back in 1985.

The car's dimensions comply with the maximum figures allowed under the FIA's Group C regulations: the XJR-15 is 480 cms (189 ins) long, 200 cms (79 ins) wide and 110 cms (43 ins) high, and weighs about 1050 kilogrammes (2300 lbs).

For the record, TWR's atmospheric V12 racing Jaguars have been the XJR-6 in 1985-86, XJR-8 in 1987, XJR-9 in 1988-89 and XJR-12 in 1990-91. The latest in this series is now only used for long-distance racing, and may have raced for the last time at Le Mans '91. The turbocharged V6 powered racing Jaguars have been the IMSA-legal XJR-10 (recently updated as the XJR-16) and the FIA version, the XJR-11. All these models were originally designed by Tony Southgate. There was no XJR-13, for superstitious reasons.

The designer of the XJR-14, TWR's 3.5 litre V8 powered sportscar, which has already won this year at Monza and Silverstone, is Ross Brawn.

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