Million-dollar magic

IN 1991, THE PRESTIGIOUS MONACO Grand Prix is in danger of being upstaged by the opening round of a spectacular new racing series. Jaguar and its racing partner, Tom Walkinshaw Racing, have dropped an amazing bombshell on world motorsport with the announcement of the JaguarSport Intercontinental Challenge. This will be open exclusively to owners of an exiting new $1 million road racing car – the V12 Jaguar XJR-15. A prize of $1 million will be awarded to the winning entrant.

Undoubtedly the ultimate one-make track racing championship, the Challenge will support three Formula 1 Grands Prix. After Monaco in May, the second round will take place in July at the British Grand Prix meeting on the rebuilt Silverstone circuit. The series will reach its climax the following month on the classic Spa-Francorchamps road course, in support of the Belgian Grand Prix. Up to 30 identical Jaguar XJR-15 chassis will compete in the Challenge.

Motorsport has seen nothing like this since BMW initiated the 'Procar' series, for its straight-six M1 sportscars, a decade ago. The Procars produced some spectacular racing at Grand Prix meetings in 1979-80. But the new Jaguars – race-bred, and with much more power – will make those look pedestrian.

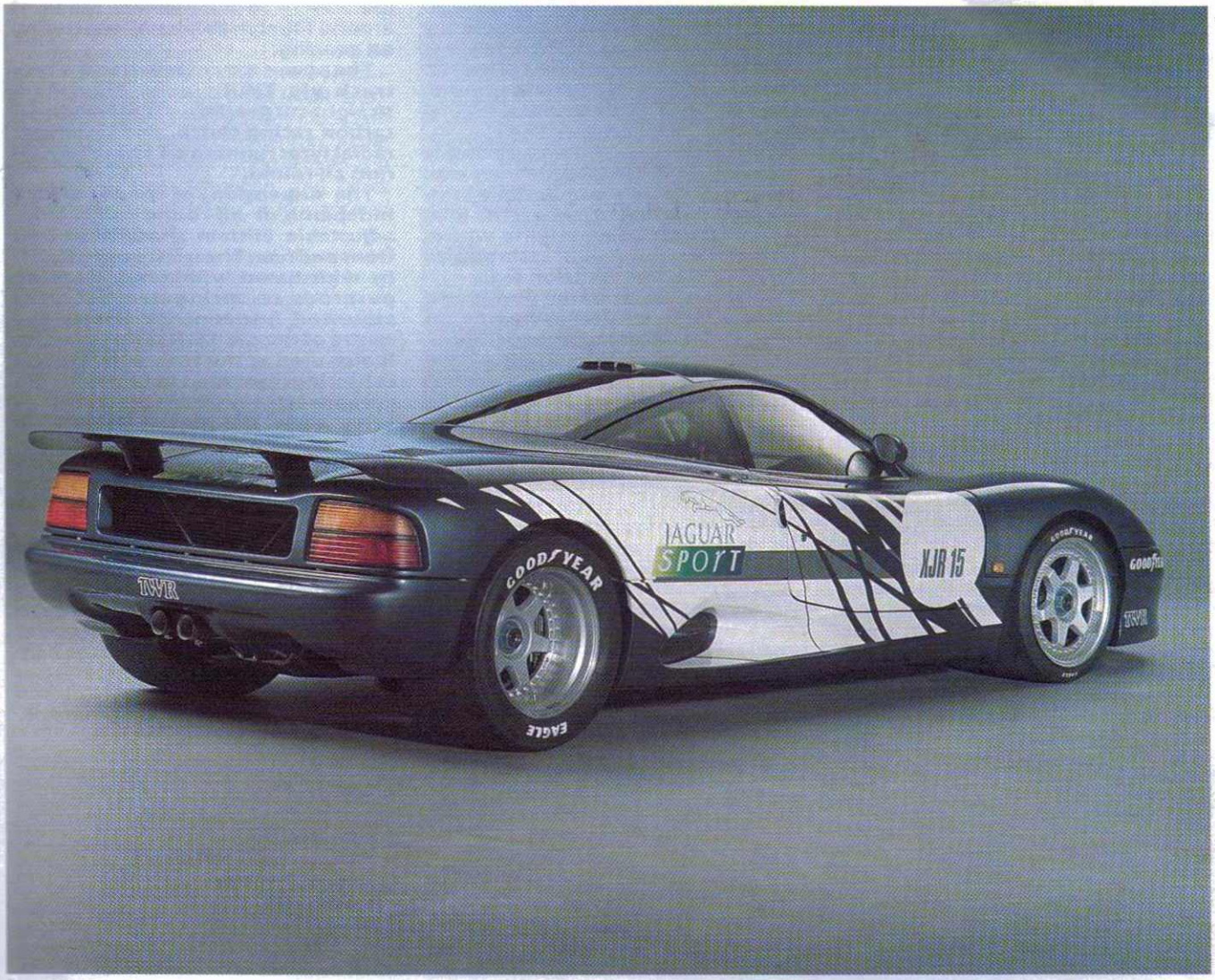
The new car which will form the basis of this astonishing, big-buck mini-series has evolved from JaguarSport's own 'Project R9R' research car. This, says TWR, was conceived as a wide-based development project, primarily a high-speed testbed for the latest carbonfibre composites and plastics materials 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 Le Mans and Daytona in 1988, and won the World Sports-Prototype Championships for both Teams and Drivers that same season.

First tested towards the end of 1989, the restyled R9R car underwent a secret but intensive development programme, covering many thousands of miles away from the gaze of the press and public.

This testing schedule contributed valuable

Imagine 30 of these racing on the streets of Monte Carlo! JaguarSport's stunning new XJR-15 will be used for the most amazing one-make series in the history of motorsport

JAGUAR XJR-15



data towards the ongoing research and development programme operated by JaguarSport, the growing company that is jointly owned by Jaguar and TWR. When the idea arose of a one-make racing series, to promote JaguarSport's range of high-performance road cars, the R9R was a 'natural'. Further development, by a specially selected team of JaguarSport engineers, yielded the individually styled Jaguar XJR-15, its name derived from the lengthening line of models deployed by Jaguar and TWR in their successful sports-prototype racing programmes.

The curvaceous body design of the XJR-15 has been the work of Peter Stevens, who was also responsible for the styling of the recently introduced Lotus Elan. Underneath the sleek bodywork, the XJR-15 differs little from the XJR-9 concept: this subsequently evolved, of course, into the superb XJR-12 which

State of the art

APART FROM THE CHASSIS AND THE bodywork, all the components of the exciting new Jaguar XJR-15 are being manufactured by JaguarSport, which has a special team of engineers assembling the cars. The monocoques and bodies are being produced by the specialist Draycott, 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 Jaguars. Like its WSPC and IMSA counterparts, the XJR-15 racing car is built using the very latest high-tech composite materials used in the racing car industry.

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 vents for the front-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 car also features twin ground-effect tunnels and a Group C regulation flat-bottom area.

The monocoque is based very closely on that of the XJR-9/12-series race cars. Manufactured in a composite of carbonfibre and Kevlar, it bears the load of the rear-mounted engine which, with the transmission casing, also carries the rear suspension loads.

The normally aspirated power unit of the XJR-15 also relies heavily on Jaguar's Sportscar racing experience. The all-aluminium alloy engine is the same production-based, 60 degree V12 which has powered TWR's racing Jaguars to so many Sportscar victories in the past. 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.

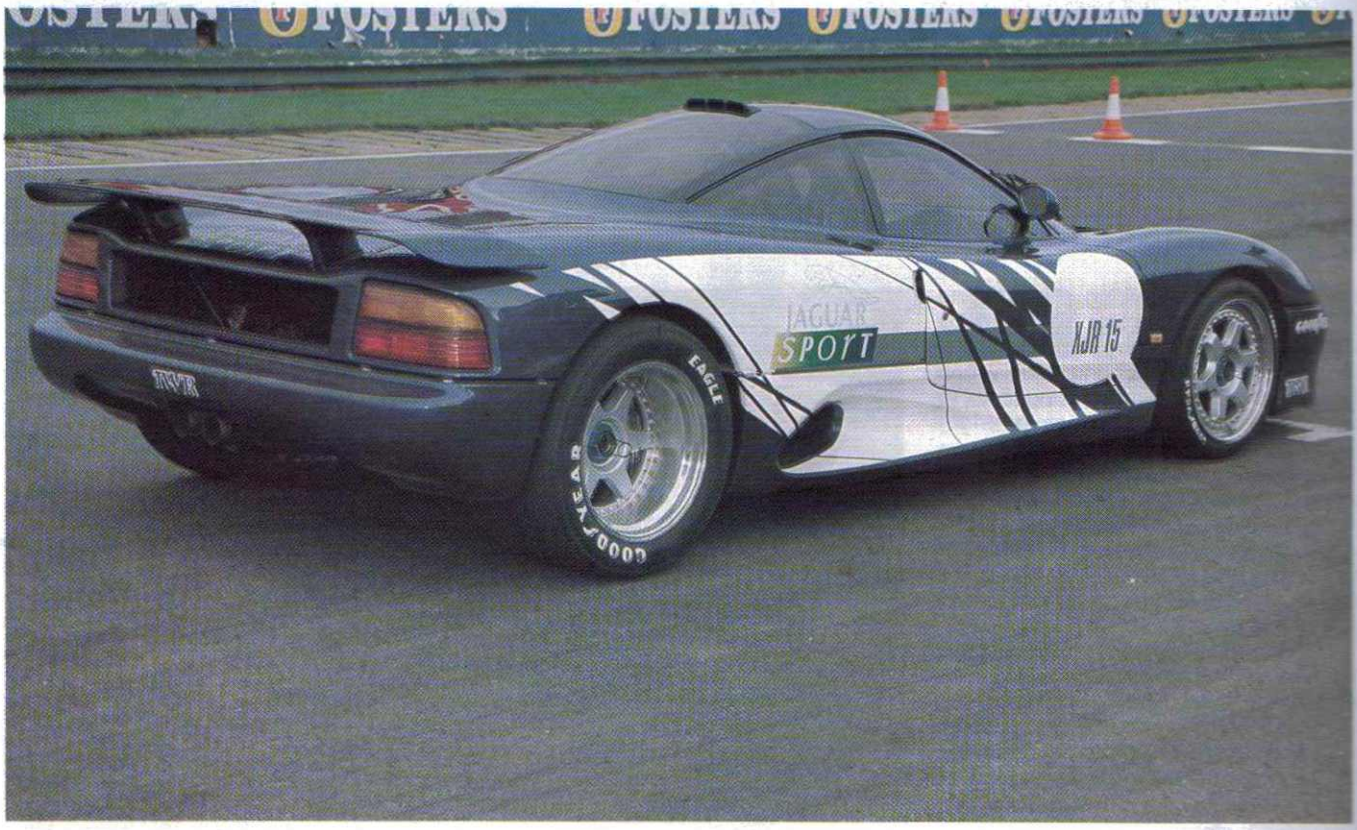
With a cylinder capacity of 6 litres – like the IMSA Castrol Jaguar XJR-12 cars – the engine operates on a compression ratio of 11:1 and produces over 450 bhp at 6250 rpm, and 420 lbs/ft of torque at 4500 rpm. The power output is more than sufficent to propel the XJR-15 to a maximum speed of around 185 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 Goodyear radial tyres running on 17-inch wheel rims all-round.

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 coilsprings 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 motorsport back in 1985.

Steel disc brakes are fitted to the XJR-15, with powerful AP Racing four-pot calipers.

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



achieved another 24-hour racing double for Jaguar at Daytona and Le Mans in 1990.

A maximum of 50 of these chassis will be built, and entry in the Challenge is a precondition of purchase of one of the initial batch. Among those who have already made firm commitments to race 'customer cars' in the Challenge are Sportscar racing veteran and team owner Vern Schuppan, and Derek Warwick, who will be Silk Cut Jaguar's lead driver in 1991.

The private XJR-15 owners will be allowed to nominate drivers (with the necessary International licences) to race their cars.

Each XJR-15 will be prepared at the tracks by a specialist team of mechanics and engineers from Tom Walkinshaw Racing, while JaguarSport is also offering a full body preparation and painting service.

Eight Jaguar XJR-15 chassis will be entered by TWR on behalf of JaguarSport. These will be raced by specially invited 'name' drivers from around the world. Two drivers will be picked from each of the continents of Europe, America, Australasia and Japan.

The prize fund for the JaguarSport Intercontinental Challenge is substantial. As well as the $1 million (£500,000) purse for the winning entrant, the winners of both the first two races will receive JaguarSport XJR-S 6.0 road cars, worth £46,000 each. In addition, a solid silver Challenge Trophy in the shape of the Jaguar XJR-15 will be awarded to the national motorsports governing body of the championship-winning driver. The driver himself will receive a silver replica of this trophy. At present, the series is scheduled to run for just one year.

The man behind this bold and unique venture, Tom Walkinshaw, is immensely enthusiastic about the prospects. Walkinshaw sums up the concept of the JaguarSport Intercontinental Challenge like this: "We are offering a select number of car connoisseurs an opportunity to own a unique and highly 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."

The car, pictured in JaguarSport livery, looks just fabulous, and it is easy to see why some owners may be tempted to convert their XJR-15s for use on the road. In theory, of course, this option is available with all competition designs of the Group C type. In the case of the XJR-15, from all outward appearances, such a transition would not involve a great deal of reworking. The XJR-15 already has suitable front and rear light clusters, including indicators, and the ground clearance, cockpit visibility and rear wing treatment would all seem to be favourable for conversion to roadgoing use.

The £500,000 price tag of the Jaguar XJR-15 includes race preparation for rounds of the prestigious JaguarSport Intercontinental Challenge