

30th Anniversary - Jaguar Wins Le Mans for 7th Time

With five victories in seven years Jaguars reigned supreme at Le Mans in the 1950s, but rule changes left the highly successful D-Type unable to compete after the 1957 season.

Thirty-one years later, Jaguar's 1988 victory remains one of the most celebrated and emotional moments in the company's history.

Yet the win two years later in 1990, was as hard fought as any of the 7 wins, but this victory is often overlooked when compared to previous wins.

Le Mans 1988

In 1988, with a 7-year reign at Le Mans, the favourite to win the race was again Porsche with 17 cars out of a field of 52.

Five V12 XJR-9 Jaguars were fielded as well as a number of Sauber-Mercedes, Nissan-March, Mazda's and Toyota's.

During the race, the Jaguars gradually fought their way to the lead but tragedy almost struck when the leading XJR-9 suffered from gearbox problems near the end of the race. Driving in only fourth gear, the car was able to complete the race, two minutes ahead of the fastest Porsche. Jan Lammers took the win with Andy Wallace and John Dumfries.

Australian Larry Perkins finished 4th in the second XJR-9. Porsche filled the remaining top-ten positions.

Le Mans 1990

Two chicanes were introduced along the Mulsanne Straight prior to the race. This was done to reduce the maximum speed of the cars after a Sauber C9 reached 400 km/h (249 mph) the previous year (1989).

FISA refused to renew the licence for the track unless the chicanes were installed. This caused a lot of controversy as it put a far greater strain on suspensions, brakes, transmissions and on the drivers themselves. However, all the talk drew one of the largest crowds in recent memory including a vast army of 50,000 motor racing supporters from across the channel.

With Jaguar only managing to finish 4th and 8th in 1989, Jaguar remained the underdog as it went into the 1990 event.

Porsche was clearly the favourite with 19 of its 962's entered. Nissan also became a main contender for an overall win when Mark Blundell's Nissan R90CK took pole position. Jaguar entered four of its 7.0 litre V12 XJR-12's, an update of the 1988 winning XJR-9.

Porsche and Nissan were able to turn up the turbo boost and qualified in the top spots. However, in the race, with these cars now in normal race configuration turbo boost, the Jaguars caught the leading field and after four-hours a pair of Jaguars topped the leader-board.

The new chicanes caused problems for the drivers, with all manufacturers having mechanical problems and accidents to contend with.

Jaguars had their problems as well with two of the Jaguars succumbing to engine troubles, but the two leading Jaguars kept going to the end.

Car No 3, with Nielsen/Brundle/Cobb finished a whopping 7 laps ahead of the 3rd placed Porsche, with Jaguar No 2 finishing second to claim the first a 1-2 victory since 1957.

Jaguar's victory, their seventh at Le Mans, made a fitting farewell gift to Sir John Egan, leaving the company after a ten-year tenure.

In 1991, a lone Mazda robbed Jaguar of an 8th victory with 7.4 litre XJR-12's finishing 2nd, 3rd and 4th. ■

Le Mans Race for 2020 has been rescheduled from June to the 19-20th September 2020.



Jaguar entered four of its 7.0 litre V12 XJR-12's (an update of the 1988 winning XJR-9) for the 1990 Le Mans race. Car No 3, with Nielsen/Brundle/Cobb finished 7 laps ahead of the 3rd placed Porsche, with Jaguar No 2 finishing second to claim the first a 1-2 victory for Jaguar since 1957. Car No 3 (chassis N°1090) is the only sports car to have won both Daytona (1988) and Le Mans (1990) 24hr race.