Jaguar Broadspeed XJ12C

After covering an article about the First-Generation of XJ Jaguars, it wasn't really possible to exclude reference to **Leyland Cars** re-entrance into motor racing. A number of books have been published about the Broadspeed XJ12C racing period including excellent coverage by Paul Skilleter in his book "Jaguar Saloon Cars".

In the 70's, manufacturers such as BMW had earned a great deal of marketing exposure from the European Touring Car Championship (ETCC) successes. Leyland Cars were keen to do the same to help boost sales. However, Leyland wanted instant success, and when that didn't happen, the project was scrapped after only 18 months.

Virtually all commentators noted that Ralph Broad and his team were in a no-win situation with insufficient time for development and testing, with added pressure from Leyland for instant results.

One of the biggest problems that Broadspeed had was the weight of the car. The XJ12C was much heavier than its BMW competitor requiring the XJ12C to make additional pit stops for fuel and tyres, and so the Jaguars had to be able to pull away from the competition to afford the time needed for the extra stops.

As noted earlier, the two door coupés lacked B-pillars and the racing cars needed to be stiffened to make the chassis stronger and more ridged, requiring more added weight strengthening the front and rear bulkheads. Even though the interiors were stripped and everything done to lighten the cars, they were still heavy at around 1.5 tons.

The weight of the car in turn caused other problems including major overheating problems with the brakes and a huge load on the gearbox and drive-shafts, often resulting in failures. Of key concern however were the wheels, which, under cornering loads "rocked" on the standard steel hubs causing stress cracks and stub axles to break. This became a perennial problem that would plague the project.

In its short career the Broadspeed Jaguar XJ12C competed in eight races, started in pole position six times, and led all eight races prior to mechanical problems.

Ralph Broad and the drivers that raced the cars were convinced that they would have been winners had the project been given another season. After all, it had taken several years for the BMW CSL's to be fully developed for motor racing.

"If Leyland had the foresight to stay in 1978, it would have realised the CSL would no longer have been competitive and the Jaguar would have walked it."
— Andy Rouse

"The BMW was a properly developed car. I think Leyland were short-sighted in stopping the development of the Jaguar. They got keyed-up about winning, but just running the car all over Europe was a tremendous fillip to the morale of the dealers and the public loved it..."
— Derek Bell

Trivia

Ironically, Mercedes-Benz subsequently raced automatic 450SCL's, and did no better than the Jaguars, but did it quietly, then disappeared even more quietly.

The twist to the Leyland Racing effort was this. If the Jaguars had raced another year and been a threat at winning the championship as anticipated, it was very likely that someone would have eventually queried the legality of the cars and asked - how many XJ12C's were sold with manual gearboxes?

Editor- Log Book Secretary David Burton was at Silverstone to see the XJC's leading the race. When the cars retired, so did most of the parochial spectators.

Tim Schenken. "If it was your turn to be the second driver, you generally never got a chance to drive". Seen here retired with a broken stub axle.

The beautiful looking Broadspeed XJ12C. One of the team's drivers was Australian F1 racer Tim Schenken. In an interview, Tim said the cars were very fast but the project needed more money and more time. We needed 4 cars like our competitors so that we could alternate each pair of cars between races to give the team more time to rebuild each car before it raced again..