

# XJ-S and Motor Racing

## Motorsport

After covering a story about the evolution of the XJ-S it wasn't really possible to exclude the successful racing career achieved by the XJ-S in the 70's and 80's.

Today the XJS continues to be extensively campaigned in club level motorsport, both in the United Kingdom and overseas.

## USA - Group 44

For 1977, the "Group 44" racing team had a very successful season in Trans Am with a race car based on the actual production XJ-S chassis and running gear.

The team won the series' 1977 drivers' championship cup for Bob Tullius but missed winning the manufacturer's title by two points (only 1 Jaguar competed in the Trans-Am series compared to many more Porsche entrants).

In 1978, a purpose-built tube-frame "silhouette" style XJ-S race car was constructed which greatly reduced the weight compared to the full production chassis car campaigned in 1977.

Group 44 succeeded in again capturing the driver's championship for Bob Tullius and also captured the manufacturer's title as well, by entering the 1977 car at some venues to gain additional manufacturer's points for Jaguar.

## USA - Cannonball Race

In April 1979 a XJ-S driven by Dave Heinz and Dave Yarborough was entered into the very illegal "Cannonball Run".

They won the 4,608 kilometres (2,863 mi) event from New York to Los Angeles in a record time of 32 hours and 51 minutes, a record that stood for 4 years. They averaged almost 90 mph, when the maximum speed limit in most USA States was 55 mph. The win was a huge publicity success for Jaguar.

## Tom Walkinshaw Racing (TWR)

Jaguar saw the benefit in racing in the European Touring Car Championship (ETCC) but had no money. They agreed to supply cars and components and pay TWR £200,000 for every victory.

In 1982, TWR entered one XJ-S into the ETCC. Tom won 4 of the 11 races that season to finish a credible 3rd overall and validating TWR's decision to take the XJ-S racing.

With Jaguar becoming an official sponsor in 1983, the team became a two-car entry, taking 5 victories and finishing second in both the driver's and manufacturer's championship.

With more money coming from Brown's Lane, new lighter cars were built with more powerful engines, 5-speed gearboxes and 17 inch wheels allowed massive 14 inch diameter brakes.

In 1984 TWR Jaguars won 7 races (including the prestigious Spa 24 Hour race), to win the driver's and manufacturer's championship.

These on-track successes had a huge effect on the image of the XJ-S and increased sales throughout TWR ETCC campaign.

## Bathurst

In 1985 the three TWR XJS Jaguars were brought out of retirement for the James-Hardie 1000. The cars were clearly the class of the field, qualifying in 1st, 2nd and 6th.

Walkinshaw and Percy dominated most of the race, only losing the lead to the Goss/Hahne car during pit stops. Goss and Hahne (car #10) had to battle a broken seat, held loosely in place by straps and cable ties for well over 100 laps. They sat in second most of the way until a split oil line late in the race cost the Walkinshaw/Percy car 3 laps and any chance of victory.

Goss/Hahne won the "Great Race" while Walkinshaw finished to make a Jaguar 1-3 victory with Walkinshaw following Goss across the finish line in a formation finish. The cars were entered in the 1986 Bathurst 1000, but ultimately did not race due to a lack of funding from Jaguar Rover Australia. ■



*Despite being heavier and having less engine displacement than most of its competitors, Bob Tullius and the Jaguar saw the checkered flag 7 times in a row tying Mark Donohue for the most consecutive Trans-Am wins. The program was aimed to boost the corporate image of British Leyland, not the Jaguar marque as such, but Jaguars 1978 Manufacturers win over Chevrolet was sweet.*