

# ARIZONA JAGUAR TEAM SHINES

AT THE ROLEX MONTEREY MOTORSPORTS REUNION

STORY BY TIM SHARP  
PHOTOS BY TIM AND KRISTIN SHARP



In recognition of its fiftieth anniversary, the Jaguar E-Type was selected as the honored sports car at this year's Rolex Monterey Motorsports Reunion. As the successor to the legendary C-Type, D-Type and XK120 Jaguars of the 1950s, the XK-E had a proud racing heritage to defend. The E-Type did this admirably, with scores of race victories in Europe, Australia and America. The XK-E also became the iconic symbol of English pop style during the British Invasion of the 1960s, often adorned with a Union Jack. However, Jaguar traditionalists still preferred British racing green.

One might assume that fastidious Jaguar owners would ship their vintage race cars to England for restoration. However, many American and British Jaguar owners choose to send their cars elsewhere. They ship them to Terry Larson's shop in Mesa for restoration and race preparation. Yes, race fans, they send them here to Arizona. As one of the top experts in the world on racing Jaguars, Larson not only restores Jaguars, but he also wrote the *The C-Type Register*, which chronicles the lineage and race history of Jaguar's earliest race cars. Having raced virtually every cat made

from the post-war era through the 1960s, Terry also understands the handling characteristics and mechanical quirks of each vintage racing Jaguar. Currently, Larson owns a Jaguar SS 100, C-Type, D-Type, XK120 and Lister-Jaguar.

During the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the XK-E at the Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca circuit, Terry and his mechanics—Ken Shutze, Dave Walls, Greg Nell and Chris Ewing—had a very busy week. They not only had to prepare the vintage Jaguars for the races, but also for the concurrent Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance and for track displays. It was Jaguar's year to shine, and the deep green cats sparkled like emeralds.

Terry and Darlene Larson were also joined in their pits by Mike Silverman of Scottsdale, who raced Terry's latest acquisition. This black cat is a 1954 XK 120 infamously known as "The Raider." Formerly raced on the West Coast by Hap Richardson in the fifties and sixties, this machine is believed to be the winningest racing Jaguar on the planet. Far into the 1960s, Richardson was still beating Corvette Stingrays with his antiquated 1954 Jaguar.

## THE CATS ON THE TRACK

It is one thing to look good in the pits and quite another to do well on the track. Fortunately, the Jaguars performed flawlessly on the twisty Laguna Seca circuit. In the 1981-1989 FIA and IMSA GTP Class, the Group 44 Jaguar XJR machines took the first two podium spots, followed by a Mazda RX7-92P. Former professional driver Rick Knoop won, with Doug Smith taking second and Weldon Munsey finishing third.

In the 1947-1955 Sports Racing and GT Class, John Buddenbaum led most of the race in his Jaguar Special, only to be passed late in the race by Rob Manson's Ford V-8 powered Manning Special. (Apparently, Manson did not get the memo that a Jaguar was supposed to win.) However, Jaguars did take the next three places. Bernie Juchli finished third in the Hagemann Jaguar Special, Terry Larson was forth in his C-Type and Mike Silverman finished fifth in Larson's black XK 120 roadster. Alex Curtis, another Arizona driver, finished sixth in his sleek Mercedes 300SL.

There was also a Jaguar Invitational Class, which featured E-Types exclusively



—early six-cylinder E-Types, not the later twelve-cylinder cars. Art and Bob Hebert took the first two podium positions in their lightweight silver 1965 Jaguar E-Types. Jack Busch was third in his 1962 XK-E.

## TOP PERFORMANCES FROM ARIZONA

Brilliant drives were also put in by other Arizona racers at the Rolex Monterey Motorsports Reunion. Ross Thompson and Les Betchner, both former Bob Bondurant School of High Performance Driving instructors, finished second in their races. Chris Orosco was the runner-up in his class.

Thompson's 1973 Corvette pressured Ken Epsman's 1976 Monza AAGT for most of the race until his heavier machine overheated its tires. Betchner was impressive during his first time on the Laguna Seca circuit. Driving a Chevy-powered 1958 Devin SS, Les was the runner-up to Donald Orosco's 1958 Lotus 15.

Chris Orosco, Donald's son and a Phoenix resident, also finished second in the 1955-61 Sports Racing Cars Under 2000cc Class, in his superb handling 1959 Lola Mark 1. Chris was edged out by Ed Nigro in a similar Lola Mark 1 machine.

Congratulations to all the Arizona drivers who put on a remarkable show for the vintage racing fans. A special thanks to Terry Larson and his team for making this a memorable year for Jaguar. We are certain that the HMSA and Laguna Seca Raceway appreciated Larson's efforts, as Terry was awarded the prestigious "Spirt Of Monterey Trophy" for his driving performance and preparation work at Monterey.

## A PERSPECTIVE ON VINTAGE RACING

If you have ever raced cars for championships and prize money, it may be difficult to grasp the notion of vintage racing. Most vintage racers receive nothing for winning their race, save the admiration of the fans and the respect of their fellow competitors. However, for most vintage race drivers, this is more than enough.

"The car is the star" is an expression frequently heard in vintage road racing. Vintage sports cars are rolling works of art which provide us a nostalgic link to our past. They amaze us with their innovative and quirky engineering. They

Jaguars of every type were the stars at the Rolex Monterey Motorsports Reunion. Opposite page, Terry Larson takes a turn in his No. 28 Lister-Jaguar. Bottom right, Art Hebert wins the E-Type race in his silver No. 63.



KEEP RIGHT >>



Many vintage Jaguars arrived via Reliable Transport and their owners by motor coach. Shown above are Larson's lineup, Group 44 Team's XK-E V12 roadster on display and Terry Larson's No. 100 C-Type on the track.



bring smiles to the faces of children who sit in their cockpits and pose for photos. They bring joy to race fans who remember when these cars competed "back in the day."

"If the car is the star, then isn't vintage racing really an on-track car show?" one might ask. Absolutely not. Former professional drivers like Bobby Rahal or Brian Redman still like to win their races, and the amateurs who compete against them are intent on denying them the victory. However, when you are racing three-million-dollar Jaguars or Ferraris on the track, you tend to make safe passes and avoid body contact. You will never see the intentional take-out moves NASCAR drivers frequently use, but you will see some exciting passes and very close competition.

While it is interesting to view vintage sports cars in a museum, there is nothing like watching them compete on the

race track as they did in their prime. Whether you prefer pre-WW II Grand Prix cars, Trans Am muscle cars or Le Mans prototype machines, you will see them all race at the Rolex Monterey Motorsports Reunion. It's not too early to start planning now, to catch the historic races in Monterey next summer.

**MISSED THIS YEAR? PLAN FOR 2012**

If you would like to attend the Rolex Monterey Motorsports Reunion, Pebble Beach Concours d' Elegance, auctions by Bonham's, Gooding & Company, Mecum, RM Auctions and Russo and Steele, the Gathering at Quail Lodge, or any of the other exciting events held during Monterey Auto Week in mid-August, check out these websites for more information:

**ROLEX MONTEREY HISTORIC RACES:**

[www.mazdaraceway.com](http://www.mazdaraceway.com)

**PEBBLE BEACH CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE**

[www.pebblebeachconcours.net](http://www.pebblebeachconcours.net)

**MONTEREY AND PEBBLE BEACH AUCTIONS:**

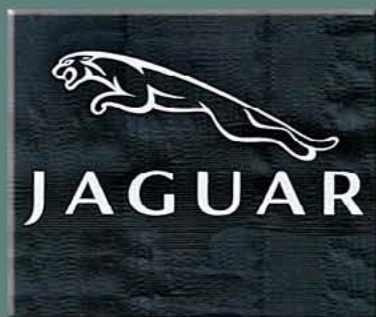
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