

On the day it announced its arrival in Formula One, Jaguar Racing also confirmed that Eddie Irvine will join the team for the 2000 season.

Irvine has reached agreement on a three-year deal. In confirming his signing, 33-year-old Irvine said: 'I'm overjoyed. I've been waiting for this opportunity for the past two years. I'm lucky to be involved in such a fantastic project. Through my experience in the re-building of Ferrari, I believe I can make a significant contribution to Jaguar Racing.'

Jaguar Racing also confirmed that Irvine will partner Johnny Herbert for the 2000 season. Herbert, 35, is driving for the Stewart-Ford team in 1999.

Jaguar has been involved in motor sport since the company was founded by Sir William Lyons in 1922. The Coventry-based luxury car manufacturer has seven times won the world's toughest endurance race at Le Mans. Jaguar has twice been World Sports Car



THE JAGUAR D-TYPE TAKES THE CHEQUERED FLAG AT LE MANS IN 1956

JAGUAR'S MOTOR SPORT HERITAGE

Champions and in 1956 the company won both Le Mans and the Monte Carlo Rally in the same year. Jaguar's global motor sport successes have also included two victories in America's toughest sports car race at Daytona, countless rally wins and a debut win in the first production sports car race ever held at Silverstone.

William Lyons founded the company that was to become Jaguar, in Blackpool, in the north west of England, in 1922. His first products were sidecars for motor cycles. He quickly realised that having his products seen on the race tracks would give his company a marketing edge and his sidecars were soon notching up successes in the celebrated TT races and other motorcycling events. By the mid nineteen thirties William Lyons had moved his company to Coventry and was building cars. Again he turned to motor sport and his new SS Jaguar 100 became a regular and successful competitor in circuit racing and rallying. A victory in the 1936 Alpine Rally, followed by a win in Britain's 1937 RAC Rally established the performance credentials of the SS 100.

Britain's first production sports car race was held at the newly opened Silverstone circuit in 1949. Three recently-announced Jaguar XK120 sports cars were on the starting grid and, cheered on by coach loads of Jaguar employees, went on to score an impressive one-two victory. The XK 120 also quickly made its mark in international rallying winning the classic Alpine Rally at its first attempt in 1950. It was however, the gruelling 24 hour endurance race at Le Mans that Lyons believed would be the ideal showcase for his car's performance and reliability. During the winter of 1950/51 the Jaguar boss authorised his racing chief Lofy England, to build an aerodynamic version of the XK 120 specially for the race. Inside Jaguar, the car was known as the XK 120 C. Motor sport enthusiasts the world over know it as the Jaguar C-Type.

The three car team, with a young Stirling Moss among the drivers, lined up for the traditional Le Mans start. Twenty-four hours later Jaguar was celebrating an historic victory. Jaguar C-Types won at Le Mans again in 1953. By 1955, the D-Type had taken over from the C-Type and this purpose-built sports racing car scored victories at Le Mans in 1955, 1956, and again in 1957, when Jaguar dominated the race finishing first, second, third, fourth and sixth.

The Jaguar E-Type was introduced in 1961 and although it was never to win Le Mans outright, the car had a very successful career in motor sport in Europe and in North America. Jackie Stewart tested, raced and scored victories in a lightweight E-Type in 1964.

Jaguar officially returned to top flight sports car racing in the nineteen eighties. The XJ-S climaxed a successful three season assault on the European Touring Car Championship by winning the European crown in 1984. Jaguar also returned to Le Mans that same year, backing Bob Tullius's American Group 44 Team in a renewed assault on the classic French race.

It would though be another four years before Jaguar would score its sixth win at Le Mans. That victory came in 1988 - exactly 31 years since the last famous win in 1957, when a V-12 powered Jaguar XJR-9 driven by Jan Lammers, Johnny Dumfries and Andy Wallace took the chequered flag. That same year Jaguar also won America's top endurance race, the 24 hours of Daytona and clinched the World Sports Car Championship for the second time.

Exactly 40 years after first competing at Le Mans in 1950, Jaguar scored its seventh victory, in the classic endurance race in 1990 when Martin Brundle, Price Cobb and Denmark's John Nielsen celebrated an emotional win for the Coventry Team. As in 1988, Jaguar's victory at Le Mans followed an impressive one-two success at Daytona.

The roll call of drivers who have raced jaguars during the past 50 years reads like a Who's Who of motor sport. In the fifties Mike Hawthorn, Paul Frere, Duncan Hamilton and Stirling Moss were regulars with the Jaguar team. Jackie Stewart (and his brother Jimmy), Sir Jack Brabham, Briggs Cunningham and Graham Hill all drove jaguars during successful racing careers. Martin Brundle, Tom Walkinshaw, Derek Warwick, Patrick Tambay, John Watson, Raul Boesel, Johnny Dumfries, Eddie Cheever, Teo Fabi, and Jan Lammers are among the many top international names who have driven for Jaguar in recent years.