

Jaguar XK-120, XK-140, C- and D-Types

Jaguar created a sensation in 1948 when they introduced their new XK 120 Roadster. The 120 was way ahead of its time, offering a top speed of 120 mph, superb road handling, radical styling plus a smooth ride. 120s were offered in roadster, fixed head and drop head coupes. All were used for racing. In the early days, Jaguar 120 roadsters were the dominant production cars and the C-Type won famous racing victories, especially at Le Mans in 1951 and 1953. Some late-model production 120s had "C" type heads and were known as XK120MCs. 12,000 120s were produced before it was replaced by the XK140 in late 1954. The 140 model offered rack-and-pinion steering and 190 hp. In 1957, the Jaguar XK 150 came in with a more powerful version of the Jag 120 XK engine. Jags competed in Class C Production, always in the same race if not the same class as the more successful Corvettes and Mercedes of the day. Outwardly, only subtle body changes were evident between the 120, 140 and 150 models, and one photo basically suffices for all. The photos show a 120 model as well as a C and D.

In 1955 the most famous of the Jaguars appeared: the D-Type. In addition to a beautiful streamlined body, its XK engine was highly tuned and capable of clocking over 170 mph in the Le Mans straights. It won at Le Mans three straight years: 1955, 1956, and 1957

In the Northwest, early 120s were plied by Rod Neville, Pete Lovely and Herb Weissman as well as many other club racers. They scored numerous overall wins in both production and feature races. C jags were raced here only by out-of-towners. Bob Byrd was the last Jaguar champion and he even tried hard in the 150 model. B.C.'s Jim Rattenbury was the most famous Jaguar driver of the late 50s in his D-type, which he modified heavily without a lot of apparent success. More consistent than fast, Jim raced the D everywhere and managed a fair share of wins. Rattenbury eventually sold the D-Type to Starr Calvert who installed a big Ford engine and modified the body further.