

CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE

OF AMERICA
AT ST. JOHN'S



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THE INN AT ST. JOHN'S
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Corvette vs. Jaguar Racing

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1960 Chevrolet Corvette

Legendary U.S. and British marques excel on track

One is a 60-year-proud product of America's biggest car company and its best-selling brand, Chevrolet. The other is a 77-year-old iconic British boutique brand. Both have scored countless racing victories and competed for sales and image among sports car enthusiasts.

Jaguar

Founded in 1922 as the *Swallow Sidecar Company* by **Sir William Lyons**, Jaguar began building SS Jaguar sedan cars in 1935. Following World War Two, it dropped the "SS" and found fame with sexy sports cars starting with the XK-120 in 1949, then the more powerful XK-140 and XK-150 (each named for its top speed) and eventually the positively erotic E-Type (aka XKE) in 1961. All were powered by Jaguar's legendary twin-cam straight-six engine, and all earned success competing on twisty "road" racing circuits on both sides of the Atlantic.

But Jaguar's most widely respected racing successes were earned with factory-built C-Type (1951-53) and D-Type (1954-57) racers. The former, which mated XK-120 running gear to an aero-slick aluminum body on a lightweight tubular chassis, won the Le Mans 24-hour in 1951 and again in 1953. By then, their 3.4-liter sixes pumped out as much as 220 hp and their brakes were pioneering 4-wheel discs. A total of 52 were built.

The latter finished a lap down to the winning Ferrari at Le Mans in 1954 and won the following year after a horrific accident killed Mercedes driver Pierre Levegh and more than 80 spectators. Mercedes-Benz withdrew from motorsports at the end of that season, and D-Types won again in 1956 and (fielded by private team Ecurie Ecosse) in 1957. Most notable about these cars were their pioneering aircraft-type monocoque chassis, highly-aerodynamic body (especially the long-nosed version introduced for 1955), dry-sump lubrication for the XK engine and the large fin behind the driver's head to improve high-speed stability on Le Mans' very fast Mulsanne Straight. Counting 16 XKSS road-going versions built after Jaguar withdrew from racing at the end of the 1956 season, D-Type production is thought to have totaled 87.

Corvette

Corvette was born in 1953 as an intriguing concept sports car. Positive public and press reaction to it led to 300 hand-built copies that year, followed by low-volume production the next as GM's answer to Jaguar's XK-120 and other postwar British roadsters. Powered by a tepid six-cylinder engine through a two-speed (Powerglide) automatic, it looked great but was hardly thrilling to drive. That began to change with arrival of Chevy's small-block V-8 for '56, then a (short-lived) factory racing program led by Belgian-born Chief Engineer Zora Arkus-Duntov.

Chevy general manager Ed Cole (who had chief-engineered the now-legendary small-block V-8)



approved preparation of two 1957 Corvette race cars for factory-backed competition in October 1956. The first Corvettes with Rochester fuel injection and four-speed manual transmissions were built to compete in famous endurance events at Daytona, Sebring and Le Mans with the idea of enhancing the Corvette's (and Chevy's) performance reputation.

Their first test was Nassau's famous Speed Weeks that December, where the one driven by Dr. Dick Thompson finished a disappointing 20th and Jim Jefford's car failed to finish a 200-mile Nassau Trophy race. Things went better the following day, when Thompson scored a class win (seventh overall) and Jeffords was second in class, ninth overall, in a 20-lap race. Even better was the '57 Sebring race, where the pair finished first and second in class.

But that would be the end of factory racing at GM (and other U.S. makers) for quite a while. Reacting to that awful 1955 crash at Le Mans, the U.S. Automobile Manufacturers Association (AMA) banned factory-backed efforts in June, 1957, and they complied.

Still, Chevy continued to surreptitiously back top Corvette privateer teams with secretive development and "heavy-duty" parts spirited out the "back door" through most of the '60s, '70s and '80s. A 1000-plus-hp Lola-based prototype "Corvette" GTP won seven poles and two races in 1986 International Motorsports Association (IMSA) competition and two more poles in '87. But it was a decade later when Chevy began developing the Corvette C5-R racers that would go on to win numerous major races from Le Mans to Daytona to Sebring beginning in 2001 ... just as Ed Cole and Zora Arkus-Duntov had envisioned a half-century earlier.

On the field

The 2012 Concours d'Elegance of America at St. John's has assembled a spectacular collection of Jaguar and Corvette racing machinery to celebrate the competition histories of these two great marques. Here is a sampling:

1953 Jaguar C-Type (James Taylor, Gloversville, NY)

- Originally purchased by Robert McManus in 1952, this C-Type was campaigned in the United States by McManus and Chuck Hassan several times during 1953 and early 1954 with good results including three class wins and second-overall finishes. It was

sold in early 1954 to Riddelle Gregory, who drove it to a third overall and second in class at Pebble Beach that April. Gregory drove it several more times that year, then sold it to Tom Groskritz, who raced it through the next several years. The car resided in the collection of famed Jaguar enthusiast Walter Hill from the early 1970s until 2006, when it was purchased by Mr. Taylor.

1955 Corvette Duntov "Mule" (Kenneth Lingenfelter, Brighton, MI) - This is the actual car that Corvette chief engineer Zora Arkus-Duntov drove to a record 163 mph at GM's Desert Proving Grounds in 1955. It began as a '54 test mule fitted with a race-prepped Smokey Yunick V-8, then was given to Duntov to prepare for record attempts at Daytona. He fitted a curved plexiglass windscreen, a fiberglass tonneau over the passenger-side cockpit and a (Jaguar D-Type-like) fiberglass headrest-tailfin for high speed stability. He also increased the engine's displacement from 283 to 307 cu. in. and ordered up a special camshaft (the first "Duntov Cam") from Chevrolet Engineering. This same engine was later installed in a second test car that set a record of 150.583 mph on the sands at Daytona.

1957 Corvette "4007" (Bill Connell, Cincinnati, OH) - The first of 43 legendary RPO 579D "Air Box" Corvettes offered in the spring of 1957 as the first factory-built race cars available to the public for serious competition. Building on the RPO 684 racing suspension (heavy-duty springs and shocks, a quick-steering adaptor, larger wheels and special finned-drum brakes), performance of the RPO 579D cars was further enhanced by addition of a cold air box that captured cooler, higher density outside air for the Ramjet fuel injection and rear brakes. In 2010, this E857104007 Corvette was inducted into the Bloomington Gold Great Hall as one of the 50 most historically significant Corvettes.



1951 Jaguar XK 120
Open Racer

1962 Jaguar E-Type (Miles Collier, Naples, FL) - This right-hand-drive E-Type was provided by the factory to Briggs Cunningham to race in the 1962 Le Mans 24 Hour, where he and Roy Salvadori drove it to a solid second in class and fourth overall. It ran at Sebring the following year, and then was retired into Cunningham's collection. It was bought by Miles Collier, along with most other cars in the Cunningham Museum in 1986, and is now in the Collier Collection at Naples, Florida.

1962 Corvette Gulf Oil Race Car (Paul Andrews, Fort Worth TX) - One of the most significant American race cars of the 1960s, this Gulf-sponsored racer was the 1962 Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) A-Production National Champion. It was one of 246 '62 Corvettes equipped with the RPO 687 package, which included heavy-duty suspension and brakes and, in this car's case, a large 37-gallon fuel tank. Originally sold by Chenko Chevrolet of Cannonsburg, Pennsylvania, it was driven mostly by "Flying Dentist" Dr. Dick Thompson to 12 of 14 SCCA National races and class wins at both the 1962 12 Hours of Sebring and the Daytona Continental 3 Hour. In recent years, beautifully restored, it has been the benchmark car for the NCRS American Heritage Award and a two-time Bloomington Special Collection and Hall of Fame Award Winner.

1963 Jaguar E-Type (Jaime Van Valle, San Juan, PR) - Not only is this factory-prepared, alloy-bodied E-type very rare, it also has an amazing racing history in England. Originally purchased and raced by professional driver John Cuff, it was upgraded by the factory in 1966 with its current 4.2-liter engine. Then Jaguar founder Sir William Lyons' son-in-law bought it in 1967 and continued racing it until 1970.

1965 Jaguar E-Type (Lou Fidanza, Mentor, OH) - Because it often beat V-8-powered Corvettes and other cars in higher (A- and B-Production) SCCA

classes, this six-cylinder Jag has been called "the ultimate David vs. Goliath" and "the most competitive E-Type Jaguar in road-racing history." Among its numerous victories with driver Freddy Baker, it beat Paul Newman's Datsun Z-Car for the 1980 SCCA C-Production National Championship at Road Atlanta, Georgia, and broke every existing sports-car and sedan-class record in the process.

1966 Corvette L88 Penske Sunoco Corvette (Kevin MacKay, Valley Stream, NY) - In October, 1965, Roger Penske received a call from Zora Arkus-Duntov, who offered him a racing version of the new 427 cu. in. Mark IV big-block engine and this (secretly factory-built) Corvette with a prototype cowl-induction hood. Penske signed Californian Dick Guldstrand as primary driver with George Wintersteen and Ben Moore as co-drivers. They set class records and scored the class win at Daytona, despite a late-night crash that heavily damaged the car's front end, then another at Sebring a few weeks later.

1969 BFG #49 ZL-1 Corvette (Chuck Ungurean, Columbus, OH) - One of three John Greenwood team cars sponsored by BF Goodrich during 1971-73 to showcase its new line of TA Radial tires, this 750-hp #49 competed in the trifecta of sports car racing; the 12 Hours of Sebring, the 24 Hours of Daytona and the 24 Hours of LeMans. Driven by Greenwood and comedian Dick Smothers, its first major win came at the 1972 Watkins Glen 6 Hour. The next year at Le Mans, it set a GT speed record of 215 MPH on the Mulsanne Straight in qualifying. Restored to concours condition in 2008 by Kevin Mackay of Corvette Repair, Valley Stream, NY; it has received numerous awards, including the 2009 National Corvette Restorers Society American Heritage Award (the highest award for non-street Corvettes) and has been a center display car for a Corvette Racing Legends event at the Petersen Museum in LA and at the National Corvette Museum for the Corvette Hall of Fame in 2009.

