

SS-90, FIRST JAGUAR SPORTS CAR, TO STAR AT ARIZONA CONCOURS

The British automaker that would become Jaguar took a bold step in 1935 with the SS-90, a prototype of its first sports car. With its gleaming chrome grille, sweeping fenders and distinctively sloping rear deck, the roadster was greeted with excitement by the motoring press and public.

The SS-90 set the stage for all Jaguar sports cars to come, also launching the marque's legendary reign in motorsports, with the prototype serving as the factory's first competition car.

The SS-90 prototype, arguably the most historic of all pre-war Jaguar models, is owned by Terry and Darlene Larson of Mesa. Larson, a famed Jaguar restorer, collector and historian, completed restoration of the SS-90 in 1998 for a Swiss collector, who went on to amass international awards for the car. Larson was able to obtain the SS-90 and bring it back to Mesa in 2019.

The roadster has a colorful early history, purchased from the factory in 1937 by Royal Air Force Wing Commander Hugh Kennard, a decorated

fighter pilot who flew the first Spitfire for the RAF. Kennard would drive the prototype regularly, parking at the airfield when he went on missions including the heroic Battle of Britain. He was shot down over the English Channel but survived.

Kennard sold the SS-90 in 1944, and it changed hands several times in the 1950s as a cheap used car. In 1962, an enthusiast purchased it with the intention of restoration, but it sat essentially untouched for 30 years in a garage in Norfolk, England. It was bought in 1996 by the Swiss collector, who shipped it to Larson for its restoration.

Although 22 more SS-90s were eventually produced, the prototype is unique for its dramatic rear styling. Behind the cockpit, the sculpted body slopes down between the fenders with a large spare tire inset at the center affixed with leather straps. While the rear styling was beautifully rendered, it was considered impractical for private owners and too expensive for the factory to produce in series. Subsequent SS-90s and the follow-



ing SS-100 models had more-traditional upright fuel tanks and space for folding fabric tops.

The SS-90 will be on display, competing in the class for Aerodynamic Pre-War Sports and Race Cars, at this year's Arizona Concours.

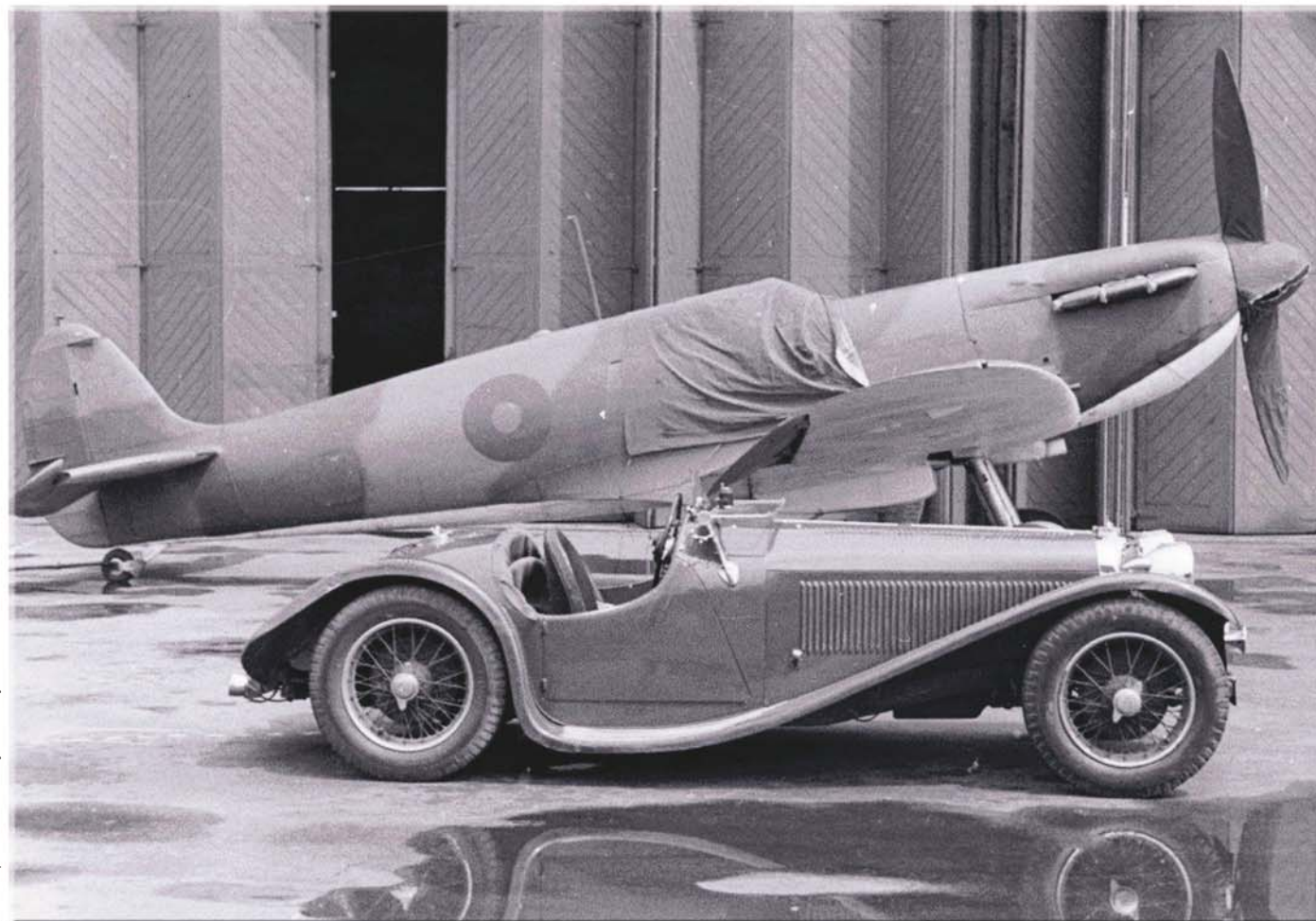
The 2023 Arizona Concours d'Elegance takes place Sunday, January 22, in its new location at the Scottsdale Civic Center. See further information elsewhere in this issue, or visit:

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Period photo courtesy of Terry Larson