

INTERNET

Jaguar fires up jet pack with eye on world record

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Jaguar XE and Olympic skier Graham Bell

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British automaker Jaguar is taking its aerodynamic expertise onto the slopes with the help of Olympic skier Graham Bell.

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The Olympian and automotive brand have announced a technical partnership with the goal of setting a Guinness World Record for fastest downhill ski speed, currently held by Italian speed skier Simone Origone. Emphasizing principles of design and speed in other fields builds the Jaguar brand in an organic and unobtrusive manner.

"As engineering challenges go it doesn't get more unique than this, so the next few months are going to be very exciting," said Ian Anderton, thermal and aerodynamics manager at **Jaguar Land Rover**. "In many ways, it's very similar to the car design process, necessitating the perfect balance between aerodynamics, engineering and design for ultimate performance."

Downhill edge

Mr. Bell participated in five Winter Olympics from 1984 to 1998 and now hosts the British TV show "The Jump," in which celebrities partake in a variety of winter sports. Working with Jaguar, he hopes to exceed 160 mph, well above Mr. Origone's 156 mph record.



Mr. Bell on the slopes with a Jaguar XE

Jaguar is developing a ski suit and harness that contains twin micro jets. The Jaguar XE is being used as a model for its aluminum-intensive body structure, which makes it lighter, stiffer and more aerodynamic than any other Jaguar.

In a statement, Mr. Bell said, "I approached Jaguar to become my lead technical partner due to their experience in

aerodynamics and love of all things involving speed. As lead technical partner in the attempt, Jaguar will provide the aerodynamic expertise to develop the Iron-Man-style suit I need, as well as helping me acclimatize to speed and external forces using high performance vehicles including the Jaguar XE AWD - designed to provide maximum traction in adverse conditions including snow and ice."



Mr. Bell skjoring behind Jaguar XE

The two partners have already begun training in the Austrian Alps. Mr. Bell has skjored, a winter sport in which a skier is pulled by an animal or motor vehicle, behind a Jaguar XE traveling over 100 mph.

The tests help determine what factors, such as wind chill and skiing position, need to be considered when designing the ski suit. The actual record attempt will take place early next year in Jaguar's cold weather testing facility in Sweden.

To help promote the partnership, Jaguar has shared a training film of the skjoring on social media platforms.



Clip from Jaguar's training film

The video begins with shots of the Austrian Alps and Mr. Bell suiting up and stepping into his skis. Mr. Anderton echoes the difficulty of the challenge but notes, "We are best placed, in terms of our technical capabilities, to be the ones who do it, though."

Bell then discloses his strategy: to reduce the amount of fuel and thus weight he has to carry, he will let the XE bring his speed up as high as possible, then disconnect from the vehicle and activate the jet pack to put him over the hump and claim the record.

Jaguar & Graham Bell / The Fastest Man on Skis

"Extreme" stunts often have a broader appeal than specialized sporting activities because of the thrills and dangers associated with them. By sharing the video on social media, Jaguar can draw the attention of consumers who may not initially be interested in a skiing activity.

Moreover, the placement of the XE in the Alps discreetly promotes the vehicle's handling and bad-weather capabilities. Making itself a design and speed force in other racing and sporting events reinforces Jaguar's brand values.

Off to the races

Jaguar's sister brand has also looked to other forms of racing to prove its design and speed prowess.

British automaker Land Rover is also using its technological proficiency to conquer the seas.

For the first race of the America's Cup, sometimes referred to as "Formula 1 on water," Land Rover will participate in

the race with a multihull catamaran going by the name R1. Land Rover frequently puts design and tech at the forefront of its marketing, but taking to the sea will solidify those values and possibly bring the brand to a new market segment ([see story](#)).

However, Jaguar is not the only automaker to find parallels with the world of skiing.

In 2014, fellow British automaker Bentley Motors celebrated its affinity for winter with a short film that shadowed professional skier Chris Davenport.

As it showcased in the film, the automaker's attraction to snow stems from its four-wheel drive, which allows its vehicles to navigate treacherous conditions. "In Search of Snow" also allowed Bentley to align itself with Mr. Davenport's guiding philosophies ([see story](#)).

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