

Jaguar wows with wagon

WINFRED B. CROSS
Test Drive



Americans are still gobbling up gas-guzzling SUVs at a surprising rate despite sky-high gas prices. Come on now. We need room for seven or even nine for our two-and-a-half kids, wife and pet.

You can still fit all of that in a station wagon, which, by the way, has as much storage space if not more as a big ol' honkin' SUV. Unfortunately, if you want Jaguar's snazzy Sportwagon, you'll pay what you pay for one of those honkin' SUVs.

Is that such a bad thing? Yes and no. Yes, because my test wagon is \$43,940. No, because you get a great-driving Jaguar wagon with a lot of stuff.

The Sportwagon is an X-Type stretched a bit and reconfigured as a station wagon. Like the X-Type, it's smallish, but stylish. It's actually handsome as a wagon.

The mechanicals are the same. A 227-horsepower V6 gets a workout in the heavier, all-wheel drive wagon, but it's up to the task. Soccer moms don't peel away from stop lights (well, not all of them) but they do need power to pass and that this car has. It's also nimble. All the road manners of the X-Type are present, with maybe a smoother ride because of the longer wheelbase.

There is ample room for four; five would be tight. Cargo space is good, but becomes great when you lower those leather-covered split-folding seats in the rear.

At \$36,330, the Sportwagon has a lot of stuff, including bunches of airbags, wood trim, remote entry and alloy wheels. You can pile on the options, of course, which is what Jaguar did to my test car. Who could live without Bluetooth connectivity in this day and age? Or a navigation system, two-stage heated front seats, metallic paint, reverse park control or dynamic stability control.

Then there's that \$2,200 premium package that really makes this a Jaguar.

Mini vans have more room but aren't as cool. SUVs allow you to crush a lot of stuff for no particular reason. The station wagon seems to be the most common sense mode of transportation for families these days but there's that stigma from the 1960s and '70s. Jaguar has added cool points to a dying breed.

MEAC tourney sales pick up steam

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Hampton coach Maurice Pierce said. "We were able to do all those things."

Norfolk State won its first indoor title since 2001 by piling up 133. Hampton was second with 86 points and North Carolina A&T third at 74.

"We exceeded our expectations," said Norfolk State head coach Kenneth Giles. "This win is for the seniors, we have a good group of student-athletes who have helped build this program."

A&T's Justin Byron earned outstanding performer honors, the senior earned 20 points and won the 200 meters with an indoor championship record time of 21.35 seconds.

Eleven records were broken during the two-day meet. Hampton's Kellie Wells ran a personal best in the finals of the 60 meters hurdles (8.08 seconds) that broke her previous record of 8.13 set during Friday's preliminaries. UMES' Danieth Pryce edged Wells in the 60 meters in 7.32, one-hundredth of a second better than Wells' record set a day earlier.

The records keep falling for Delaware State basketball.

The Hornets won for the 13th time in 14 games in an 88-77 win over Hampton Saturday, solidifying their grip on the top seed for next month's tournament. Jasha Bluntt scored 22 points for Delaware State, including five three-pointers to become the school's career leader with 195. Terrance Hood held the old mark of 194 from 1995-99.

Ticket sales for the MEAC tournament are picking up steam.

League officials report 2,500 ticket books have been sold in advance, something that hasn't been seen in years. The March 6-11 tournament will be played in Raleigh, a first-time host city.

"The response in terms of tickets sold is unprecedented," MEAC Commissioner Dennis Thomas said. "With presales going this well, we are right on track to surpass our expectations in terms of ticket sales. We anticipate as the tournament approaches, walk-up sales will increase significantly."

The brisk ticket sales are also translating to lodging deposits. Hotel rooms are also moving, with four of the official MEAC hotels completely sold out.



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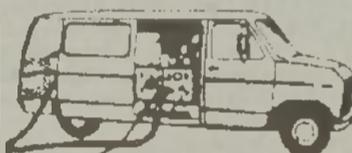
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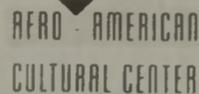
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