Interview with Tsujimura

Full model change in base car a major turning point

The Lancer Evolution IV had to undergo many changes alongside the base Lancer, which was undergoing a full model change in that year. Everything had to be done from scratch, but that turned out to be an advantage for the Evolution. That is, we were able to pick the best layout for rallying right from the start, and build it into the base car. It was a chance to use everything we learned from the Evo III – from the engine to the suspension...all the way down to the four-wheel-drive system.

Engine layout reversed

In order to cut vibration and weight on the base Lancer, the layout of the engine was reversed. That meant that the Lancer Evolution would get the same reversed engine. Of course, in order to do that, some engine-related parts had to be remade; so we decided to use this as a chance to increase the potential of the engine. The point at which we changed those parts was the point at which we included the twin-scroll turbine. That, plus some exhaust revisions, allowed us to succeed in making it into a 280 hp power unit.

4WD system soaks up increased power

Once engine performance was raised, the next thing to think about was four-wheel drive. At the time, Mitsubishi Motors' 4WD engineering was advanced beyond that of other automakers, and we did a lot of research on it. One of the fruits of that labor was AYC (Active Yaw Control). After going out to the test course to find out what sort of technology it was, we found that it improved turn-in, increased cornering limits, improved stability in braking; a very satisfying package. It was at that point that the development team decided it wanted to use this technology in the Lancer Evolution. I decided to approve the inclusion of AYC. By making the best use of the power, we could improve handling, and take the Evo drive experience to an entirely new level.

Next issue: improving the chassis

Thanks to the new platform, the car had greatly improved automotive performance from the engine on down. However, in order to make future models faster, all that was left to improve was "chassis speed." First, to meet the demands from the WRC Team, we focused on widening the tread, inverting the front suspension, and gaining improved stiffness, fitting her with 225-size tires. To improve braking, we chose Brembos, which are the motorsport industry standard.

Cutting weight and heat

Widening the tracks, along with increasing brake and tire size, meant that we had to cut weight all around the car. We reevaluated the quality of parts materials in the front and rear suspension, and swapped in aluminum wherever possible. We also chose aluminum for the fenders and rear wing, resulting in a significant cut in total weight. Also, when you boost power you also have to worry about heat. We increased the size of the radiator and oil cooler, as well as tweaking the water flow within the engine for peak efficiency.

With Evo VI, the keyword is response

With the advent of the Lancer Evolution V, we knew that we had made the car as fast as it was going to get. The next step was to improve the responsiveness of the car. Starting with the implementation of the world's first titanium-aluminum turbine for a mass-production car, we tweaked various areas to improve the car's response, all the way down to its "footwork."

Tommi Makinen and the Lancer Evolution

From 1996 to 1999, Tommi Makinen won an unbelievable four consecutive Drivers Championships. If Makinen had not set that record, the Lancer Evolution would not be known the world over as it is today. Many thought we should include him as a permanent part of Lancer Evolution history, and the Tommi Makinen Model was born. At first, we thought we'd just embroider his name on the seats or slap a label on the car, but the development team wasn't satisfied with that and it became the start of a new challenge.

Boosting tarmac specification

We developed the Lancer Evolution VI TME as a car that would be quick on the tarmac. We dropped it 10 mm, improved the steering gearbox, changed the titanium turbine blade shape, and made other changes to maximize the car's performance and response on tarmac.

With motorsports enthusiasts in mind

At that time, we would bring Tommi Makinen, some Japanese rally drivers, and others to Okazaki so that we could watch them drive, have them drive our test cars, or just talk about the business. In this way, it is no exaggeration to say that the Lancer Evolution has grown side by side with motorsports. I believed that it was our job to take the feedback we gathered on the motorsport field and plug it back into the production vehicles.