



Interview with development team: Mr. Funo

(Manager, Function Testing Department)



Tuning plan for the Lancer Evolution

Generally, there are specialists for the turbocharged engine, for the automated manual transmission, and for the S-AWC four-wheel-drive system. But this group is composed of all of these sorts of people working together, evaluating every aspect of the “driving feeling” — whether good or bad. This team has made a career of working with the Evo and all of the staff are top shelf.

It’s not as if a special team was specifically assembled for this; it just turns out that a lot of very talented individuals made their way here.



High testing standards

There are a few special tests in which we use to obtain our very specific standards and results. For example, running durability tests under extreme conditions while keeping the engine temperature from rising too much as part of one test.

We also use reference vehicles in deciding the level to which we have to raise the quality of the driving feel. The level is high even when compared to other development vehicles. So in this way in terms of mechanical ability and in terms of the driving feel, we’re talking about a car that is tweaked a step beyond other vehicles. Obviously with the Evolution we’re concerned about how the car performs in on-the-limit situations; whether it performs safely. Not so much things that the average user will be concerned with, such as whether it turns or not. Rather, we are assessing the car in a manner far beyond that, scoring it, and judging whether or not it has made it to the designated level.





Punishing testing in race against time

The toughest part was that this car — the body, suspension, engine, transmission, and four-wheel-drive system — was almost all completely new. That is something that we didn't have to deal with in previous versions of the car. The development period for the car was substantially compressed. It was always a struggle; a race against time, or making one system join properly with another.

There's a 2.2-km / 4-km handling track at the test course in Okazaki. We use it for the endurance testing that the cars have to get through. Only the Evo and a few other high performance cars use it.

The driver will drive sets of 20 laps — 10 one direction, 10 the other — all day long, with the goal of doing 100 laps. This time, since we had the new SST to think about, one time we did about 160 laps in two days. That kind of testing will tire out both your car and your driver.



Test driver's evaluation of S-AWC

Yes, I'd say everybody out there is going to be very surprised when they get behind the wheel of this car. Why the surprise? Because I think you are all under the impression that cars already squeeze as much performance as possible from their tires. Truth is, I thought so too, but I was wrong. The control that S-AWC exerts shows you that those tires still had a lot of grip left in them.

The reason is that until now we've thought of it as common sense that if you turn and skid at a certain point, you're not going to be able to recover.

But the car modifies its own trajectory and comes back to the intended line. It is a very new — and surprising — feeling, to have a car that follows the driver's intention in this way. I think this will be the biggest surprise you get from the car.



What would you say is the difference between the evolutionary steps seen in previous Evos and in Lancer Evolution X?

I'd say at least double. The car's character has completely changed. If you imagined the car to be an extension of its predecessors, you'd be wrong. Up until now you might say the goal of the Evo was "the faster the better" — this time, the development team put much more emphasis on "a better way to go fast" — and went after several new challenges in that direction.

Core users of the previous Evo might take the new car for a spin in town and think, "Hmm, the Evo's gone a little soft, has it?" But they'd be wrong. If they push it a bit, they'll see what is so impressive about the system, and I think they'll find some real fun in driving it, too. I believe that the car really brings new value to the game, and I think that's where it will leave the competition behind.

