

Volume XII, Number 1- January 2010



DRAG RACING

MAGAZINE

Online

FONTANA NEW YEARS BRACKET BASH



**INNERVIEW:
SCOOTER BROTHERS, PART 2**

**MEET NEW COLUMNIST
JIM BAKER**

JOHNSON SURPRISES DAD WITH CHALLENGER

Allen Johnson surprised his father, Roy Johnson, with a belated Christmas present on New Year's Day that would turn any father green with envy — a brand-new Dodge Challenger Drag Pak by Mopar vehicle.



Roy Johnson built a reputation on the drag strip as a champion sportsman racer, earning the 1975 and 1976 IHRA world championships driving a 1971 Dodge Challenger and inspiring his son's racing career, before assuming engine builder duties for Allen Johnson's J&J Racing team. Allen overheard his dad raving about the Mopar Drag Pak during the vehicle's debut at the 2008 Mopar Mile-High NHRA Nationals in Denver and a seed was planted for how the son could pay back the father.

"Dad was talking about wanting to play with one of those Drag Paks at Denver in 2008," said Allen Johnson. "I began thinking about it and then I talked with Dale (Aldo, Coordinator, Performance Parts, Mopar) about getting in line for a Mopar Drag Pak vehicle for Dad."

Allen Johnson had the Drag Pak body delivered to B&B Racecars, based in Hohenwald, Tenn., toward the end of October. B&B hammered out the car, complete with a retro paint scheme nearly identical to that in which Roy Johnson campaigned in the '70s, in a little over two months. Roy Johnson's Drag Pak will be powered by a 5.7L HEMI engine supplied by noted Mopar engine builder Gary Stanton and is the lowest serial-numbered vehicle of the few Drag Paks to carry the 5.7L HEMI.

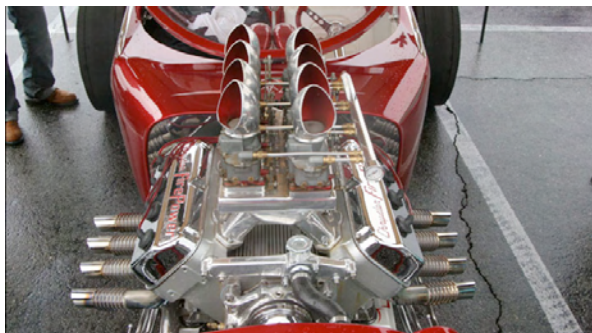
A group of about 20 friends and relatives crowded the J&J Racing shop on New Year's Day for the surprise reveal, after Allen's mom, Revonda Johnson, took husband Roy out on an "errand" for a few hours.

"When they came back, I watched for them and when they pulled in, I hollered at Dad to come into the shop," Allen recalled. "He walked in, opened the door, and it was like, 'Bam!' It was awesome. Dad was completely surprised and shocked."

Roy Johnson plans to compete in his Mopar Drag Pak at divisional races close to home during down time from the NHRA Full Throttle Pro Stock circuit, and may compete in NHRA national events at Bristol and Atlanta. He joins other celebrity owners of Dodge Challenger Drag Pak by Mopar vehicles, including "Big Daddy" Don Garlits, owner of the first factory-built Drag Pak, and Pro Stock driver Jeg Coughlin, who plans to debut his Mopar Drag Pak at the NHRA Winternationals in February. (photo courtesy Mopar) [01/06/10]

HEY, PUNK

This is a close up view of the Hemi-powered "Atomic Punk" on display at the Mooneyes Xmas Party. James Drew takes us on a [photographic tour](#) in Features. [01/06/10]



PATRIARCH OF OLDEST DODGE DEALERSHIP DIES IN HOUSE FIRE

Oliver Dee Joseph, the icon of the country's oldest family-owned Dodge dealership, died in a fire at his home on Wednesday, Dec. 23, 2009. He was 82.

The Oliver C. Joseph Chrysler-Dodge dealership in Belleville, Illinois, founded by his father, has sold cars since World War I, opening on June 1, 1914. Oliver D. took over the business in 1958 and, even after his son Brad took over as general manager, could still be found at the dealership, greeting customers and answering telephones.

Joseph, who had recently suffered a stroke, was overcome by smoke before he could exit the house. He was found just five feet from the front door. He was alone when the fire started. Joseph's wife was attending a Christmas party that he had also been planning to attend, but decided to stay home. A cause of the fire has not yet been determined. [01/06/10]

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CHALLENGER GETS 'MOPARIZED'



Mopar is giving Dodge Challenger even more of a muscular appearance.

"Our mission at Mopar is to add value to all of our brands," said Pietro Gorlier, President and Chief Executive Officer – Mopar Service, Parts and Customer Care, Chrysler Group LLC. "Our 'Moparized' Dodge Challenger is a great example of how we can further enhance the value of all of our Chrysler, Jeep®, Dodge Car and Ram Truck vehicles."

Mopar's new exterior appearance package is now available as a factory production option. The exterior includes a unique body-color hood with scoop, body-color rear "Go-Wing" spoiler and strobe stripe performance graphics. An interior appearance package is also available and includes a Mopar-branded T-handle shifter, bright pedal kit (automatic only), bright door-sill guards, premium carpet floor mats and a full



vehicle cover to protect this prized possession.

"We worked closely with Mopar to further enhance the appearance of Dodge's modern-day muscle machine," said Ralph Gilles, President and Chief Executive Officer – Dodge Car Brand. "Our additional design cues effectively communicate the vehicle's world-class handling, performance and cutting-edge technology."

The Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price (MSRP) for the exterior package is \$1,995. The MSRP for the interior package is \$945 for the automatic transmission and \$780 for the manual transmission. Both options are available on SE and R/T models in the following colors: TorRed, Bright Silver Metallic, Brilliant Black Crystal and Bright White. (photos courtesy Chrysler) [\[01/06/10\]](#)

SPRING FESTIVAL 5 SCHEDULED FOR MARCH

The fifth annual Spring Festival will be held March 20 in the Irvine Spectrum overflow parking lot in Irvine, Calif. The car show is geared for vehicles built on the LX/LC platform. For more information go to www.socalx.com. Vendors wishing to display at the event should contact Scott Palmer of Automotive Event Specialists at 951-734-2392. [\[01/06/10\]](#)

AWARDS AND SMALL INCREASE IN SALES FOR CHRYSLER VEHICLES AS YEAR ENDS

Chrysler Group today reported December sales increased 36 percent compared with November 2009 and 20 of 24 vehicles posted sales increases for the same time period.



Nearly 600 cars were displayed at the 2009 Spring Festival. Past participants include executives from Chrysler and Sam Hubinette and the Mopar Drift Team. (photo courtesy John Fortuno)

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Chrysler Group received multiple accolades in December, including

Motor Trend's Truck of the Year award for the all-new 2010 Ram Heavy Duty pickup truck that is arriving in dealer showrooms now. In addition: Jeep Wrangler Unlimited Rubicon hailed as "Most Significant 4x4 of the Decade" and Jeep Wrangler Rubicon named "Best 4x4 of the Decade" by editors at Four Wheeler Magazine; Jeep named "Top Domestic Brand" in Kelley Blue Book's kbb.com® 2010 Residual Value Study; 2010 Ram Power Wagon was named Four Wheeler Magazine's "Pickup Truck of the Year"; 2010 Ram 1500 was named a "2010 All Star" by Automobile Magazine; Dodge Challenger was named "Most Satisfying Car" by readers of a prominent consumer magazine; and 2010 Dodge Grand Caravan identified as one of the "Safest Vehicles under \$30,000" by NADAguides.com.

"As we kick off the new year, Chrysler Group continues to build momentum with some of the best products in the marketplace, and we are enthusiastic about the new products coming this year" said Fred Diaz, President and Chief Executive Officer—Ram Brand and Lead Executive for the Sales Organization, Chrysler Group LLC. "Our great Chrysler, Jeep, Dodge and Ram products

are being recognized by opinion leaders in the industry, and consumers are responding in a positive way. In 2010 the company will continue to earn the trust of consumers with exciting, high-quality vehicles that are priced right."

Chrysler Group reported total U.S. sales for December of 86,523 units. Sales increased 36 percent month-over-month and declined 4 percent year-over-year. The company finished the year with 931,402 units sold, a decline of 36 percent compared with 2008. Inventory is down 55 percent compared with December 2008, with 178,538 units in inventory, representing a 58-day supply. [\[01/06/10\]](#)

A little engine-building advice



One of the hardest parts of being a mechanic for other people is when they come and ask what sort of motor they should put in their car. The first two questions I ask are, "how much can you spend and where is the majority of your driving done." The most frequent answers are as follows, "not much" and "in the city". With these two things in mind, I counsel towards low-end torque and simplicity. These two factors, in turn, produce the next four results: reliable, inexpensive, fast, fun. The last thing I try to impart is to stay away from the latest trendy/trick trick build-ups and stay with tried and true pieces and combinations.

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When you build for low-end torque, you immediately turn to the factory parts shelf and stay away from too many trick parts that send budgets skyward and tend to make reliability an issue. High horsepower means either huge cubic inches or high revs per minute; both cost lots of money compared to the torque-y city street motor. With a true, budget street motor you first turn to the stock combination and see where and how you can improve the formula with minimal changes.

Carefully consider how each change will affect the whole combo. When building a simple 383 big block for the street that doesn't need to go over 5500 rpm you can toss out the whole idea of gaining a few HP with trick aluminum roller rockers, or titanium valves. There really isn't any point to it when the stock parts work fine. A case in point is one of my favorite street motors. The particular motor I am talking about is at the far end of what I consider a true street motor—there is over .500" of lift on the cam. What I like so much about it is that it makes nearly 500 hp and over 550 ft. lbs. of torque and the parts list is incredibly simple and pretty much straight off the Mopar shelf. Heck, it even has stamped steel, non-adjustable rockers. No mysteries here; bulletproof and fully reliable.

Let's go back to that 383 that will top out around 5500 rpm. A stock Road Runner 383 got the job done admirably well with a little 600 cfm carb, not much cam, iron heads and a low, dual plane iron intake. Here are the stock, at the flywheel, numbers for 1969: 335 HP at 5000 rpm, 425 foot lbs. of torque at 3400. A regular 383 four barrel motor made the same torque at 200 rpm less and 5 hp less at the same RPM. Going simple, we can immediately look at the intake manifold. Sure, a performer RPM is a first choice proven piece, but many of the swap meet oldies are only a few numbers off and will give more oomph than the old iron intake for cheap. We can go for a slightly bigger carb while remembering to use a vacuum secondary 750 Holley (or a 750 AVS style carb) and the most basic one at that. Maybe spend some coin on some good shorty headers (remember, we are thinking STREET car here). As far as the cam goes, we can go over the stocker but keep it tight. There are great profiles that will give .475 to nearly .500 lift with nearly stock overall duration and overlap numbers. If we shoot for the best lift with the absolute closest to stock duration and overlap we will gain the best performance, reliability, and drivability.

When it comes to heads the choice becomes more difficult. Remember, the stock 383 made its power with uncut iron heads and stock valves. If we stick to the stock head, we can get a decent set of stainless valves or ask our machinist to back cut our stockers and we are gaining. Ask for a bowl cut below the seats and gain for cheap. Buy a Mopar template set and go to town with a grinder, be careful and port 'em out. Now we have some power in the heads. The next step is aluminum and how can you really bitch about those?

They might not fit the "budget" definition but they sure do get the job done. If you can go there, go there. No losing here.

What about pistons? Silv-o-lite. Choose a ratio that will give 9.0:1 and live happily ever after. End of story.

Already we are seeing a motor that might not have to break much more than 5500 RPM to make 400 horsepower, possibly more and be an absolute kitty-cat while doing it. By keeping our RPM range down low we are keeping it cheap and reliable. We are also closing the door on many "trick" parts that are really only good at an RPM range beyond what we've specified, so why spend money on them?

The real "secret" ingredient is to pay close attention to the assembly process or to find the absolute best builder you can afford. This is not the place to cut a corner at all. You can do without aluminum heads but you cannot do without an absolutely tidy, accurate and obsessive engine man. Check out [Gaffo's column from last month](#) and see what he has to say about Dan Dvorak building a class motor out of a '66 383. Talk about a dog with no cam and crap heads. By using every bit of experience and care, (Tricks? Hmmm.) Dan expects the doggy '66 motor to run with a well prepped bracket motor no problem. There is horsepower lurking everywhere. Good tuning, post build and break-in, is also essential.

The reason I am writing this is because I have seen, and made, too many mistakes. I've pulled more than one too big cam out of a motor for a mellower one and seen the owner go crazy with the newly found torque and fun. I've seen too much money spent on parts that either broke, didn't fit right, or really didn't make any difference. If a new engine is one of your new year's resolutions then resolve to get it right the first time. Carefully consider your goals, keep the recipe simple and stay away from exotic tricks or trends. Most of all, ask around. Talk to your fellow gearheads, call the most respected builders, do the research, read the Mopar engine books and then build it—or if you must, buy it!

Happy New Year!

Steve Mags Speaks



The Winter Beater Blows Up: Go To Plan D100

Well it finally happened. The \$1200 '98 Dodge Stratus winter beater I scored ten months ago finally took a dump. And this, just weeks after I'd had the driver side door glass replaced. Some bum smashed it to grab a few bucks worth of coins from the console. With only liability insurance on the virtually worthless rig, the \$240 out of pocket glass replacement fee seemed a small price to pay to keep her on the road for another winter. But it was not to be.

With Steppenwolf's *It's Never Too Late* cranking from the Stratus's excellent Alpine CD player (that was in the car when I bought it), I stopped at a red traffic light. During those few moments, the 2.5 liter Mitsubishi-sourced V6 shuddered a few times then shut down. Of course, this happened just as the light turned green. And yes, it was after 8:00 p.m. on a Sunday night, December 6 to be exact.

I hit the key and the engine turned over *waaay* too easy. Yep, the timing belt snapped and without the burden of rotating the top half of the engine, the starter motor was suddenly twice as strong. Before the harsh reality of the situation set in, I turned the key a few more times in a vain attempt to get it running so I could get under way or at least limp it off to the side of the road. No dice. I got out and pushed it into an alley. The wind was blowing cold.

What I hadn't heard over the sound of the whir of the electric starter motor was the metallic pitter-patter of intake and exhaust valves hitting pistons. Yep, the Mitsubishi 2.5 V6 is a so-called *interference* engine. In case you don't know, the term refers to an engine that is configured such that the valves and pistons collide in the event of a timing belt (or chain) failure. Naturally, when everything is correctly phased, these engines run just as well as any other. But when the belt breaks (or slips), its hammer time.

Not every engine is an interference disaster waiting to happen. But some are. That's why the owner's manual of many cars suggests timing belt replacement at 60,000 miles (on average) as a handy bit of preventative maintenance. It's best to nip this kind of expensive trouble in the bud...before it happens.

With 173,100 miles showing on the Stratus's odometer when I took the reins in February 2009, the health of the timing belt was unknown. And frankly, when you buy a car for \$1,200 you take a gamble. Sure, the seller mumbled something about replacing the timing belt, but the dusty engine looked like it hadn't had a finger set on it for years. But it was running strong.

Until last week. So what do you do with what is essentially a throw away car when a major mechanical meltdown occurs? You...throw it away. I see it like this. For my \$1,200 outlay the Stratus got me through the winter of 2009 and took the burden of salted roads and ice storms so my fleet of California-sourced hot rods wouldn't have to. Not that I'd even considered driving any of the "good cars" after the first snow fall. Throw in the \$240 glass replacement and the car cost me \$1,440. In it I covered exactly 7,029 miles from purchase to pop. I have no complaints other than the inconvenience of getting stranded. But that's what cell phones are for.

Sure, I could have blown a grand or more on remanufactured cylinder heads to right the wrong of bent valves. But have you ever looked at a Stratus engine bay? When powered by the inline four, there is a fair amount of room for service. But the optional Mitsubishi V6 is another matter. The potent but complex little mill is transverse mounted and wrapped with so much plumbing I told myself "No way." I guess I could have figured it all out but I have better things to do with my time. Don't we all?

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So I literally gave the car to a buddy who runs a scrap hauling business. He went back the next morning and retrieved the Stratus from the alley. After draining the full gas tank and (hopefully) removing the good sound system he probably got a hundred bucks for the carcass and smiled.

This left me car-less, right? Not so fast. Many years of working at *Hot Rod* magazine (HRM) have instilled in me a "Plan B mentality". In a nutshell, since its formation in 1948 HRM hasn't missed a single month – and likely never will. As a staffer I made sure I held up my end of the responsibility by always having a small collection of backup stories to plug in just in case the feature story gets delayed, cancelled, or otherwise "held over" (as they say in the biz). When you *expect* things to go wrong (and prepare accordingly), you're always covered. That's the Plan B mentality.

So when a family member offered me a 1992 Buick Riviera for a grand, I jumped on it as a perfect candidate for winter abuse. The less said about that car in this column, the better. But before I move on, with its pearl white paint, fake wire wheel covers and acres of velour inside, it isn't really my style. I'm more about radio delete plates and rubber floor mats. But as a front wheel driver with a great heater-defroster it'll get me through when the weather turns ugly. I will admit that the Buick pales in comparison to the deceased Stratus. The Buick's lethargic 3.8 liter V6 has a bunch of car to pull around and works hard just merging onto the highway.

By contrast the Stratus was about 600 pounds lighter and was a sweeter car from a driving standpoint. The little 2.5 was a ton of fun and would smoke the skins when prodded. I also loved the sporty Auto Stick feature. You could hold any gear through 6,000 rpm then up-shift with a quick side-slap of the stick. Neat. The real hassle is how the Riviera is a two door coupe. It's got a big trunk but I really miss the incredible utility of the Stratus's four door platform and fold-down rear seat.

One time I bought a bunch of 8-foot fluorescent light bulbs for the shop. With the seat folded down and one end of the bulbs resting on the shift console, I was actually able to close the trunk lid! Another time I loaded a complete Ford 5.0 Mustang 8.8 inch rear axle (drum to drum) back there. Again, I was able to close the trunk. I will miss the Stratus and would actually consider buying another some day. Maybe even a brand new one.

So where does all this leave my Plan B mentality? With the Stratus out of the picture and only the Buick available for daily use I would be in the hot seat once again if the Riv went poo-poo. As is always the case, solutions to life's problems seem to come when you're not looking for them. One day last week I spotted a clean Dodge D100 pickup truck sitting at a small repair garage. There was a For Sale sign in the window so I dropped in for a look. A 1976 half ton model with two-wheel drive and an eight-foot bed, I puzzled at the written description stating it packed a 440. Inside, a column-shifted Torqueflite was apparent. But the 440 claim was what caught my interest.

On my knees in a cold, wet puddle I looked just past the bottom radiator tank on the passenger side and sure enough, there was the horizontal oil filter we all know and love, a sure sign of a big block Mopar. But was it a misidentified 400 low deck truck or a real deal raised deck 440 machine? You can't tell from looking underneath unless you really get under there and check the casting numbers on the side of the block. Not fun in wet weather. I looked up the seller and he gave me a tour. Indeed, it is an original D code (440) half-ton with a 727 and 3.55 Sure Grip unit in the 9 ¼ rear axle. As a Camper Special, it's got heavy duty springs, auxiliary cooling and power steering and brakes. Better yet, it had recently been driven to Massachusetts from Oregon and was completely rust free.

I drove it around the parking lot and noted an exhaust leak from the driver side manifold. But the transmission seemed to shift well and the 440 was showing decent oil pressure...at least during this brief test ride with stone cold oil in the pan. So we worked a deal. I traded my 1962 Valiant four door (a semi-clean California car with a 170, 904 and minor external rust issues) plus a grand for the truck. He was happy to have the former Blow Mobile (it was used as a background car in the Johnny Depp / Paul Rubenz film *Blow*) and I was happy to have a clean 440 Dodge half ton pickup.

Since registering the truck I've put a few hundred miles on it. Though related to the Max Wedge, Magnum and Six Pack, its smogged out 440 is a comparative slug. But let's remember, by 1976 compression was down to 8.2 and net horsepower was a mere 220. But it's got plenty of torque and will lay a few feet of rubber when floored.

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Now about that oil pressure. During sustained cruising the in-dash factory gauge reads 40 psi. Not great but passable. But if I get stuck in traffic or sit at a long traffic light, the needle drops to almost zero. There is no knocking or other audible indication of metal-on-metal contact so I don't go into panic mode when the pressure drops. But unlike the Stratus, Riviera and all the other throw away cars I've owned, I *will* meet this one more than half way. It's a unique truck and a rare factory 440 when the vast majority were either 318 or 360 powered.

Naturally I gave it an oil change right off the bat. I shunned 20W50 since it makes for sluggish starting below freezing. Instead I went with 10W40 but the wacky oil pressure persisted. Could it be the gauge or a semi-clogged sending unit? I'd guess so and I'm off to the parts store today to get a shiny new sending unit. If that doesn't do it I'll hook up a temporary mechanical gauge to double-check the accuracy of the factory unit in the dash. If it indicates low pressure I'll replace the existing oil pump with a Mopar Performance high volume unit, the so-called Hemi pump.

Unlike factory big block passenger cars – which require a bunch of engine hoisting for an in-car oil pump swap – the D-series truck is set up with lots of open space under the pump. The job couldn't be simpler. The new pump should crutch excess bearing clearance with extra oil and buy time. Or maybe even solve the problem for good.

Again, through all of this, I have not detected a single hint there is serious trouble brewing due to the minimal oil pressure. But who wants to gamble? Regardless of what I discover on the oil pressure front, I'm jazzed to have this cool Dodge in the picture. It's got a welded frame-mount trailer hitch so it'll easily pull a car trailer to the drag strip in the spring.

In fact, this is the first pickup truck I've ever owned. Compared to the string of Dodge A100 vans I'd previously used for maximum utility duty, I love that I don't have to bend my six-foot frame in half loading cargo. As for the new pickup's two wheel drive, a buddy scored me a bunch of damaged concrete slabs from a local pre-cast plant. After loading 400 pounds of dead weight over the rear axle, it runs great in the snow. So that's the latest news on the winter beater scene. Check out the pictures to see more. And always remember the Boy Scout motto: Be Prepared!



Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. The mortally wounded Stratus rides into the sunset.

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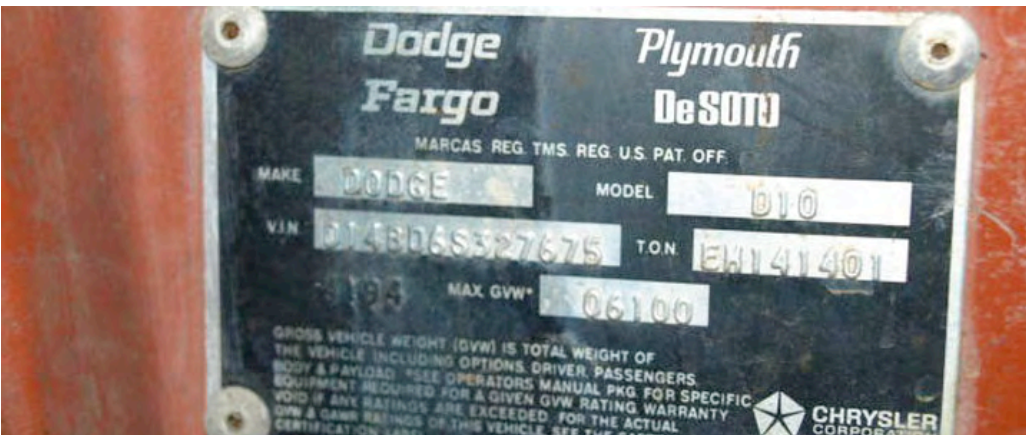
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The straight, rust free Oregon body caught my eye since most 1976 Dodge trucks in the north east today are riddled with rust holes and dents. Originally painted orange with a white roof, it's been given an unfortunate coat of greasy dark green paint.



The VIN on the door tag reads D14BD6S327675. Translation: D1 = D100 series pick up truck, 4 = Sweptline bed with conventional cab, B = 6001 to 10,000 lb. GVW index, D = 440 V8, 6 = 1976 model year. S = Warren MI assembly plant no. 1, 327675 = assembly sequence number. Check out the original orange paint on the inner door.



The cast crank 440 is bone stock except for an Edelbrock 750 carburetor residing in place of the original Carter Thermo-Quad.



My plan is to put minimal winter miles on the truck – mainly pulling my snowmobile trailer. I'll hose it down regularly to minimize salt damage. The concrete ballast works with the aggressive rear tires and Sure Grip to provide surprisingly good traction on snow.

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Out With The Old, In With The New... Or Not

Despite the 'Chicken Little' cries of global warming, it's snowing here again on New Years Eve. One more day left on a turbulent decade, one more day before a new one starts. Could anybody have seen the changes to be wrought in the last ten years when it all started out? According to Wikipedia (a reliable, though biased, source these days), 2000 was to be The International Year for the Culture of Peace; how that workin' for ya ten years, two ongoing wars, and an economic tsumani later? The globe moved toward globalization at a rapid pace during this decade, while many normal people just wanted everything to reset back to 'normal,' whatever that is.

As we close out the ten year window, the company that draws us to this website each month had also undergone a massive transition. Chrysler went from being the red-headed stepchild of Stuttgart to the cash cow for a shark-infested pool of investment brokers, then became the very representation of the one-world movement as part of manufacturer Fiat, with European Chryslers soon to be rebadged as Lancias and Alfa Romeos. The faces we knew on the factory performance side have changed, though there is true promise as the SRT group tools up with new ideas and technological possibilities. Viper stayed alive, Challenger's become part of the modern musclecar era, and the alternatives to the Italian connection were all unpleasant; it will just take some getting 'used to.'

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A lot of people are bitter about the administration's undisclosed methodology that cost long-time dedicated dealers like the Painters in the southwest their family franchises; frankly, it smelled rotten to a lot of us. The financial fallout from the banking debacle that rocked the world is still not finished for the survivors yet, either, as some of the remaining dealerships are struggling now with credit issues in a still-tight lending/financing market; GMAC got \$3.2B (billion) more in stimulus yesterday (12/30/09) as a result. Regardless, this whole episode had 'brave new world' connotations as the government seized power over private enterprise at a rate not seen since the Great Depression. Resetting *that* back to zero, and paying down the attendant debt it has now generated, unfortunately becomes very unlikely with every passing day this Congress 'works for us.' Yeah, right...

In model changes, Challenger stepped up to the plate for competition at the end of the decade. In addition to the Drag Pak program, we now will have several teams running the retro pony car in NASCAR's 2010 Nationwide series. Based on the car's appearance, this is a very cool development coupled with the successful (but not as sporty) Charger design in the Sprint Cup Series. We still want to see a Challenger funny car, though...

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Technology. While we live on to love seven liters topped with hemispherical combustion chambers, the reality is that efficiency is playing a role in how people construct cars in the 21st century. The Hemi itself has lost a little of its former mystique as Gen II 426" conversions using all-new parts became commonplace on the show scene. The envelope was further stretched this decade as the third-gen versions arrived in new cars, complete with EFI and computer-designed flow characteristics, with some of that technology spilling over into the aftermarket for vintage cars. For those of you who missed the first musclecar era, these are going to be our 'good old days.' We have no idea where tomorrow will end up, but with all of the cool products now available, we'll live for today. The focus on global warming, the modern penances called 'pollution credits' that its high priests demanded, and the reality of worldwide oil supply instability has had benefits that some of us don't always recognize. Sure we want power at the pedal, but if we can get 25 miles per gallon or better while doing it, that's cool, too. Overdrive transmissions, tightly-regulated fuel systems that eliminate waste, and more passive forced induction outfits like turbocharging are becoming a large part of modern car rebuilding. People are not just constructing their Mopars for straight-line acceleration any longer; they now want to cruise at highway speed listening to the radio, and go around corners without bodyroll and tire issues. Once more, it's a great time to be alive...

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So what will the new decade bring? I don't know. If you've read my rantings before, obviously I sometimes worry about the overreaching hand of the nation's leaders. How much control they will take from us in terms of private vehicle ownership and modifications; will we all be required to have a tell-all GPS unit just to buy fuel and get our tags renewed? Will we get fooled yet again, as The Who once prayed we wouldn't? Nobody knows yet, but a new year means new hope and promises, and maybe things will go the way we hope they will, regardless of our outlook on politics, society, culture, or cars.

STUNKARD

That I can toast to! Happy New Year! 🍷🍷

Ron Lewis's Mopar Wheelstand Photo Album

Ron Lewis is Mopar Max's Senior Photographer. His main beat is the National Hot Rod Association although he will occasionally cover a NASCAR race and other racing. During 2009 he photographed quite a few Mopars for our sister publication Drag Racing Online. So we picked out the best of his shots from the past season for this photo retrospective of the NHRA season. The only criterion was that the cars did big wheelies. We did include one burnout though. Enjoy.

RIGHT: Jeff Teuton had his C/SA '69 Super Bee at Gainesville and ran 10.70's with the wheelstanding Mopar.

BELOW: Bob Marshall's venerable Mopar has run in many classes over the years in NHRA's Super Stock Eliminator. This year at the Gatornationals he ran the car as an SS/AM and continued to pull the giant wheelies the car is famous for.



We're on a roll with
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Mopars at **Mooneyes**

Stunkard: Whither Chrysler?

Kevin Thomson gives a little
engine-building advice





John Tripp borrowed Mike McKim's '68 Dart to race at Denver at the Mile Highs. He qualified with a 10.40 on a 10.50 index and lost in the first round.



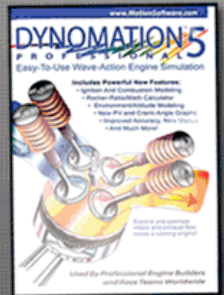
John Langdom's E/SA 1971 Cuda qualified with an excellent 11.10 on a 12 flat index at Seattle.

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We couldn't do this retrospective without at least one shot of a late model Mopar Super Stocker, so we picked Wayne Taylor's '99 GT/HA Sebring that qualified 10th in at the Winternationals with a 10.288 on an 11.35 index.



New Orleans racer Joe Paillot pushed his 528-inch Ray Barton Hemi-equipped '70 'Cuda to a breakout 8.854 first round Super Comp loss at Memphis.



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Steve Kent got the wheels up nicely in his blue AA/AH Super Stock 'Cuda.

Mopars at Mooneyes



Photos by James Drew

Each year the folks at Mooneyes in Santa Fe Springs, California, hold their Xmas Party. Photographer James Drew gives us a look at some of the cars on display.



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Project Fighting Fish is a Roller!

Words and photos by Darr Hawthorne

It's been a busy time for work on Zak Hawthorne's '65 Barracuda Project Car and a lot of items are getting checked off of the "to do" build list. The clock is ticking and the next project car needs to get onto the rotisserie, so all the parts we have been accumulating are coming off of the dusty shelf and we started bolting them onto the rejuvenated Mopar A-body.



Before removing the Cuda from the rotisserie, we needed to finish the welding in the S&W Racecars roll cage, as well as attaching the Mancini Racing sub-frame connectors to tie the Uni-body all together.



While the Cuda is still in the air it is a lot easier to replace parts of the rusted rear quarter panels with Layson's Restorations sheet metal patches. The panels are made by Layson's to fit a much larger section of the quarter panel; we just needed a three- to four-inch-wide piece of curved sheet metal to extend from the fender well along the bottom. This Cuda fortunately was a California survivor and we have found very little rust.



Once the welding, beating and banging was complete we decided to undercoat the whole undercarriage of the Cuda, which is a very messy project by itself. We utilized a kit from Herculiner; a brush-on pickup truck bed liner and it worked great, but really needs to be applied outside of the shop with lots of air circulating because of the resulting hallucinogenic vapors.



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The Herculiner product can be easily masked to keep areas clean – areas we wanted to paint later -- and it covers a multitude of issues, sheet metal patches and welds when it dries. It's not an original OEM item for a period-correct resto, but for this application, the stuff looks great.

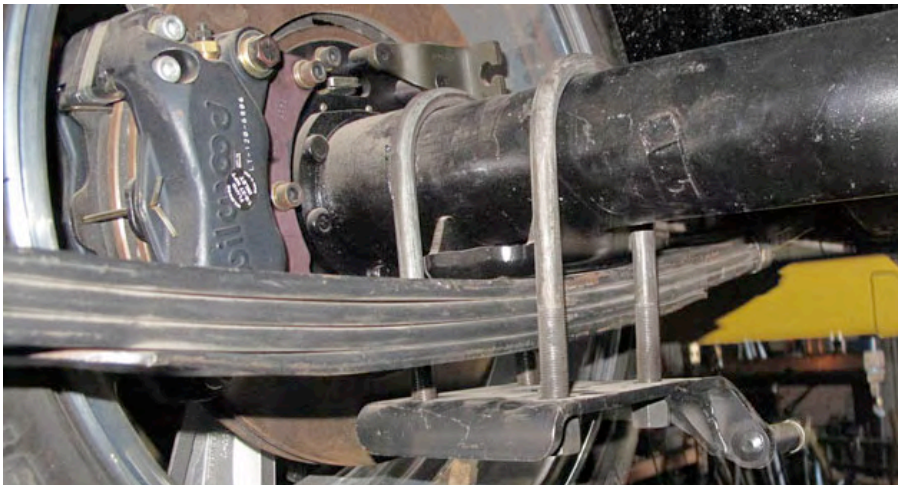


Strange

After recovering from the fumes of the undercoating, we off-loaded the Cuda from the rotisserie with the help of the lift at Mercenary Off Road and installed new spring perches and leaf springs purchased from Firm Feel. First the spring perches were bolted onto the A-body chassis and then we hung the springs.



You might remember the 8 3/4 rear-end build we built over at Sutton Engineering with Moser Engineering innards, we rolled the beefy new rear into place and lowered the car and springs around the rear.



All the parts, nuts and bolts you'll need are in the Firm Feel kit, including U-bolts and then bolting the whole unit together, the rear end is in!

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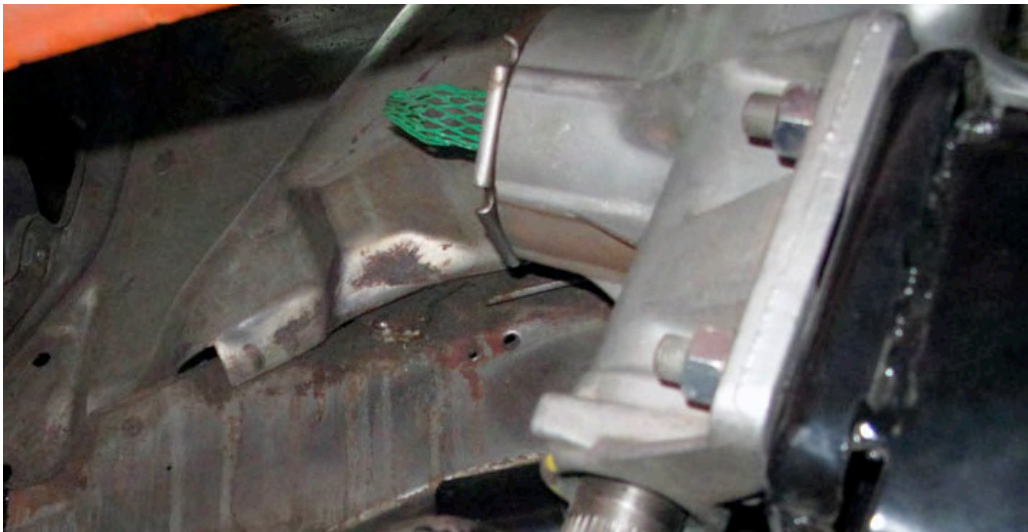
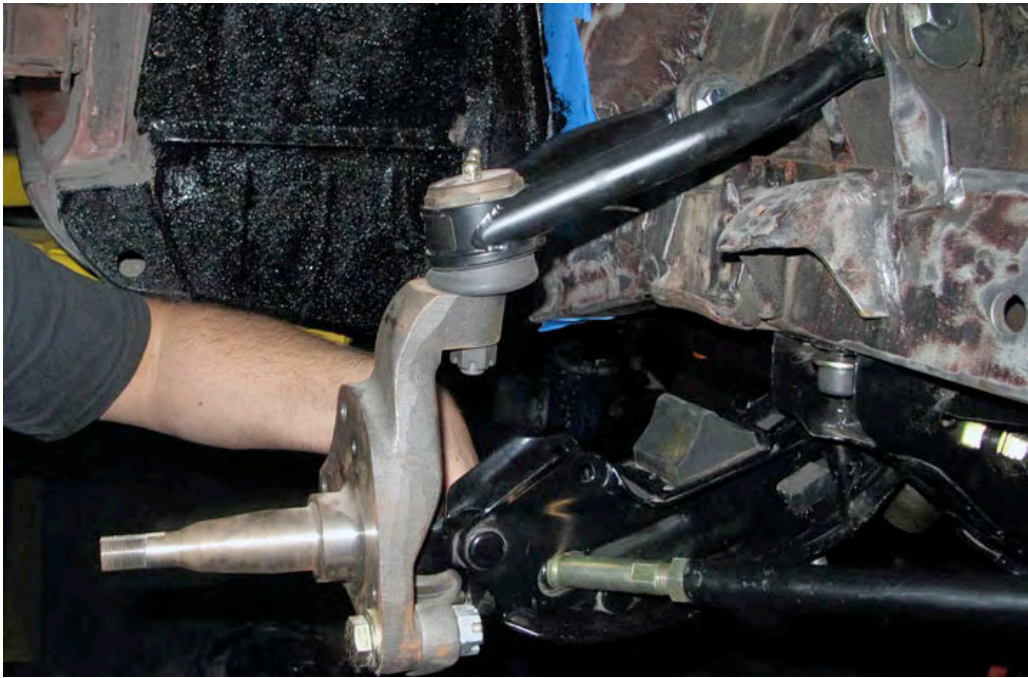
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To get the Cuda rolling, we mocked-up the Firm Feel front suspension kit. It included tubular A-Arms, greasable lower control arms, racing torsion bars, a new sway bar kit and a fast ratio manual steering box. The K-member had already been welded, gusseted and powder coated.

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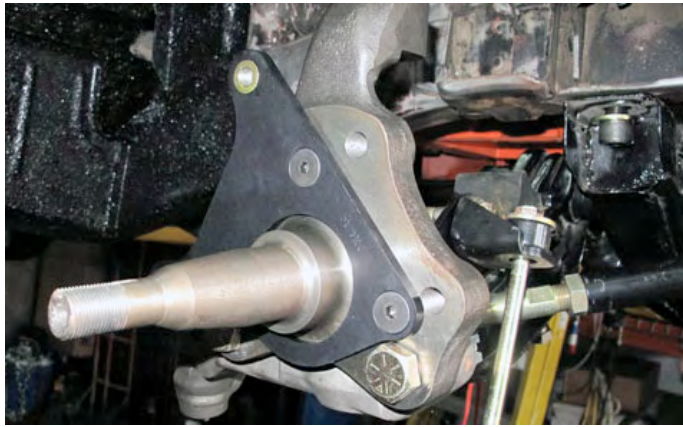
Standard, off-the-shelf nitrous kits will not fit the 2005 Ford Mustang GT. Due to a fuel system redesign, special components are needed to install a nitrous kit. ZEX™ is the first manufacturer to engineer an application-specific kit for the new 2005 Mustang GT that includes all of the special parts needed for an easy, 2 hour installation.

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For extra stopping power when Project Fighting Fish hits the racetrack for road racing, we added a set of Wilwood discs and calipers hanging off each corner and changed out the original front MOPAR spindles over to new, beefier ones from the early 1970's vintage.



Follow all the directions included in the Wilwood kit, particularly if you have never installed a new set of disc brakes before. This set of spindles requires some minor machining to mount the new brakes and after assembling requires aircraft safety wiring before hitting the road.



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One last piece of fabrication before the Cuda can get out and that's the tunnel to house the new Passon Performance 4-speed and rebuilt Hurst Shifter. While we never found a "bolt-on" sheet metal tunnel that fit, we adapted, cut, hammered and shaped one we got online.

With Frankenstein-looking surgery, fabricator Todd Farrand did a beautiful job of crafting our new A-body transmission tunnel, putting it all together with his shears and TIG welder.

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You can see how we've de-chromed and smoothed the Cuda including the welded and patched rear quarter panels, and there's a little more customizing yet to come on this project.



In the next issue of Mopar Max we'll show how we are installing a 22-gallon Fuel Safe racing fuel cell that we found at a super-bargain price on eBay, but for now with loading the Cuda out of Mercenary Off Road – back on the trailer for us to finish back at Zak's shop. There is still plenty of work to do, with the goal to debut the Cuda at the legendary March Meet at Bakersfield's Famoso Raceway. 📺

SOURCES

S&W Racecars
swracecars.com

Mercenary Off Road
 Todd Farrand
 (818) 653-6637
mercenaryoffroad.com

Mancini Racing
manciniracing.com

Moser Engineering
moserengineering.com

Wilwood Brakes
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This new six-finger clutch, which fits into a stock bellhousing, is available in a one or two disc configurations and is legal for all sanctioning bodies and all forms of drag racing. Unlike the diaphragm style clutches currently in use, the new Boninfante clutch utilizes a single disc for street applications and an optional two-disc setup for high horsepower engines. Built to the same aerospace specifications as their other products, the new street/strip clutch is designed for the weekly grass roots racer who wants to have a clutch that will perform in all sorts of conditions.

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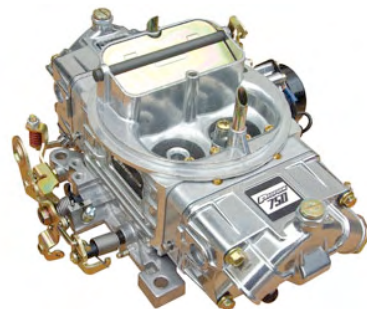
Professional Products Powerforce+Plus Dodge VIPER dampers duplicate the factory damper dimensions for easy installation, are manufactured from forged 1045 steel, and include a keyway for those who prefer to add a keyslot in the crankshaft to provide extra safety. These dampers provide the best value and race ready quality when compared to anything on the market.

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440 WEDGE – Cross Ram - PN. MRE440MWP – 440 Cross Ram Induction Package - Includes an Aluminum One-Piece Cross-Ram Intake Manifold w/440 intake port size, two Edelbrock Performer Series 600 CFM Carburetors – Specially Calibrated, Unique Cross-Ram Linkage Kit, Special Fabricated Fuel Lines and Filters, Intake Gaskets and Carburetor Studs. Fits all Mopar RB applications w/Edelbrock Performer or production cast iron cylinder heads (non Max Wedge)

440 WEDGE – Inline - PN. EDE54401405 – Induction Package Includes Edelbrock Dual Quad In-Line Intake, two Performer Series 600 CFM Carburetors – Specially Calibrated, Edelbrock Progressive Linkage Kit with Throttle Adapter, Special Fabricated Fuel Line, Intake Gaskets and Carburetor Studs. Fits all Mopar RB applications w/Edelbrock Performer or production cast iron cylinder heads (non Max Wedge)

Mancini Racing can custom tailor each induction package to match the customers specific needs by offering various options and upgrades. These options include intake manifold plenum modifications to match the camshaft power range along with cosmetic enhancements such as polishing and powdercoating. Mancini Racing will also modify the exterior of the Edelbrock Performer Series Carburetors to give them give a “retro” finish similar to the original Carter AFB models.

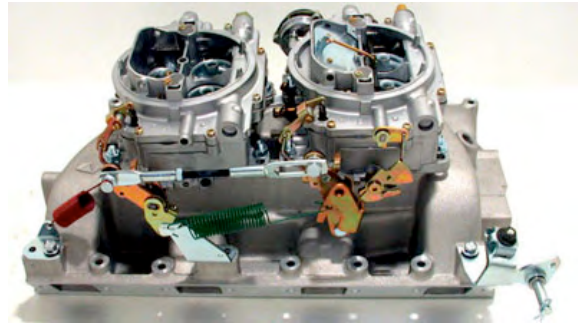
For more information about Mancini Racing, visit www.manciniracing.com , or contact David Hakim at (313) 702-4364 or hemid@manciniracing.com .

CUSTOM OR STOCK MOPAR E-BODY ALUMINUM RADIATORS FROM MARK 7

Mark 7 Radiators now has custom made or stock replacement radiators for all Mopar years, makes and models. This black anodized unit is for the 1970-'74 Dodge Challenger. Mark 7 will custom make a radiator to your specifications and provide it in natural or polished aluminum, or in one of 16 other custom anodized colors. Custom engraving on the tank or shroud is also available. This semi-gloss black anodized unit is for a restored Challenger R/T with a built 400-CID engine and automatic trans. The owner prefers a stock appearance for this resto.

Mark 7 aluminum radiators, custom built for any size engine or transmission, will cool more efficiently than the traditional copper/brass radiator, as aluminum transfers heat to the coolant faster. Manufactured with two 1.25-inch cores, this radiator will cool up to 750-HP in 100-degree weather with the A/C running. Mark 7 radiators are not off-the-shelf units; each is specifically built for your car or truck. The average starting price for the natural finish radiator is \$650 (cost will vary with application) with anodizing slightly more. Visit www.mark7radiators.com for more information.

For pricing, and more on custom applications, contact the cool folks at Mark 7 Radiators, 102 S. Tuscola Road, Bay City, MI 48708, or call toll free at 877-777-7505, Fax: 989-922-0700.



mopar mailbag

RAMCHARGERS ARE GO

Great Ramcharger article Steve. I too was a Ramchargers "nut". I got into the frenzy around '70 when the late great Leroy Goldstein put the Ramchargers Challenger (AAFC) into the sixes first. So glad to see you write that you could not find mistakes in the book. In the past I have purchased many books, I won't mention authors, that were full of mistakes. Just wonder if the authors ever have an outsider edit these books before publishing them. Forty bucks is steep for me, hell I can't even afford a tank of gas, so I will have to take your word that the book was fantastic. Thanks for a great story about a great team, the Ramchargers.

Mark Elms
Everton, Missouri

IT'S A MYSTERY

Hi Steve. If you got the 2009 Wagons of Steel calendar you would see that 12/12 is "Ramcharger" day. I honestly can't remember why. I liked the story. Send me your snail mail address and I'll send you some cool swag.

Chris Barnes
Wagons of Steel

WHERE ARE THE MOPARS?

I just attended the PSCA Event at 'The Strip.' To my dismay MOPAR didn't show up? Why aren't MOPARS successful in this very rapidly rising segment of our sport? I'm 66 and go waaaaay back... to LADS in Long Beach! I love this sport and am very concerned about the LACK of competitiveness of MOPARS in most of the competition(s).

BTW-Your publication is one of the BEST! I look forward to it. I look forward to your response.

Nick Mangeris
Berthoud, Colorado

WE CAN ONLY HOPE

Hi, just been reading all about that SS/HA. Sure wish I was there. Think they can drop into the 7s?

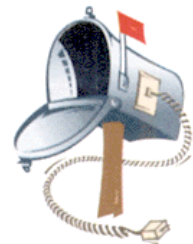
Thank you.

Charles Rice

BACK TO BASICS

Hi Jok, I am new to the sport of drag racing. I caught a Pinks All Out half way through the show and I found myself glued to that show. I watched a car win a race but did not understand why Pinks All Out disqualified it because "it ran too fast". I Googled for an explanation and found your writeup and explanation for running too fast in the cluster. Thanks for taking the time to write about why you can lose a race by "running too fast". I enjoy watching Pinks All Out a lot better now that I understand. Count me in as a Pinks All Out fan now!

Ed
Toronto, Canada 🇨🇦



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moparcon | Car

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Offline



moparcon | Car

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Offline



deefunk727 | Car

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Offline



predatorcar | Car

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Offline



RumbleFish | Car

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Offline



Stroker498 | Car

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Offline



LAST1987GN | Car

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Offline



rustman | Car

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Offline



bigjimsrt | Car

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Offline



Van-Nuys-Cruise | Car

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Offline



Van-Nuys-Cruise | Car

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Offline



Van-Nuys-Cruise | Car

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Offline



Van-Nuys-Cruise | Car

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Offline



Van-Nuys-Cruise | Car

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Offline



Van-Nuys-Cruise | Car

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Offline



tripod32 | Car

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Offline



ozwild | Truck / SUV

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Offline



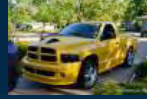
vgate440 | Car

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Offline



Invader | Truck / SUV

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Offline



Invader | Truck / SUV

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Offline