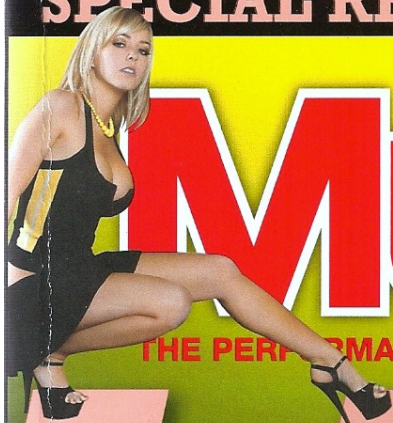


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1986 Mustang LX Coupe

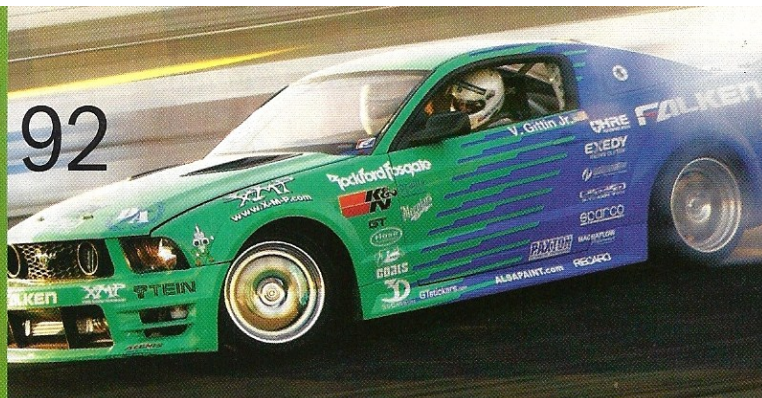
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COVER STORY

BUILDING THE 'BIG THING'

Kevin Solsbee is a man on a mission. His 1995 GT pet project has simply taken on a life of its own and each year the ground in North Carolina shakes a little bit more, every time this bad boy takes to the streets. To get the full story, turn to the page number listed above

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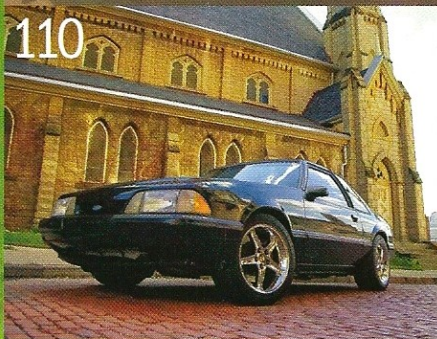
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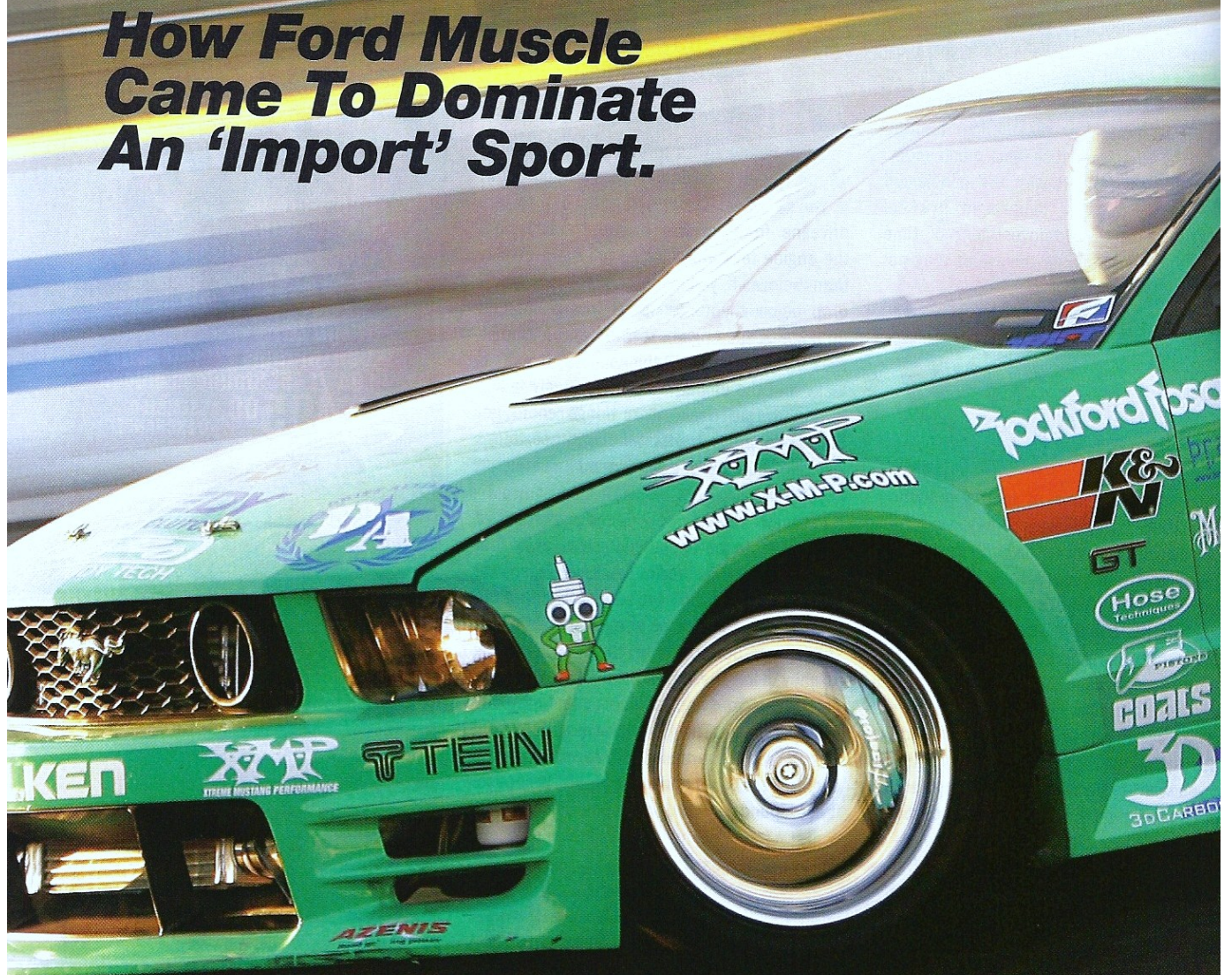
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How Ford Muscle Came To Dominate An 'Import' Sport.



SIDEWAYS SENSATION

STORY BY HUW EVANS PHOTOS BY JASON SIU



Sideways SENSATION

Falken Motorsports built a Drift Mustang Team but even they could not foresee the beast that had been unleashed.

One of the best things about owning a rear-drive performance car is that you can take it out on your favorite stretch of road, get on the throttle, feel the back end come out and steer the car through the turn. At that moment in time, for many of us, life doesn't get any better. Tires screeching, engine rumbling, it's an experience like few others. In North America at least, people have been doing broodies for as long as there have been cars capable of performing the task, but now, going sideways has taken on a whole life of its own.

Some of us probably know people into the 'import scene.' And one of the hottest things for the last couple of years has been the emergence of drifting in America. Unlike many other forms of motorsport, in drifting points are awarded for style and execution, rather than lap times or finishing position. The idea of drifting, is to slide a car through a corner, faster than the tires' adhesion will allow. The sport has its origins in

the Far East more than two decades ago, when kids would drive up and down twisty mountain roads and get sideways through the steep hairpins, often with quite disastrous results. As interest and momentum grew, drifting migrated to race circuits in Japan, where bona fide competitions were put together and drivers pitted their skills on the tarmac, looked on by a team of highly experienced judges.

In 2003, drifting migrated across the Pacific Ocean, on the wave of the Import craze, and this is where our story begins. In March of that year, Falken Tire Corporation organized a Drift Show Off in the parking lot at Irwindale Speedway in California. Falken, a big name in the tire business both in Japan and the US, had a hunch that Drifting in America could become really big and this first exhibition proved them right. So in 2004, a select group of Japanese D1 professional drivers and their cars, Nissan S13 and S14 Silvias (sold as 240SXs here, albeit with much less inspiring powerplants), were

invited over to show us lot how it's really done. "That was the beginning of our US Formula series," says Falken's Motorsports Supervisor Mickey Andrade. "We had a good year at Irwindale, we put on an actual round of the Japanese drift series. We had, like 10,000 people attend and it was really competitive. Guys didn't win but took part. This event proved that Drifting was here to stay."

So obviously this newly imported 'sport' was gaining momentum. But there were interesting things happening. Many of the import guys don't like domestic cars like Mustangs, but anything, this sport of theirs was well suited to the likes of powerful, rear-wheel drive machinery, like Mustangs. So it didn't take long for some individuals and organizations to put two and two together and get some real Detroit muscle out competing against these Nissans and Hondas like. Ace rally driver Rhys Millen, with backing from Pontiac, took the world by storm with his Drift GT0 in 2004 and Samuel Hubinet





INTERIOR/EXTERIOR

Falken Mustang Drift Car

EXTERIOR

Custom body work by GT Stickers Graphics;
Custom paint by South County Auto Body

INTERIOR

Recaro SPA and SPG XL seats, with 5-point
3" safety belts; XMP custom 14-point,
chrome-moly roll cage; Sparco steering wheel
with quick-release hub, fire extinguisher;
Autometer Cobalt series LED gauges

CHASSIS

XMP rear shock tower brace, front strut
gussets to chassis

WHEELS AND TIRES

HRE Competition 3-piece wheels
with custom offsets, 18" x 9" front,
18" x 11" rear; Falken RT-615 tires,
255/35R18 front (32 psi cold),
275/35R18 rear (27 psi)

In a series of four rounds,
JR knocked out each and
every one of his challengers,
including 2005 series
champion Yasuyuki Kazama.



SIDEWAYS SENSATION

FALKEN MUSTANG DRIFT CAR



followed suite in a Viper. These guys proved that American V8s could really handle themselves and Hubinette walked away with the Formula D championship in 2004. At that time, our boys at Falken were fielding cars in the Formula D series (Nissans), but the presence of the Viper and GTO indicated that maybe, just maybe it was time to give Rhys and Sam a taste of their own medicine and field an American drift car.

So before the 2004 season was out, a plan was put into action. "The new Mustang was hot,"

says Mickey Andrade. "Everybody was going nuts over it and we thought it would be a great car to run in Formula D for 2005 because it was untested and seemed like a good platform to use." But time was running out. A car needed to be found and fast, so Falken would be ready come the start of the season. "Ford was featured manufacturer at the SEMA show that year and Mustangs were everywhere. The show was coming up and we hadn't got a car yet. We did find one, but it wasn't the way a lot of people think. We actually bought it from a dealership. It was a regular Mustang GT automatic and

that's what we started with – our drift Mustang was no purpose-built no expense spared race car, but a lot of people don't know that." Well now they do.

So, with Falken having got this Mustang, somebody needed to be tasked with turning it into a competitive drift machine. "At this point in time, Falken didn't have a lot of experience with Mustangs, so we sought out help from those who did. We had a number of companies that we went to in order to assist building this car, but in the end it was down to one local shop." The place in question being Xtreme Mustang Performance, in Aliso Viejo, California. "We settled on Eric Cheney and X-M-P, because

■ ABOUT THE CAR

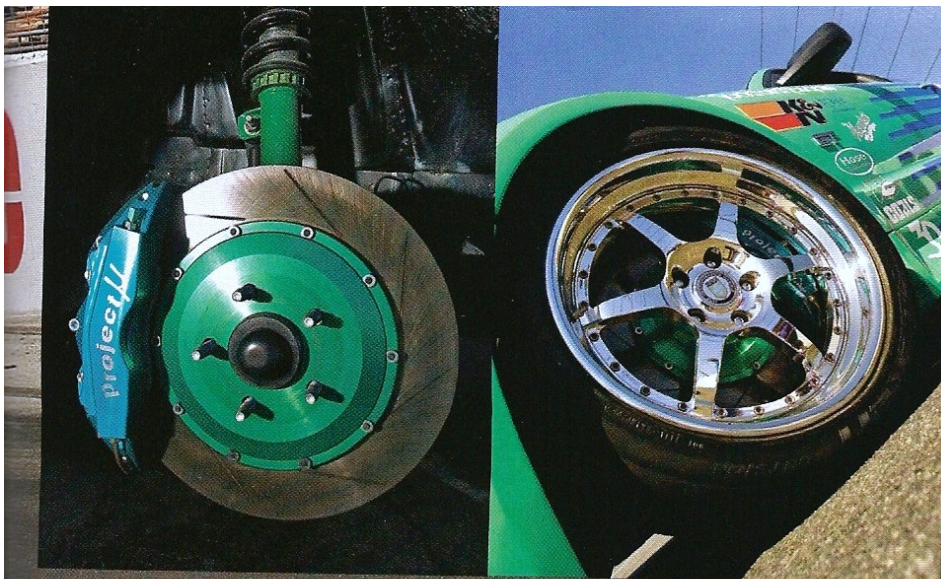
"**THE CAR** we got came locally from a dealer as it was the only way we could get the program started on time. We knew that drifting was becoming really big, so it was important for us to build the most competitive car we could. It was difficult because we didn't have any past experience to go by, nor any parts in existence at the time. It was a kind of 'lets build this car between X-M-P and Falken and see what happens.' The driver, Vaughn Gittin Jr, was used to a [Nissan] S13, so we had to design and build a car with similar characteristics. That meant that it had to be lightweight and balanced, with an engine that revved to like 8500 rpm instead of 6200, because he keeps his foot to the floor all the time.

We found out early on that positive displacement blowers don't work very well in Drifting, because the instant torque makes the car difficult to control, so we went with a centrifugal supercharger that would allow the power to build more gradually. We took a look at our vendors we had for the power adder – Paxton came to mind. We needed a big race blower with an intercooler and they



were the guys to get it from. When it came to the motor, we knew that Sean Hyland was the premier 4.6 engine builder. Sean designed a custom swing oil pickup for our engine, a Cobra based 283 cubic inch four-valve all-aluminum cammer V8 which he also supplied. You need to run a wet oiling system in Drifting and we have a 16 quart setup. With the custom pickup it proved reliable. We went an entire season on just one engine. The car runs a Tremec Custom Drift spec T-56 six-speed manual and we've got full Tein suspension on it, Flaming River custom steering rack and custom bracing for the front and rear shock mounts. It's got 14-inch front

brakes with lightweight calipers, drift spec pads and an adjustable proportioning valve. When we started out, everything went well, with two exceptions – the blower belt and the cooling system. We had an eight rib system for the accessories and a 10 rib for the blower, however the 10 rib wasn't enough. After running the car for a couple of rounds the belt would start to slip, so we went with a Gates Cog Drive with a Kevlar belt. It puts a lot of tension on the crank and the blower drive and is definitely something designed for drag racing, but has also proved key for drifting. Since installing it we haven't had any problems."

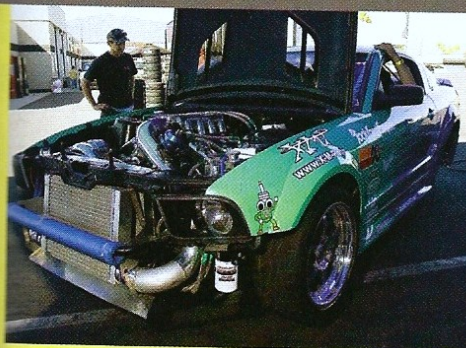


they were local and because Eric and his team were real Mustang people, they had the contacts, experience and connections with Ford."

So there was now a car and a shop, but SEMA was looming large on the horizon, and with two weeks to go, something needed to be done. "We actually drove the car around for a bit, we put a body kit on it, but it still had the automatic," remembers Mickey, "but for SEMA it had to at least be in some kind of race car shape." So the decision was taken to paint the car in the Falken team colors, work on the interior and install the brakes, wheels and tires. The car created quite a stir at SEMA and once the show was over, it was back to X-M-P for the work to begin. "It took us about three and a half months to get

the Mustang ready for drifting - Eric and I did a lot of the work ourselves, but it was challenging. When we started this car there just weren't any parts available for it, so just about everything on it is a prototype part or hand-made. The engine and driveline were probably the toughest of all, but we got it done."

So the car was coming along, but who would drive it in Formula D come 2005? "Actually that was one of the first things nailed down when we decided to build a Mustang," says Andrade. "We had this young guy from the East Coast, Vaughn Gittin Jr. He'd really impressed us with his talents behind the wheel of a S13 and we knew he was the perfect fit for the car, the burly All-American driver, to go with our burly,



ERIC CHENEY & XTREME MUSTANG PERFORMANCE

If you've already been through the main story in this article, or are familiar with drifting, then you probably know a bit about the car. But since we had time to talk to Eric Cheney about it, we thought we could expand on that a little bit, so here Eric tells us about it in his own words.

"On the cooling side, we also knew that we needed a recirculating cooling system, so we ended up using a massive custom radiator from Ron Davis Racing. It's four-inches thick and a double pass design. It's so far proven to be invaluable, but even with the radiator, we were still experiencing problems of heat soak. So, for 2006 we've created special ducting and shrouding, with 45 degree sheets of aluminum welded on the sides of the core to make sure the air goes in and a true air extraction hood to reduce the problem as much as possible. As a further precaution, we've also decided to use Evans Non Aqueous Propylene Glycol Plus

coolant - designed for high stress applications like ours, plus Evans also has its own water pump that prevents cavitation in the cooling system. We'll also be using a Nitrous Express intercooler system - we've got this custom spray bar that squirts directly on the radiator to drop the engine operating temperature. We're looking to see if it really makes a difference - it's a brand new thing for us and we want to make sure it works. This year is going to be really exciting for us. We've already shown that American Muscle can win, and with big money sponsors involved and our driver comfortable with the car, we should do well."

SIDWAYS SENSATION

FALKEN MUSTANG DRIFT CAR

Everybody was going nuts over it and we thought it would be a great car to run in Formula D for 2005 because it was untested.

All-American Mustang." However, JR, as he's often called, didn't have much experience driving muscle cars. "We knew the potential was there, but in order to make JR comfortable we built the car with that in mind - trying to make it as much like an S13 as we could in terms of weight and characteristics. So with the car, driver and team ready, Falken went head first into Formula D with a new package. "We didn't even have time to test the car really, we dyno'ed it and that was it, off to the races." And how did they do in 2005?

"We got off to a bit of a rough start in the beginning," remembers Eric Cheney. "We had a lot of problems with the blower setup and the belts and then we had a couple of problems with the throw-out bearings in the transmission. We ended up missing one event, but once everything was dialed in it all worked really well."

And for those who watched, the distinctive Falken liveried Mustang with JR behind the wheel proved quite the combination. As Mickey tells the story - "it was really great to see our car and driver out there and it was even better to see JR run with Sam Hubinette and Rhys Millen - we even beat them a couple of times during the season. That was great for us because in 2004 both those guys were untouchable and in our car that we'd built basically from scratch, without factory support, we'd proved that we were competitive. We ended up finishing fourth overall, right behind Rhys, Sam and Ken Gushi

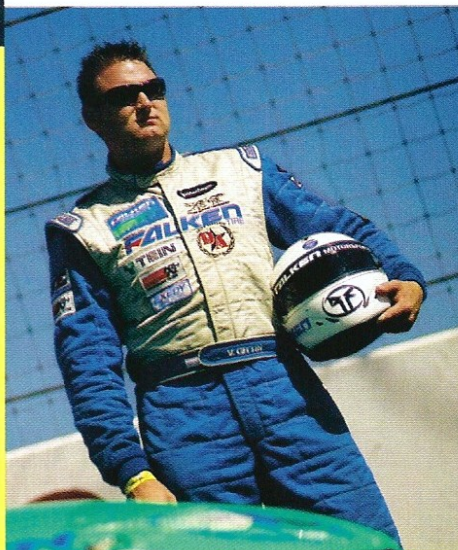
in the Toyo Tires Mustang and we only ran four out of six events."

But this was only the beginning. Long after the final showdown of Formula D at Irwindale in August, some three months in fact, a cold, frosty December night witnessed the D1 USA versus Japan All Star Drift Event. At the highest level of professional drifting, the competition is fierce, and the stakes high, but having thrown down the challenge to compete against some of the world's best, Vaughn Gittin Jr. and the Falken 'Stang were up to the challenge. In a series of head-to-head battles against some of the most experienced and respected Japanese Drifters in the business, JR met them head to head and became the first American in history to win a D1 event. In a series of four rounds, JR knocked out each and every one of his challengers, including 2005 series champion Yasuyuki Kazama, and in the final Tatsuya

■ ABOUT THE DRIVER

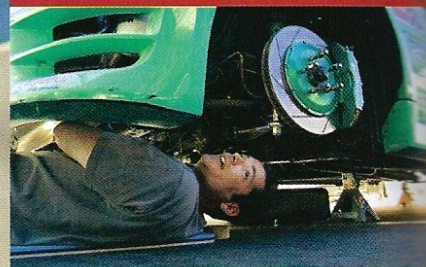
"THE WHOLE thing with the Mustang came about early in 2005. I was down at Falken's offices in California. I saw this rendering of a Mustang and thought what the heck is that? It looked really mean. Then, about three weeks later Nick and Mickey from Falken called me and said 'JR, what color would you like your Mustang to be?' I was excited but a bit nervous, because I'd never driven the car. I was comfortable with my 240 but had been running the car for five years at that point - I was getting a bit lazy and I thought the Mustang would be a really great idea - bringing some American Muscle to an import-dominated sport. So I went for it. X-M-P in Aliso Viejo were charged with building the car. I remember we had some meetings and felt pretty confident they could build the car to my specs, but we also knew that it was an untested combination and there was the possibility of facing mechanical issues, at least in the first season of competition.

As far as the chassis, suspension and track go, the car was excellent, the Tein suspension and the wide track really allow it to hook up well - the only problems we really had were throwing belts. In Atlanta I almost lost the blower belt going into a 90-degree left hander at 100 mph. I went to yank the car to make it turn and the belt snapped, causing me to go right through the infield, Dukes of Hazzard style. In Houston, we ran the car normally aspirated but still finished third. After that we went with a two-piece system and a cogged belt for the blower and it worked really well. Our only other major problem was the throwout bearing in the transmission. We only ran four events in 2005, but we managed to finish fourth over-



VAUGHN GITTIN JR.

Vaughn Gittin Jr. is the 24-year-old sensation who started his drifting career tearing around parking lots in a beat up Nissan 240SX. Today, he's taken on the might of Japan's D1 elite and proved that he can beat them at their own game. Here he tells us a little about driving the Mustang.



all in the points standings - once we sorted out the problems the car was really great. I'm driving with my foot to the floor and the motor is spinning 8500 rpm all the time and it takes it - I'm really impressed by how it just holds together. If I tried that with my 240 I'd be picking valvetrain pieces off the tarmac. And the car just keeps getting better. By the end of the '05 Formula D season at Soldier Field, the car was really dialed in and at the D1 event in December it just all came together. We out drove and out maneuvered the Japanese in their own series - we really hurt their pride. They paired me up against their top guy in the first round and when I beat him their morale really took a battering. It was more amazing because these guys have like 15 years of experience and they have all the cars, parts and expertise at their disposal. I know that this year they'll be coming

after us hard and we need to be prepared. But it's cool. The thing is, now that I've driven this car for a season I'm starting to understand what Mustang guys are all about and we hope people come out and cheer us in 2006. Since I'm here I also wanted to say a big thanks to Rockford Fosgate. These guys hooked me up with the sound system and I listen to it before every event - the music is calming and it allows me to go out there and really give it my best. I also wanted to say that if you guys want to come and check us out, I have a team called Drift Alliance that does demo and exhibition runs, plus we've got a DVD coming out called Bad as Hell, it's scheduled for release in August and it's got plenty of stuff with the Mustang on it. I'm really happy that we've come so far so soon, but it's everybody that helps and the fans are a big part of making it happen."

SIDEWAYS SENSATION

FALKEN MUSTANG DRIFT CAR

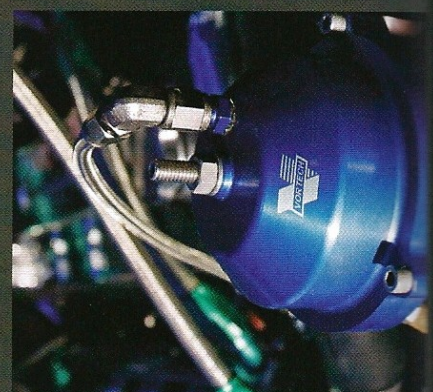


Sakuma. Wow! In a sport that had originated in Japan, that had then been brought over to the US on the crest of the Import trend, an American car with an American driver had taken on the Japanese drifting elite and defeated them.

And as we pen these very words the battle for supremacy is about ready to begin again. March 4th 2006 witnessed the D1 season opener at Irwindale and for the Japanese drivers all eyes were focused on the green and blue Mustang. Can JR do it again? You'll have to follow the season to find out.

And in Formula D, the American series, it looks like 2006 might be quite a year as well – Mickey Andrade is certainly looking towards it with optimism. "It's really getting big. We've got lots of new

cars and new drivers coming this year. And for those of us who've been doing it a while, it will be a great season because we learned so much in 2005." But it also appears that JR, the Mustang and the team might have a better advantage going in this time around. "Both Sam [Hubinette] and Rhys [Millen] are running new cars this year. JR has had time to get more familiar with the Mustang, in terms of technique and setup. We think that familiarity will work in our favor but, with the D1 win behind us, we know we have a lot to live up to." So will they pull it off for 2006? "I don't want to say too much at this point," say Andrade. "But we've been working really hard and it looks like things are really coming together – we definitely feel confident." **MM**



SPECIFICATIONS

Falken Mustang Drift Car

ENGINE

Ford 4.6 liter V8

ENGINE MODIFICATIONS

Built by Sean Hyland Motorsports, including custom billet camshafts – blower grind, race ported cylinder heads with stainless steel oversize valves, hardened valve seats, dual valve springs, titanium locks and retainers, custom high capacity, aluminum oil pan with baffles and swinging oil pickup; TEKSID all aluminum Cobra block; JE custom dish forged pistons; Manley billet I-beam connecting rods; XMP custom aluminum sheet metal intake; RCI 72 lb/hr fuel injectors; MSD 9000 EDIS; Accel Gen VII Performance Engine Management System; Ford 2003 Cobra Coil-on-Plug ignition coils; JBA Mid-length headers; Custom 3" exhaust with Magnaflow race mufflers; Setrab engine oil and power steering coolers; K&N oil filter; Exedy lightened billet steel flywheel,

Hyper twin plate clutch; Prothane billet motor mounts

DRIVELINE

G-Force custom drift-spec T-56 six speed transmission; Steeda Tri-Ax shifter; Dyno-Tech metal matrix composite, one piece driveshaft; Detroit True-Trac differential; Superior 4.10 gears; Setrab differential oil cooler with fan

SUSPENSION

TEIN Coil-over conversion, FLEX type shocks and struts with EDC electronic in-car adjuster, front and rear; Progress Engineering adjustable front and rear sway bars; Prothane urethane bushings throughout

NUMBERS

Weight without driver: 2980 lbs.
Fourth overall in 2005 Formula D series



BUILDING THE BIG THING

We weren't prepared for such a detailed answer when we met Kevin Solesbee at a small car show and innocently asked, "So, who did the work on your Mustang?"

Maybe it's because Kevin is such a nice guy who doesn't like to leave anybody out or maybe it's because his hometown of Concord, North Carolina, is ground zero for about a hundred

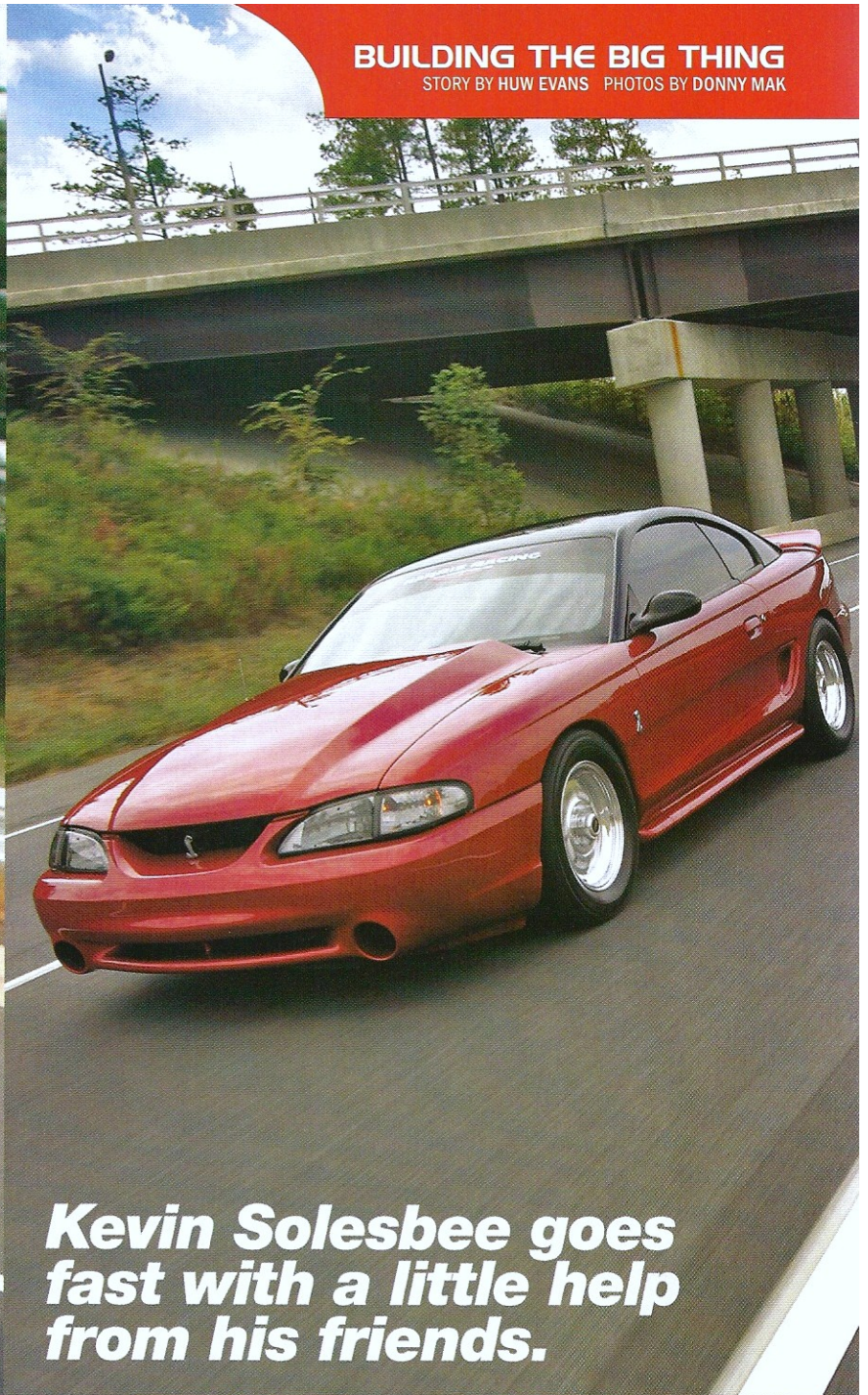
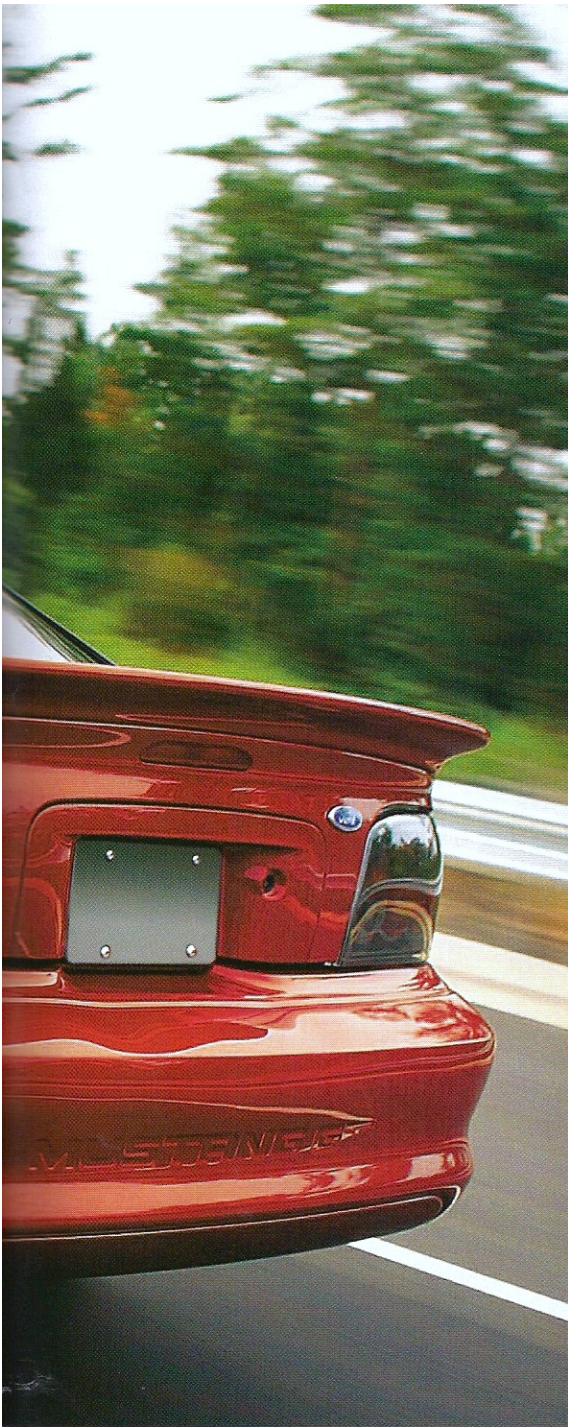
sponsor-lovin' NASCAR teams – either way, his reply would have made Sunday's Nextel Cup winner proud by including everybody who ever turned a wrench on or pointed a spray nozzle at the '95 GT known locally as the "Big Thing."

Back in 1992 Kevin was just another guy who loved cars when an '89 Mustang coupe entered his life ... then an '87 T-top GT ... then a '90 LX.

"I didn't do a lot to those first cars," Kevin claims with serious understatement.

No, not a lot. The '89 notchback had a 306-cid V-8 with a Holley 750 four-barrel sitting on top of it. Kevin lowered it, tinted the windows, and installed 4.10:1 gears, an off-road H-pipe and Flowmaster mufflers. He also applied custom paint and interior treatment. That's all.

The '87 GT that followed it only received



Kevin Solesbee goes fast with a little help from his friends.

4.10:1 gears, a C-4 automatic transmission, lower springs, window tinting, a big shot of NOS. Yup, nothing to write home about there.

Kevin even considered his '90 LX with automatic, lowered suspension, off-road exhaust and 4.56:1 gears to be "basically stock."

"I learned a lot about engines and how to make modifications from working on them. I also met a lot of great folks who were willing to share what they knew with me."

Ten years after his pony car love affair began, Kevin had a network of friends and friends of friends ready to make his dream of an extreme-performance Mustang come true. He bought a '95 GT coupe for \$11,000 with



BUILDING THE BIG THING

KEVIN SOLESBEE'S 1995 MUSTANG GT COUPE

39,000 miles on the odometer. At the time he picked it up, the only mods it had were Cobra R wheels, aftermarket heads and a matching intake.

And that is where Solsbee's extensive list of people and parts begins.

Working with his friend Kelby Harris, of Harris Racing, Kevin replaced the stock 302 with a 347-cid V-8 that Glendale Machine bored .040 over, blueprinted, decked and line-honed. A Scat 4340 Forged Steel crankshaft was balanced and polished to the owner's satisfaction before installation. Eight Mahle forged

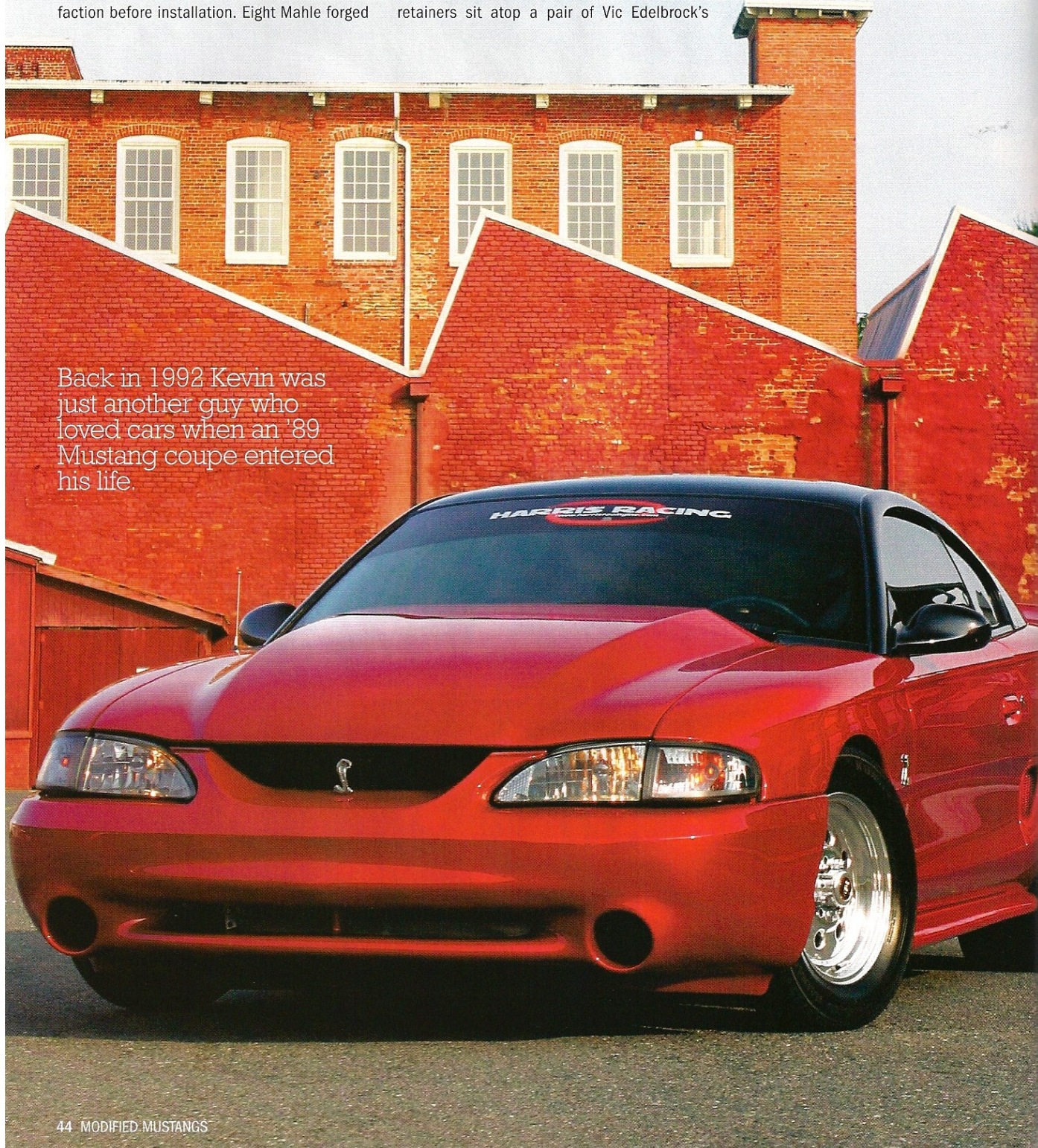
aluminum dish-top pistons and matching pins were joined to the crank by Eagle chromoly steel H-beam connecting rods, resulting in a 9.89:1 compression ratio.

Deep in the belly of this iron beast spins a Comp Cams camshaft custom ground to a 238/244 duration and .590/.608-inch lift. Comp's hydraulic lifters work with Crane 1.6:1 roller rocker arms to open and close Ferrea stainless steel valves measuring 2.02 inches in diameter (intake) and 1.60 inches (exhaust). Comp double springs and titanium retainers sit atop a pair of Vic Edelbrock's

aluminum Performer heads that Kevin had ported and polished to Stage 3 specs by Heads Up Performance in nearby Lumberton before protecting with Ford Racing valve covers.

A free-flowing K&N filter is the simple starting point for air and fuel into this 5.7-liter dynamo, but the journey takes some exotic and expensive turns from there. With such a stout hardware package under the hood, Kevin wanted the kind of horsepower that natural aspiration just can't provide, so he

Back in 1992 Kevin was just another guy who loved cars when an '89 Mustang coupe entered his life.



Brenspeed Custom in Leesburg, IN, burned a special chip to make the blown 347 work right.

ordered Procharger's entire supercharger system, including the D-1SC blower with small pulleys (built by friend Aaron Moss), three-core aluminum intercooler, polished three-inch piping and race-ready blow-off valve. A 75mm Professional Products throttle body works perfectly with Edelbrock's intake and Victor EFI manifold; Holley's 50-pound injectors, in-tank fuel pump and Kirban Performance Products' billet fuel pressure regulator.

"I wish I could say that we came up with this plan, then ordered all those parts," Kevin admits. "We were experimenting, though, so some things worked and others didn't."

"For example, we had trouble with head gaskets holding up under 20 pounds of supercharger boost, but Kelby and I converted to an O-ring setup and fixed that problem."

Electronic and ignition management is ably handled by MSD (distributor, coil and control box), Optima (battery), Autolite (spark plugs) and Taylor (wires). Brenspeed Custom in Leesburg, IN, burned a special chip to make the blown 347 work right. Keeping everything cool and streetable are a Griffin radiator and Flex-a-lite fan. Additional oomph comes from a Compucar 100-to-150-shot wet nitrous oxide system fed by a 10-pound storage bottle in the trunk and activated by the driver's foot. Moving exhaust gases away in a hurry are MAC long-tube exhaust headers with 1 3/4 -inch tubes and 2 1/2-inch MAC pipes leading to Flowmaster mufflers.

The transmission is – surprise! – a stock Mustang T-5 five-speed, but backed up by a billet steel Ford Motorsport flywheel, RAM Powergrip HD clutch and 4.10:1 rear axle gears in the factory housing. Weld Draglite wheels measure 15x10 in the rear and 15x3.5 in front.

INTERIOR / EXTERIOR

Kevin Solesbee's 1995 Mustang GT Coupe

WHEELS AND TIRES

Weld Draglite wheels (15x10 in the rear and 15x3.5 in front); BFGoodrich rear tires, 295/50-15; Kumho front tires

EXTERIOR

Cobra front bumper cover; smoked headlights; Euro-style smoked taillamp housings; Saleen fiberglass wing; Cervini three-inch cowl hood; Laser Red and Black Cherry applied by Jeff White



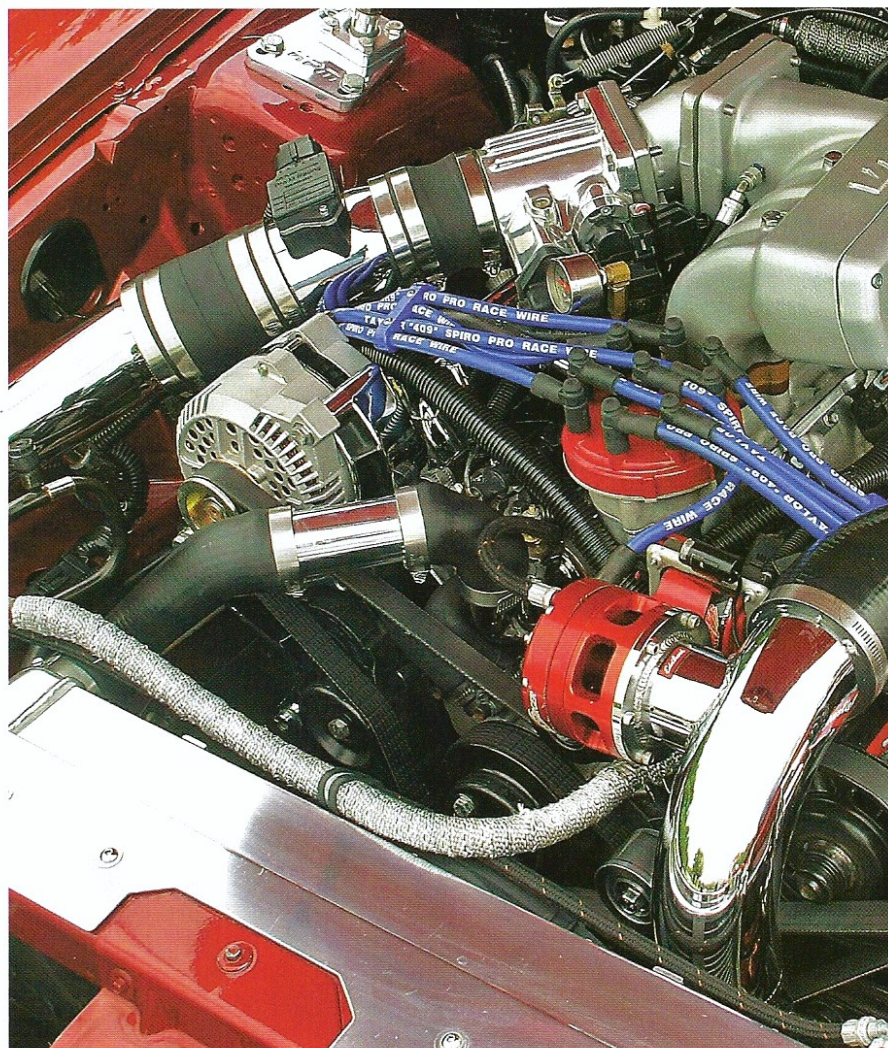
INTERIOR

Factory Saddle cloth interior; Auto Meter gauges (boost, oil pressure, water temperature and nitrous oxide pressure); reverse-punch aluminum pedals; Pro Shift light; Kenwood CD player; boost retard dial

CHASSIS

HPM Crossbar subframe connector; stock Mustang brakes





The fat rear tires are BFGoodrich 295/50R15s while the skinny fronts are Kumhos – a combination that makes the Eibach spring drop appear more severe than it actually is. An HPM Crossbar subframe connector helps keep the chassis rigid against so much torque.

“The five-speed won’t be staying much longer,” Kevin said. “I’m going to replace it with a heavy-duty C-4 automatic. Clutches just don’t hold up well against this motor.”

Big Thing’s exterior benefits from a short but carefully chosen list of goodies such as a Cobra front bumper cover and smoked headlights, Euro-style smoked taillamp housings, a Saleen fiberglass wing and Cervini cowl hood with three inches of additional engine clearance. Jeff White applied the luscious layers of Laser Red and Black Cherry that have caused many cases of whiplash in the Carolinas.

“I can’t believe the job Jeff did on the paint,” Kevin told us. “There is so much time and labor in there, and he did it in a little shop behind his house!”

“At first the whole car was covered in Laser Red because I liked the monochrome look. When I parked it at a show, though, most people passed right by it. After Jeff covered

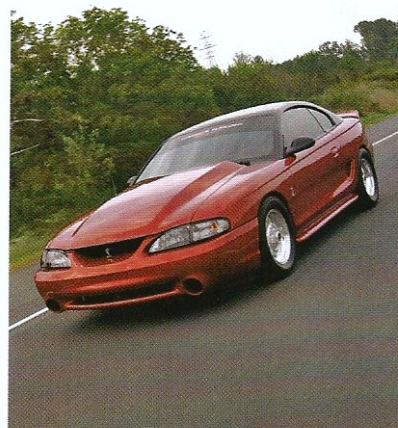
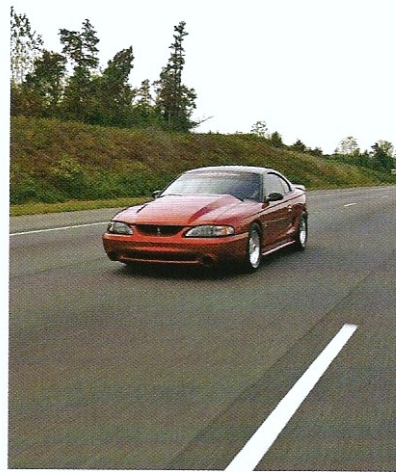
Clutches just don’t hold up well against this motor.

the top in Black Cherry, the car looked like it had some kind of high-tech glass roof and now people flock to it.”

The Cobra-ized GT retains the factory saddle cloth interior but Kevin has added Auto Meter gauges measuring boost, oil pressure, water temperature and nitrous oxide pressure; reverse-punch aluminum pedals; Pro Shift light; Kenwood CD player; and boost retard dial. Kevin took one look at the stock trunk and realized the spare tire bin would make a great home for the NOS bottle; it now shares the space with the relocated battery.

At idle, Big Thing sounds like a cross between a jet engine and an angry lion, yet it was docile enough to putt around all afternoon during our photo shoot without so much as a hiccup, fluid leak or anxious moment – even the air conditioning works! When Kevin dipped into the boost in second gear on our way to a new location the sound and kick raised goosebumps.

We pass Morrison Motors, a local dealership



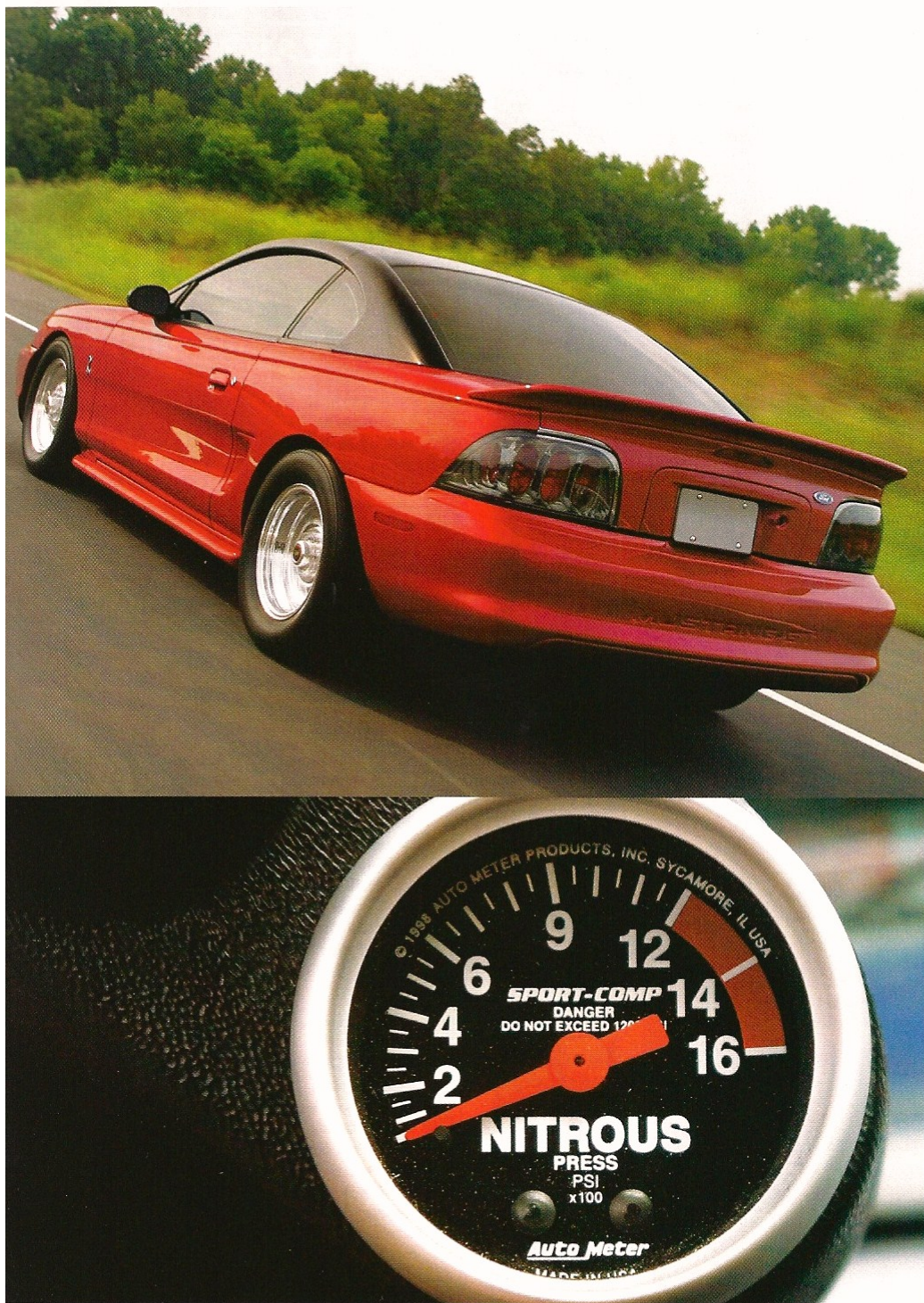
famous for its huge selection of Corvettes, Mustangs, Harleys and other vehicles of collector interest. From the serene cockpit of the growling beast Kevin points to one of several go-fast beauties Morrison has on its front row.

"I was thinking about building Big Thing into a high-performance show car, then buying a Z06 Corvette to play with," Kevin recalls. "But now it's gotten out of hand and I know I won't be able to pay enough attention to the



BUILDING THE BIG THING

KEVIN SOLESBEE'S 1995 MUSTANG GT COUPE



project if I get interested in another car.

"I don't consider Big Thing to be finished. That's why I haven't run it on the dyno yet. We estimate from one run at a dragstrip that the engine puts out about 650 horsepower without nitrous, and I just feel like there is more power in there."

What you see on these pages is simply the first of at least two phases for the parts-hungry Kevin, who is saving his money and scheduling time off to install a new list of high-performance goodies.

"My friend Mickey Dixon of Dixon Racing

& Fabrication is going to build a full rollcage so the car doesn't twist itself in half when we add more power. He also made all the custom brackets you see under the hood. I've got a cog belt system coming and we're still tuning the nitrous oxide setup.

"Once all that's in place I can finally take Big Thing out to the strip and let 'er rip! Then I think I'll be done."

Can any Mustang owner ever really be content to stay still once he's had a taste of such extreme overkill?

We sure hope not. **MMT**

SPECIFICATIONS

Kevin Solesbee's 1995 Mustang GT Coupe

ENGINE

347-cid OHV V-8

ENGINE MODIFICATIONS

Block bored .040 over by Glendale Machine; blueprinted, decked and line-honed; Scat 4340 Forged Steel crankshaft, balanced and polished; Mahle forged aluminum dish-top pistons, matching pins; Eagle chromoly steel H-beam connecting rods; Comp Cams camshaft with 238/244 duration, .590/.608-inch lift; Comp Cams hydraulic lifters; Crane 1.6:1 roller rocker arms; Ferrea stainless steel valves, 2.02 inches (intake), 1.60 inches (exhaust); Comp Cams double springs, titanium retainers; Edelbrock aluminum Performer heads, ported and polished by Heads Up Performance; Ford Racing valve covers; K&N filter; Procharger D-1SC blower, small pulleys, three-core aluminum intercooler, polished three-inch piping, race-ready blow-off valve; 75mm Professional Products throttle body; Edelbrock intake, Victor EFI manifold; Holley's 50-pound injectors, in-tank fuel pump, Kirban Performance Products' billet fuel pressure regulator; MSD distributor, coil; Optima battery; Autolite spark plugs; Taylor wires; Griffin radiator; Flex-a-lite fan; Compucar 100-to-150-shot wet nitrous oxide system, 10-pound storage bottle; MAC long-tube exhaust headers with 1 3/4-inch tubes and 2 1/2-inch MAC pipes, Flowmaster mufflers

ENGINE MANAGEMENT

Chip by BrenaSpeed Custom; MSD control box

DRIVELINE

Borg-Warner T-5 five-speed manual; billet steel Ford Motorsport flywheel; RAM Powergrip HD clutch; 4.10:1 rear axle gears

SUSPENSION

Eibach Sport springs; stock shock absorbers

NUMBERS

550 RWHP

600 RWTQ

@ 14 psi of boost

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Kelby Harris (Harris Racing), Aaron Moss, Jeff White, Mickey Dixon, sister Sandy and daughter Savannah