

THE RACE ROD

It's done, and as we said last month, it's fast—on the dragstrip and around corners. But let's back up and recap the first two installments in the Race Rod project buildup.

Part one in the Nov. '09 issue introduced Factory Five Racing's (FFR) latest component car, a '33 Ford-looking car the company simply calls The Hot Rod. FFR has made its bread and butter on Cobra-style kits that use late-model Mustang suspension and

drivetrain parts, and it's been very successful with that. Nearly two years ago, FFR engineer Jim Schenck envisioned a similar type of kit but based on a street rod. Only this wouldn't be a typical, evil-handling, straight-axle rod. No, this one would use modern suspension to actually handle well. And true to FFR's theme, it would be created in such a way that a real-world hot rodder could assemble it in his home garage.

The Hot Rod (we're going to call this one the Race Rod from here on out) looked all the part of a road-race '33 Ford from the get-go, and HOT ROD wanted to see what was involved in building one—and how fast it would be—so we did. That first story in November introduced the car and showed the bodywork necessary to get it ready for paint. Last month, in part two, we showed how a group of people came together and built the

entire car, from a pile of boxes to a running, driving hot rod, in only five days. This month, we beat it like a rented mule.

NO. 13

The car we built is, in our opinion (and also in FFR owner Dave Smith's opinion), the baddest one done yet, and most of that has to do with the flat- and gloss-black paint scheme. Credit Editor-In-Chief Freiburger

Testing the Factory Five Racing Hot Rod

By Rob Kinnan Photography: Wes Allison and Rob Kinnan

with the idea, Kris Horton with the design, and Jeff "Batman" Miller with the execution. Everywhere the car goes, the first thing you hear is, "Man, that thing looks mean."

The Race Rod was built with a three-link rear suspension for the best handling arrangement, and we also went for the optional (and big) Alcon brakes. The engine is a Ford Racing Boss 347 that makes 450 hp at 6,000 rpm and 400 lb-ft at 4,900 with a

hydraulic roller cam, 9.7:1 compression, and Ford Racing Z heads. The transmission is a Tremec TKO-600 five-speed. With 3.73:1 gears in the 8.8 rear-end, it's a combination we knew would make this lightweight rod haul the mail like a Pony Express horse on methamphetamine.

The front suspension on the FFR car is race car trick with double control arms actuating inboard-mounted, adjustable Koni coilovers. The Rated X-

model Rushforth Wheels were black powdercoated to continue the sinister attitude, and they mount 275-40 Nitto NT-05 tires on all four corners. The NT-05 is stickier than its 200 treadwear rating would have you believe. There's room to go bigger all around, especially in the rear, but in the haste to build the car, we had issues getting the right combination of wheel and tire size. Perhaps in the future we'll play around with sizes, but for now

the car is very stable with equal-size tires on all four.

Once the Race Rod was done, it went on Power Tour® as an FFR display vehicle because it hadn't been titled or registered yet (though we did drive it a little and made three passes on the dragstrip at Bristol—more on that later). After the Tour it stayed in the truck and went to FFR's shop in Massachusetts where Schenck dialed in the suspension and checked out our

> Pro Touring can kiss our butt. The Race Rod is all business with the orange cones.



HOT ROD



> The Freiburger/Horton/Miller paint scheme is bad to the bone.



> Just for grins, FFR's Jim Schenck put the Race Rod on the autocross at the Goodguys show in Columbus. It ruled.

handiwork. The alignment was set at 7 degrees of caster, 1.25 degrees negative camber, and 1/16-inch toe-in. On the corner scales and with a full load of fluids (but without a driver), it showed a curb weight of 2,320 pounds and a freakish balance of 50.1 percent front, 49.9 percent rear.

DRAG TESTING

During Power Tour® we stole the keys from Nate Johnson at the FFR truck and headed out to the dragstrip. This was the first real drive of the car for anything more than putting around the block, so it naturally revealed a few teething problems (what, you mean all magazine project cars aren't perfect from the get-go?). On the first pass we learned that our homemade throttle stop actually contacted the throttle cable and not the pedal, and it knocked the cable off the pedal when we went wide open. So in front of the big crowd in the stands, we went wide open in Second, sputtered to a stop, and had to be towed off the track. Embarrassing. The next two runs were filled with missed shifts from the brand-new Tremec—they require some street driving to break in.

While in Massachusetts after the Tour, Schenck put some miles on the car to break in the trans, then took it to New England Dragway. The Nitto tires are great handling tires, but they don't take kindly to a hard launch in a light car, so the

60-foot time was a lousy 1.90 seconds, and the car ran 11.80 at 121 mph. That speed shows low-11-second potential, and the carb was tuned stinky fat. Schenck did click off a 1.79 60-foot, but as he says, "It figures that was the only time I missed a shift. I think with a good set of drag rear tires and someone who can tune the carb, it will be very close to the 10s as it sits." If it isn't, we'll spray it.

HANDLING

Here's where she really shined. Schenck took the car to display at the Goodguys show in Columbus, Ohio. This is the same event that determines the Goodguys Street Machine of the Year (SMOTY, see the feature on the winner on page 26 of this issue), and part of the judging is an autocross. So guess where the car ended up?

Schenck registered it at the last minute and therefore only got three runs, compared with the five or six that most of the other cars took, but he burned up the short autocross course with a time of 31.36 seconds. Five of the vendors' cars were faster (Detroit Speed's '70 Camaro with a 30.438, FFR's '66 Cobra, Detroit Speed's '69 Camaro, Hotchkis' '70 Challenger, and the Roadster Shop's '70 Chevelle). Incidentally, ol' No. 13 was quicker than all the SMOTY contenders, besting the winning Roadster Shop Corvette's time of 32.222 by nearly a second.

> The first time we got to drive the car in anger was at Bristol Dragway at the end of Power Tour®. Though the runs weren't impressive, the car showed its potential. Later on at New England Dragway, it ran 11.80 at 121. There's more in it.



> You can get fenders for The Hot Rod in two different styles. This also shows what it looks like without the roof. A bolt-on windshield is included in the base roadster kit.



> We really dig the Millerspeed 1-inch belt-drive. You can just barely hear it, and if you want it louder, Millerspeed has a 2-inch drive that makes pretty good noise.



> The black Rushforth wheels add to the bad boy attitude, and the Nitto NT-05 rubber is sticky.



> The FFR Hot Rod kit comes with a side-exit exhaust, but we like Langley Kersenboom's show car with its rear-exit system. LK and Bassani exhaust whipped up this one for the Race Rod, and LK sells them now.



> The Ford Racing 347 makes great torque, especially for a light car, and barks like a pack of rabid dogs. With no choke on the Holley, it's a little cold-blooded but livable. The red things between the engine and the fan are the tops of the Koni coilovers.



> Schenck swapped the driver seat for a low-back Kirkey aluminum seat covered in matching vinyl, and it's not only supersupportive, but surprisingly comfy. It makes it a little harder to get out of the car, though.



> To continue the racy feel of the car, we eschewed the included Auto Meter gauges and went with a Racepak UDX dash. It provides all the usual gauge functions and has four screens with 20 programmable displays. **HRM**

SOURCES

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FORD RACING; Dearborn, MI; 800/367-3788; www.fordracingparts.com

J. MILLER CUSTOMS; Temecula, CA; 951/676-0191

LK MOTORSPORTS; Hermosa Beach, CA; 310/937-6869; www.lkmotorsports.com

NITTO TIRE; Cypress, CA; www.nittotire.com

OPTIMA BATTERIES; Aurora, CO; 888/80OPTIMA; www.optimabatteries.com

RACEPAK DATA SYSTEMS; Rancho Santa Margarita, CA; 949/709-5555; www.racepak.com

RUSHFORTH WHEELS; Tacoma, WA; 253/306-3215; www.rushforthwheels.com

SUMMIT RACING; Tallmadge, OH; 800/230-3030; www.summitracing.com