

Back in Time

Lead Sled Wedge Sets New Speed Record... RJ

On November 19th, 1968, Ford Motor Company took a big step in electric vehicles when they ran a battery powered race car to a new speed record at the Bonneville Salt Flats. They hit an official speed of 138.862 mph.

The power came from 20 Autolite batteries encased in a special racing chassis. This chassis was actually built by acclaimed performance wizard Brad Dennis, who just happened to be a graduate from Georgia Tech in Atlanta.

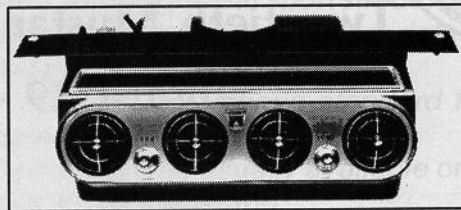
The whole reason for this effort was to dramatically illustrate the initial power surge available from these batteries. Remember, Autolite was still a relatively new division at this time and any publicity they could gain was bound to help sales.

The batteries were set up to deliver power to an onboard electric motor through a control device built by General Electric. Apparently, these batteries could generate enough power to fry its own motor if that energy wasn't modulated properly. And that's where the GE piece comes in.

On its initial runs, speeds of over 100 mph were reached. During the actual record runs, the electric motor was actually forced into a temporary "overload" situation in order to make the required 100 horse-power at about 8000 rpm to attain record speeds.

Known as the "Lead Sled", the vehicle's motor was mounted in the rear and turned the axle with a chain and sprocket. Stopping power came

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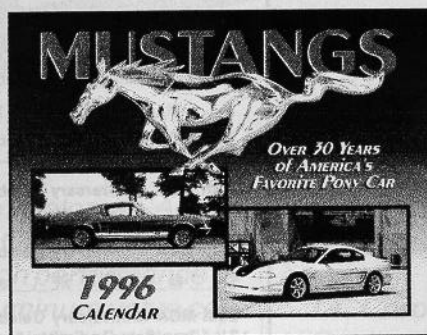
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from a single rear disc brake. A sleek fiberglass body covered the aluminum monocoque chassis. Total weight with driver was 2400 lbs.