

LAP 34—HOME IMPROVEMENT

Your home, the place where you live, is a very personal thing. Designed by you to be functional while providing a sense of belonging and comfort, it represents stability, reflects your interests and sometimes even your priorities. During our lives, some of us rarely change surroundings while others are more comfortable with continual change and the fresh look it creates. The same can be said for the interior of your Mustang race car. It should be functional, cozy, warm and inviting, while serving your interests and priorities. On this lap we'll investigate some important considerations when designing and building your track Mustang.

It is quite rare that an aftermarket seat installed in the stock Mustang location will result in the proper seat position. The best way to position your seat is to think of it as a two-part fitting process that starts with your legs and ends with your arms. Begin by removing the steering wheel and locating the seat in the exact position that provides your legs good access to the brake, clutch, and accelerator pedals. Make sure you can reach all the pedals and execute a full range of motion for each while being able to fully rest your left foot on the sloping part of the firewall. You'll need to be able to do this to brace yourself during racing. After determining this seat location, install the steering wheel and adjust it fore or aft as required to obtain nicely bent elbows when your hands are resting at the 10- and 2-o'clock positions on the wheel. It's important to remember Mustangs were street cars designed to reasonably fit the majority of buyers well, but your race car has to fit you exactly. The last thing you need is to be hanging on to the car while driving. You want the car to fit you exactly so all effort can be put into driving. It is a very good idea to custom mold the seat cushion to fit your body. There are aftermarket kits that use expanding foam contained within a plastic bag that will allow you to custom fit your seat. It's a good idea.

Interiors devoid of insulation, carpeting, and plastic are a good idea because they save weight. But even more important is the benefit they provide in terms of fire prevention. In fact, the early Shelby GT-350s were homologated for the SCCA B-Production class without the street car interior components and thus claimed by Shelby to have a "Fire Proof" interior. The question of what color comes up when you strip the interior of your Mustang for track use. Most owners tend toward paint in lighter shades of grey to lighten things up inside. It looks good and makes things easy to find when performing maintenance but does it make the car better to race? Another approach is to paint the interior black, thus reducing inside visibility and making it easier to focus on the important things that are going on outside the car. I personally prefer the black interior because, when racing, it makes the world outside much brighter and helps me focus on the task at hand—driving.

There are usually a number of switches required inside your track Mustang. It's understood that locating the starter, ignition, and fuel pump switches within easy reach while fully buckled in is a good idea. But, it is much more difficult to locate the main battery disconnect in the same manner. Inevitably, the need will arise to reach the main disconnect while fully buckled in so take the time to locate it properly. The strange thing is, you'd expect it to be more likely to need to turn "off" the battery, but in reality you'll probably be fully buckled in and ready to fire the engine and then find you have no power. You'll then be needing to reach the switch to turn "on" the power without unbuckling. This can be very frustrating and quite embarrassing. Ask me, I know. The only thing worse than this happened once with my old Shelby race that had Weber carburetion. Call for grid had

been made, I was fully buckled in and attempted to start the engine when I realized I left the caps on the induction stacks of the carburetors! Highly embarrassing!

Lastly, the single most important device in your Mustang is the fire suppression system. Make sure the trigger can be reached at all times and preferably

without looking to find it. If you use a hand held bottle, ensure the latch can be found and easily released while fully strapped in and wearing all required safety gear, including gloves. If you have a permanently mounted fire bottle, make sure the indicator gauge is located such that it can easily be read by the inspector at tech when checking to ensure a full charge. I know racers that provide a small mirror for just such a purpose.

Like your home, keeping the interior of your Mustang race car clean and neat will create an environment you'll enjoy and use to the full benefit.

Until the next lap (I'll be waving after I pass you!),

"...THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT DEVICE IN YOUR MUSTANG IS THE FIRE SUPPRESSION SYSTEM."

Charlie Jones, a.k.a.

Roadracer

