



LAP 42—IT'S THE SUM OF THE PARTS

It's a proven fact that without good parts, you can't go racing. Having an ample supply of good parts is essential to fielding a winning race Mustang. If you're lucky enough to be racing a modern Mustang, there are literally hundreds of options you can use to quickly and efficiently get the parts you need. Many items can be found straight from a catalog and at affordable prices. The picture changes quickly as your racing Mustang gets older, making the importance of parts even greater because the supply is limited and many items are only available in used form.

Vintage racers use an underground network to find parts. It's an informal group that extends coast to coast, designed to help owners keep cars running so there is someone to race at the next event. Telling your buddies what you're looking for starts a chain reaction that ripples through the network until the needed item is located. The problem is it can take time, sometimes months and in other cases years to find what you need. I know some racers that have been unable to race for more than six months while trying to find the correct parts to keep their cars legal. There are specialized sources that focus primarily in body parts, transmissions, suspension components, and rear ends that can be called upon when trying to keep the Mustang on the track. There are enthusiasts that keep quiet about the parts they actually have until they see a real need to replace something that's broken, and then they offer it up. I know several locations where individuals are sitting on numerous parts cars and assorted spares that were collected over a lifetime and won't just sell them to anyone. But if you tell them it's for your race car you'll get probably get lucky. In my experience, people want to help racers keep the old iron running.

Many times the only parts you can find are well used, so close inspection and extra work is required to make these items useful. A good example can be found in late '60s Windsor cylinder heads, which are becoming more difficult to find. The extreme punishment received during racing can stress these heads such that cracking can and often does occur. We have replaced several "good" heads in the past year due to cracking, which is a real disappointment after spending the time to get the porting right. It's the gamble you take when using parts that are more than 40 years old. Because of the rarity, people collect parts "just in case" they're needed in the future. Coming across some items you do not need is no reason not to buy them if you or your buddies might need them in the future. It's considered part of an extended community property pile when something is purchased before it's needed. When you break and need a part, the general rule is the guy that needs it first has the first right to the community parts pile. Again, the idea is to keep the most cars on the track to race. Pricing is something that

begins with how much you paid and how badly you want to participate in the community parts pile. If you charge a buddy too much it will probably be remembered the next time you need something really badly.

Another commonly used source of supply is modification of an original part formerly used in a different application. Brake components are commonly modified for use on an early Mustang where Ford trucks, vans, and station wagons of the era are a good source. The large, heavy rear drums of a Ford truck can be made to work well on early Mustangs after some time on the lathe removing excess metal. Suspension parts are commonly "improved" with changes that make them stock appearing and yet more functional. A good place to start is the older, original, take-off pieces rather than beginning with new replacements because typically the original items are more substantial, stronger, and besides they look better. The good news is there are a lot of parts that are easy to find and plentiful, too. Engine internals like rods, cranks, cams, valves and pistons are readily available and abundant. Transmission components like clutches and axles are all internal items that can be bought new from a catalog which can save time and reduce failures.

If you've ever wanted to race a vintage Mustang, now is the time. There is a world of people that will help you build a car correctly so that you only do it once. You can receive the benefit of their experience learning where to find difficult items, what parts to buy, and how to modify them. The thrill of racing old iron that took the extra effort to find good parts for cannot be beat. Learning from others how to modify parts to make them perform in competition is a challenge and a lot of fun. Completing a project where the effort required was far more than ordering from a catalog can give a sense of satisfaction that is hard to match. After all, it's the hunt and not the kill that matters.

Happy hunting, see you next lap!

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Charlie Jones, a.k.a.
Roadracer

