

Detroit has not started building special road racing machines yet—but that's no sign it isn't ready with

FORD'S MEXICO

FOR COMPETITION

BY KEN FERMOYLE

MEET THE MEXICO—the car which could form the basis of a Ford factory-sponsored racing team if the company should ever decide to take an official crack at racing! The super-streamlined model was designed by Ford's Advanced Styling Section as its idea of what an official Ford entry in such races as Le Mans and the Pan-American might be like.

This doesn't mean Ford is planning to go into the racing business like some of the European manufacturers; Alex Tremulis, head of Advanced Styling, was careful to point this out in an exclusive interview with *MOTOR Life*. It does show that Ford—like the marines—believes in being prepared for anything! It also demonstrates that, contrary to popular opinion, Europeans aren't the only ones capable of conceiving and designing this type of automobile.

As the pictures show, the Mexico is an extremely sleek and functional-looking

car; most automobile fanciers would probably agree also that it is a beautiful automobile. This, however, is only incidental, according to Tremulis. "We were not concerned with styling or appearance, as such, in designing the Mexico," he reports. "We were attempting to design an automobile for a specific purpose. Any beauty it might have derives from the efficiency and functional qualities of the design."

At present the Mexico exists only as a three-eighths scale model—as far as is known, that is. (*What is going on behind locked doors at Ford's Research and Engineering Center might be another story. In the interview Tremulis admitted that the Mexico "doesn't represent the limit of our thinking." So perhaps even more advanced designs are now being studied and worked on by Ford!*)

Let's take a closer look at the Mexico and some of its more interesting features to get an idea of what Ford feels it would

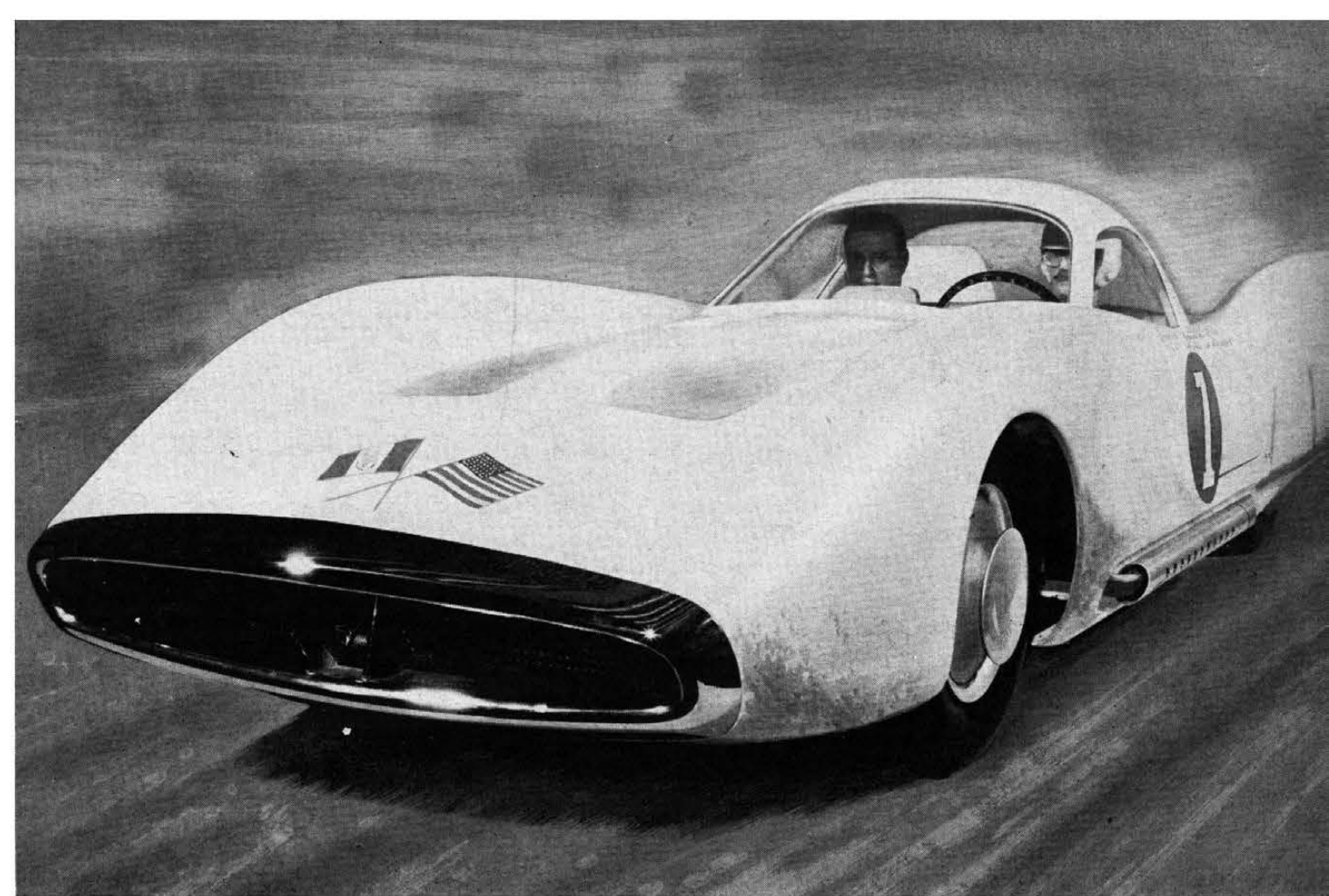
take to win at road racing—and you can be pretty sure Ford would never enter any field unless it felt it had a darn good chance of winning!

As envisioned by Advanced Styling, the car would be built around a modified Thunderbird chassis. Wheelbase would be 102 inches and it would be approximately 46 inches high. Body would be built of either aluminum or fiberglass. As a rough "guesstimate," Tremulis figures the car would weigh some 2,400 pounds.

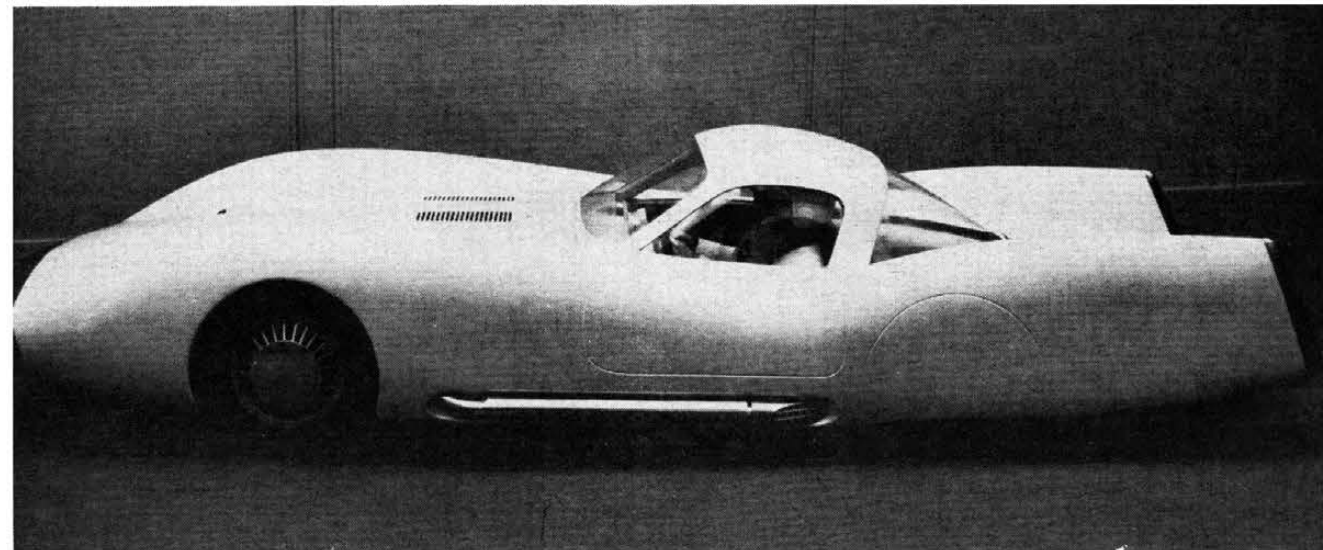
"The whole idea behind the Mexico was to create a car with the least possible air drag to get maximum speed with a minimum of horsepower," Tremulis explains. This meant combining smallest possible frontal area with extremely good streamlining, and accounts for many of the Mexico's design features.

Technically, one of the most interesting of these features is its front-end appearance. It has an elongated and very

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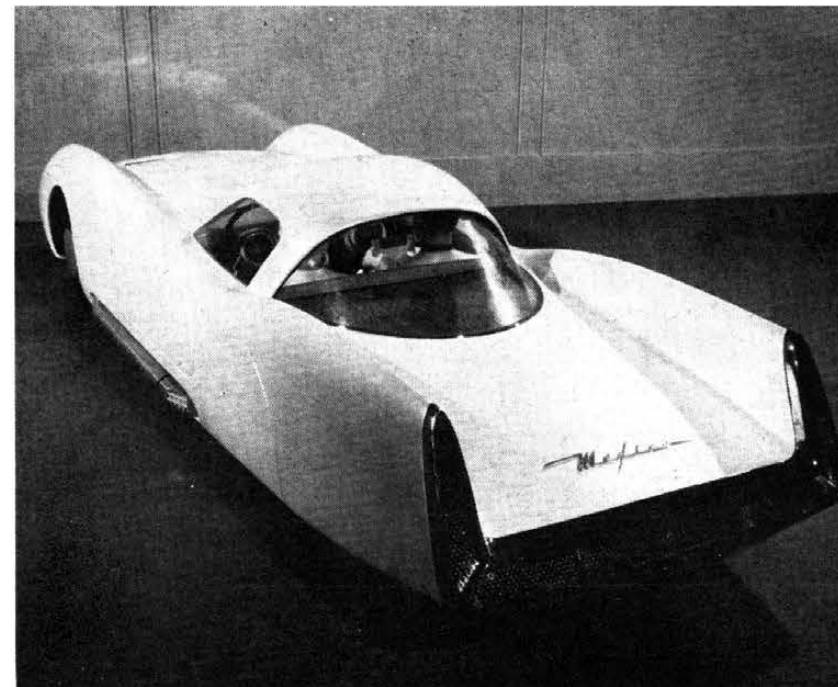


To see what the Mexico sports car might look like in action, a *MOTOR Life* artist added numbers, flags and illusion of speed.

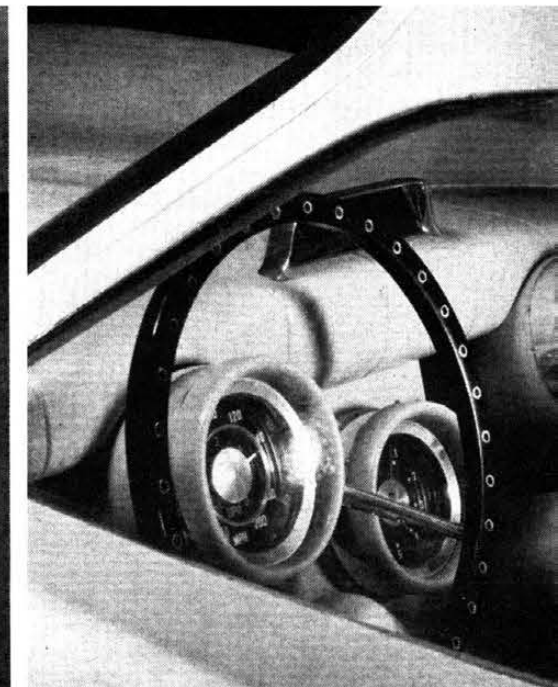


Maximum speed with a minimum of horsepower was the objective in designing body shell of the Mexico. Note outboard exhaust system which permits reduced overall height. Air for

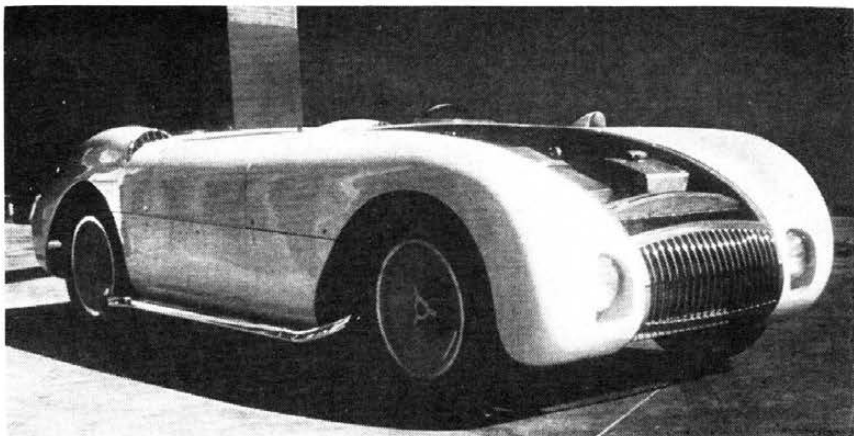
cooling is caught by frontal nose scoop, passes to radiator, which occupies a compartment separate from engine, then is returned to outside through louvers seen on top of the hood.



MOTOR Life, July, 1955



Speedometer and tach are single unit in steering wheel hub. Other gauges are in front of co-driver, with clock at center.



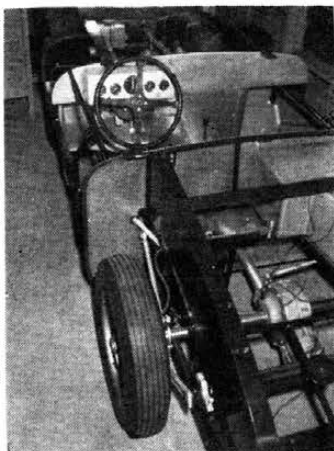
Aluminum body of the new Offy-powered sports car is on an 85-inch wheelbase.

NEW KURTIS—

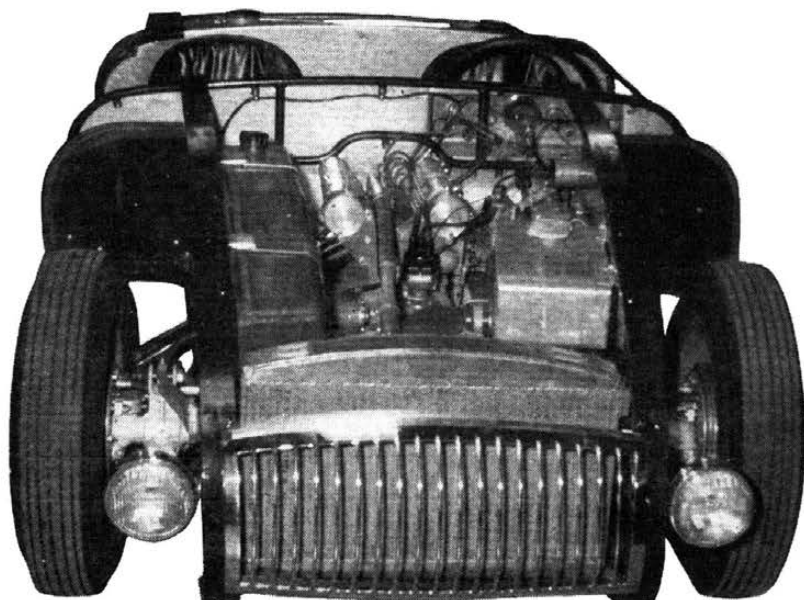
OFFY SPORTS CAR

SOON to be seen on Midwestern sports car road circuits, with Jack Hinkle at the wheel, is the good-looking machine shown here. Its production involved the combined talents of Hinkle, Frank Kurtis and Myer-Drake, plus the ingenuity of Jack McGrath, of Indianapolis driving fame, who actually did the assembly. Although not yet tested in competition, McGrath has taken the car through the Willow Springs, Calif., course. He reports the handling qualities, as to be expected with a Kurtis chassis, are superb. •

Midget rear gets power through MG transmission from 90-cubic inch Offy developing 97 hp at 6000 rpm. Overall height, 33 in.



Frame and front suspension are same as Kurtis 500C. Weight is 1500 pounds.



FORD'S MEXICO

(Continued from page 40)

clean-looking nose which contributes to keeping drag to a minimum. The Mexico has a divorced cooling system. The radiator is ahead of, and separate from, the engine compartment to insure efficient cooling and a smooth flow of air thru scoops in the nose, past the radiator and then on out thru louvers in the hood.

(Incidentally, this type of cooling system is similar to that used on Goldie Gardner's latest record-breaking MG; the Austin-Healy which set new speed marks for its class on the Bonneville salt flats also used this type of system. Don't think that this means Ford copied these designs, however. The Mexico was started over a year and a half ago, long before the appearance of these cars.)

Because of the large overhang at the front end of the car, which this cooling system makes necessary, rear fender sections were enlarged to provide stability at high speeds. Note, however, how the car's lines flow smoothly from front to rear with no breaks or abrupt angles to hinder the rush of air along its surface. It was to insure this clean streamlining that the enclosed coupe design was chosen over an open or roadster-type car.

To aid further in reducing air drag, a functional grille is built into the rear of the car to reduce turbulence and air eddies there. In short, as Tremulis pointed out, the Mexico is designed to slide smoothly thru the air with as little resistance as possible, and every detail about it was carefully thought out to contribute to this end. Another example of this is the dual outboard exhaust system which makes possible a lower seating position, thus lower overall height, while maintaining adequate road clearance.

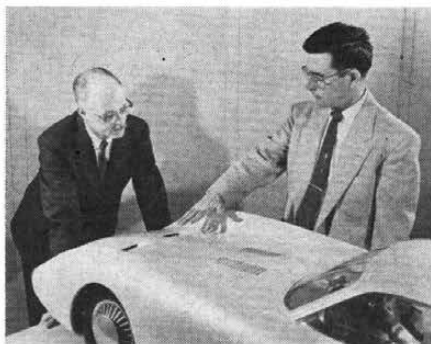
In fact, the Mexico is designed to have a smaller frontal area and cleaner lines than the Mercedes 300 SL, giving it a lower coefficient of drag. Thus it should equal or surpass the 300 SL performance with an equal amount of horsepower, according to Tremulis. "On the basis of comparison with other highly streamlined cars that have run at Bonneville, top speed should approach 200 mph—depending, of course, on the horsepower of the engine used," he stated.

He pointed out that the Austin-Healy did 192 mph with roughly similar bodywork and 200 horsepower.

Tremulis also said that the Mexico was not designed for short courses where high speeds are not possible. In fact, on courses of this type its excellent streamlining would put it at a disadvantage because it would get little or no braking effect from air drag at corners. In races such as Le Mans and the Mexican Road Race, however, and for maximum speed runs it would be in its element. For maximum speed runs, at Bonneville, for example, it has been designed so a single

bubble can be placed over the driver and a flush-fitting tonneau cover could be used over the remainder of the passenger compartment, further reducing frontal area and drag.

The interior of the car contains some interesting features also. A 200-mph speedometer and 6,000-rpm tachometer are mounted in the steering wheel hub where they are easily visible to the driver. Other instruments, oil, temperature, fuel and generator gauges etc., are mounted at right, in front of the navigator or co-driver. A large chronograph is in the center of the instrument panel for checking lap times, checking performance etc. For good ventilation of the passenger compartment, grille work is built in the rear of the seat to permit air to flow thru.



Alex Tremulis (left), head of Ford's Advanced Styling, tells Ken Fermoye about front end he designed for car.

In discussing the Mexico, Tremulis pointed out that it is "a very eloquent expression of the freedom Ford Engineering Staff allows its advanced design people. It's only because of a very progressive management and engineering staff that we can spend time working on projects like this that are divorced entirely from production car activity." Many enthusiasts will be surprised to learn that this freedom of expression exists in the industry, no doubt.

It is in this respect that the significance of the Mexico lies. As stated earlier, the fact that the Mexico has been designed and reached its present state of development doesn't necessarily mean that Ford will be going into racing in the near future—or any time. It could mean that. Ford is no stranger to racing, certainly. Everyone is familiar with Henry Ford's early racing exploits and his famous "999." Most can recall the team of racers prepared by the company during the 1930's for Indianapolis. More recently the successes of Lincolns in Mexico have received widespread notice.

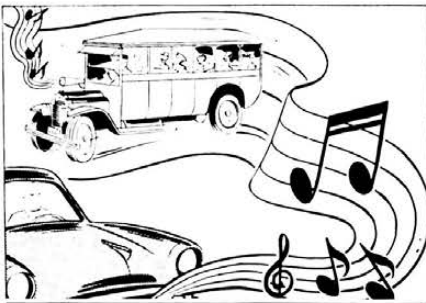
However, the appearance of the Mexico does show what Ford is capable of if it should decide on competition. It also shows that a progressive American manufacturer looks ahead a lot further than many of us realize and that Detroit designers don't have to take a back seat for anyone. •

Wheeling with Deeling

It's a Good Thing I'm Married!... By Ray Deeling



REMEMBER my telling you about the conversion kit that makes stock car horns sound like the Italian Bus Horn that nearly stole Humphrey Bogart's last picture from him? Well, since I put one of these kits on my car I've had some pretty close calls—the gadget has too darned much sex appeal! Once, for instance, a Gina



Lollobrigida-type girl tried to jump right into my car with me after I'd tootled the horn at a stop signal. Just couldn't help herself! Another time, two pretty blondes chased me for two miles after I gave them a few bars on the horn. Scared? You bet I was—and it's a good thing I'm a married man. A fellow could get into trouble that way! If you don't mind this kind of trouble, put an Italian Bus Horn kit on your car. You can install it yourself—in only 15 minutes you'll have your stock horns automatically alternating high and low tones about ten times a second, whenever you hit your horn. Works on any 6 or 12 volt system, and it's only \$6.95, including postage and money-back guarantee. But don't say I didn't warn you!



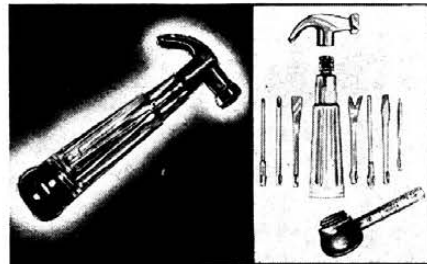
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