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TECHNOTES

GP CAR TESTS?

I found the tech reports on the Maserati, Mercedes, and Ferrari-Lancia Grand Prix cars both informative and interesting. However, there was no way to compare the three cars as to performance. Would it be possible to road test these cars, giving acceleration and speeds in gears?

Bob Schulhof
Encino, California

There is but one reasonable way to judge race cars and that is by their ability to win races, the task for which they were presumably designed. Admittedly, this method of measurement involves the driver's ability too, which makes bench racing that much more interesting.

As different circuits present different problems, we usually find that gear ratios in Grand Prix cars are swapped rather frequently. The 0-120 mph time will then vary rather widely, not to mention the speeds in gears. In gearing a car for a course, you first must determine the slowest point on the course (other than the starting line, for which you might have a "starting" gear) and then the fastest. Then you decide how fast you will be going at these two points in miles per hour.

The lowest usable gear should be selected so it relates the speed at the slowest corner to the low end of the usable rev-range. The highest gear should relate maximum allowable revs to the highest speed attainable on the course. This is easier to say than do, as one's maximum velocity can be so dependent on acceleration, which in turn is a function of the gears in use.

Anyway, once you've established your minimum and maximum, the rest of the gears are usually spaced equally between them, unless some particular condition on the course should dictate otherwise, such as a long, sweeping bend where you'd feel more at home at high revs in third than at low revs in fourth.

Some race courses, such as Silverstone, have very small differences between minimum and maximum speeds while speeds on others, such as the Nurburgring vary tremendously. If you're stuck with a four speed box the latter course will demand widely spaced ratios, so you'll want the working rev range to be pretty wide, whereas on the former, tuned intakes and exhausts would be just the thing, together with a close ratio box.

But it's not just engine and gearboxes that are tuned to various circuits. The suspension, too, comes in for a great deal of attention in order to suit the car to both the course and the driver. Thus a road-test of a first-line GP car will only present a picture of that particular car as set up at that particular time.

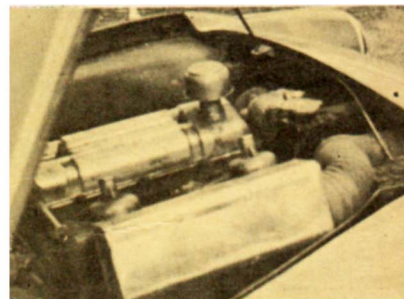
TR AIR-BOX

The April '57 Technotes contained some suggestions for modifying a TR-2 to provide a cool air supply to the carbs. Here is a balance box and scoop assembly that my brother-in-law and I fitted to my

Triumph TR-2 about two years ago. Though crude looking, it has been most effective in increasing performance and economy. With overdrive, I averaged 37 mpg (US) on a 4200 mile trip, 8 mph more than my best previous average.

The balance box was cut from a turpentine can and is attached to the carbs by the usual air cleaner bolt holes. The top of the box was made removable for ease of attachment and also for changing the filters. Two copper cleaning pads, borrowed from the kitchen, were fastened in the intake tube to the box. When dampened with oil, they seem very efficient as filters.

Cool outside air comes in through a three inch hole in the front nose panel near the upper right corner of the radiator. It is conducted to the balance box by flexible heater hose. The scoop and its backing plate, which were purchased at a hardware store as an outside ventilator for an automatic washer, are bolted together sandwiching the body panel. The backing plate, on the inside, has a short piece of tube on it, to which may be attached the flex hose. A piece of window screening in between the scoop and the body panel will keep out insects and small rocks.



Al Nicholson

Oakville, Ontario

This sounds excellent and I'm certainly impressed with your improvement in economy. I only hope that performance is correspondingly better too. One suggestion I would make is to cut out the rear of the balance box open so that the pressure at the carburetor mouth will be atmospheric, the same as at the float bowl. Otherwise, you will get involved in the complexities of ram-tuning.

The Wilen Engineering Company, Kingsbury Green, Kingsbury Road, London, N.W.9, England manufacture a kit which does essentially the same thing. They also have available for the TRs an interesting nose cowl and wraparound racing windshield to reduce drag.

CORRECTION

Under "Calling All Crosleys" (Sept.), we gave Nick Braje's old address. He is now located at 1651 West 130th Street, Gardena, California.