

FALCON CHALLENGER



SUSPENSION MODIFICATIONS WERE SIMPLE BUT MADE THE FALCON HANDLE LIKE A CHAMP WITHOUT TOO BIG A SACRIFICE IN THE OVERALL RIDE.

WHEN WE PUBLISHED a report (July '62) on the Falcon-based Challengers then being built for the Ford Motor Company at the Holman & Moody stock car racing speed shop in Charlotte, North Carolina, plans called for H&M to produce these cars in limited numbers for interested buyers. Since that time, Ford has decided to market the Falcon Sprint, which features a new, lower roof line and a 260-cubic-inch, 164-hp V-8 engine, so H&M dropped the Challenger program.

Challenger II's resemblance to the Sprint begins and ends in the engine compartment, but it's still a very interesting car to drive, even if it won't be available. Basically a 1962 Falcon Futura coupe, the Challenger II features a much lowered body, due to a three-inch section having been removed just below the belt line. Interior is stock, except that the bucket seats have been lowered to provide head room. The rear seat is stock height. The speedometer has been blanked off with a piece of aluminum and replaced by a matching Stewart-Warner tachometer and 160-mph speedometer, mounted on top of the dash, almost directly in line with the driver's vision.

The stock 260-cubic-inch V-8 is hooked up to a four-speed floor-shift transmission and 3.50-to-1 station wagon

rear axle. Carburetion is by a stock two-throat Holley, while ignition chores are handled by a dual-point Mallory distributor. A special aluminum-core, cross-flow radiator provides cooling, and the fan is of the viscous-drive type.

Performance is very creditable, considering the mill hasn't been reworked in any way. We hooked it up to our fifth wheel and electric speedometer and recorded a standing quarter-mile in 16.9 seconds, with a terminal speed of 82 mph. Top speed averaged out from several two-way runs at 105 mph. Zero to 60 was accomplished in 9.3 seconds, while 0-30 and 0-45 took 3.4 and 5.8 seconds respectively.

The Challenger II is also equipped with something we would like to see on every Ford — four-wheel Airheart disc brakes. These units are made in California and have so far proved superior to any of those now used in Europe. They are much lighter in weight and possess one patented feature the others don't have — the puck, or friction material, is self-adjusting in both directions.

Several 60-mph panic stops were made with an average stopping distance of 133 feet. Fade wasn't noticeable at any time. Pedal pressure with the disc setup is heavier than with drum brakes but not so much that they become tiring.

The suspension system has also been reworked by Holman

A little body and speed shop sleight of hand turns the compact Falcon into a hot performer

by Jim Wright, *Technical Editor*



The "260" fits nicely in the Falcon's engine compartment. There would have been even more room if the body hadn't been sectioned three inches. Lightweight, efficient Airheart discs (left) are used on all four wheels to provide quick, fade-free stops.



SLIMMING EFFECT OF SECTIONING JOB IS EVIDENT HERE. SEATS WERE LOWERED AND TOP LEFT AT STOCK HEIGHT TO PROVIDE HEAD ROOM.

& Moody to give the Challenger II handling characteristics to suit its increased performance. Front and rear springs are stiffer, and heavy-duty shocks are used all around (Gabriels on the front and Monroes on the rear). A large-diameter anti-roll bar is fitted at the front end.

The resulting ride is much firmer than stock, but not objectionably so. The only harshness encountered was on some washboard roads at moderate speeds. At high speeds the ripples were ironed out and there was no tendency for the car to feel as if it were skating. On high-speed runs the car was almost completely immune to cross-winds, and the faster it went, the steadier it felt.

We thought there was just a shade too much understeer built into the car—but then, this is the way most stock racing cars are set up and that *is* Holman & Moody's main line of business. The car is very flat in corners, thanks to the anti-roll bar, and there's enough power to induce an oversteer condition if the understeer becomes too great. So, in reality it's a pretty hard car to get into trouble with.

We're kind of sorry that Holman & Moody won't be following through with their original plans for the Challenger II—but then, the Sprint should also be a mighty exciting car and just a bit more practical.

/MT

PHOTOS BY BOB D'OLIVO



Aluminum plate blanks off unused stock speedometer, while boat-type housings hold Stewart-Warner tachometer and speedometer.