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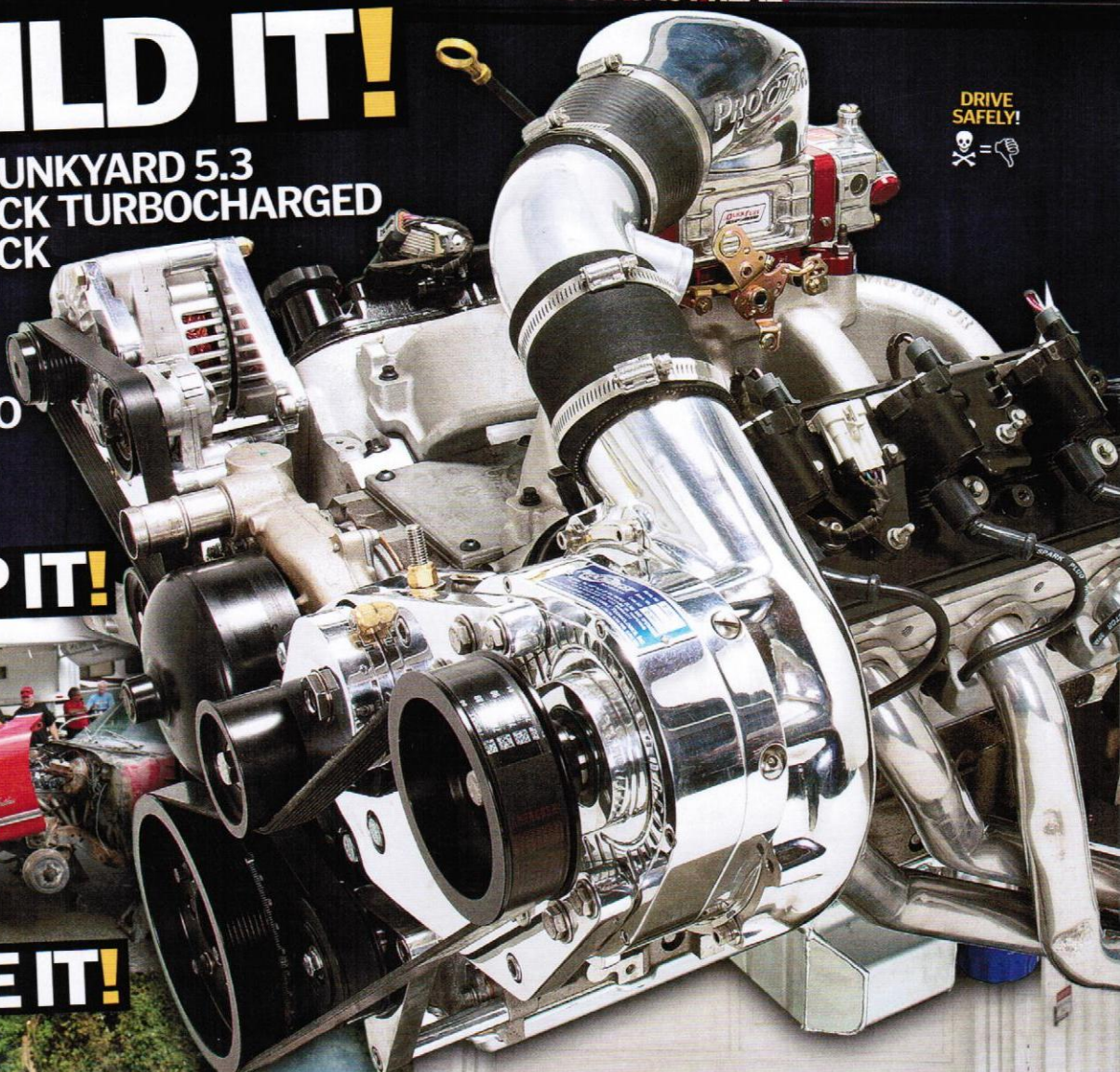
DRIVE SAFELY!



SWAP IT!



DRIVE IT!



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A heads-up wrenchfest where the winner takes home a brand-new LS6!

By Jeff Smith / Photos: John McGann and Jeff Smith

THE GIANT CAR CRAFT LS ENGINE SWAP CONTEST

The Holley LS Fest folks planned on taking several hours to determine a winner in the inaugural Car Craft Engine Swap Challenge. The finish took far less.

“Luck is where opportunity meets preparation.” This is originally attributed to Seneca, a Roman philosopher. We prefer Indy racer Johnny Rutherford’s version.

You could tell from the first moment you walked under the **Car Craft** Engine Swap Challenge tent that the team from Williamsburg, Iowa, had come prepared. The Olds Cutlass convertible was nothing really to look at, especially compared with their competition’s beautiful big-block, Chevy-powered Camaro. But this was no beauty contest. This was an all-out test of skill at the Holley LS Fest in Bowling Green, Kentucky, to see how quickly a team of car crafters could swap a GM Performance Parts LS6 into a car and drive off. The game was as simple as it was challenging. And the team that won got to keep the LS6 and the Holley HP EFI system. The big question was: How long would it take?

It had dumped buckets of southern-flavored rain the day before, and the day began overcast and humid. The two cars faced each other under the open-sided tent with puddles covering both worksites just to put a damp spin on the conditions. Holley was looking for a fun competition to round out the usual drag racing and autocross events, and this looked like a winner to us. There were plenty of applicants, but the decision came down to Corey Ritter’s team from Lexington, Kentucky, working on his ’69 454, five-speed Camaro head to head against Justin



Team Camaro showed up with a five-speed, manual-equipped, big-block Camaro. Owner Corey Ritter was confident in his team of Mercedes mechanics, who all work at James Motor Co. in Lexington, Kentucky.



Dermody’s crew and their 350, Chevy-powered, ’70 Olds Cutlass convertible. The tension before the start was real enough and had that feeling you sense right before the big cross-town high school football game.

THE CHALLENGERS

With the two cars face to face under the tent, it was clear the Iowa boys had done their prep work. In a later discussion with Justin, he admitted he had purchased a complete Holley HP EFI computer and wiring harness from Jegs so he not only knew how to wire the system, but also so he would be familiar with the software should he need to access it with his laptop to get the engine running. The Olds team’s preparation was evident in little things like a green tape line on each midpoint position on the body like the NASCAR teams use to indicate exactly where to place the floor-jack to raise the car. As a further bit of not-so-subtle intimidation, Team Olds sported a monster Snap-on rollaway tool chest, while the Camaro guys had their tools laid out on the ground alongside their car. When the horn sounded, it appeared Team Camaro would really have to hustle.

Left: This is how the big-block in the Camaro appeared before the competition started. The engine was equipped with EFI, which meant the fuel delivery system was already in place. The team had practiced pulling the heavy Rat but not installing an LS-family engine.



Each team would bolt in one of these GM Performance Parts LS6 engines that Holley had previously equipped and tested with a Holley intake and the new Holley HP electronic fuel-injection system. To assist the swap, Holley fitted each engine with a Mac’s Pivot Plate (PivotPlate.com).



Team Olds’ engine compartment revealed its preparation. The rules required the car to run, but only for a short period, so Justin Dermody bypassed the radiator and had an EFI pump and tank in the trunk. The carbureted small-block was fed by a plastic gas can under the hood, and the battery had been moved to the trunk.

THE TEAMS

Team Camaro
Corey Ritter, owner
Townsend Gregg
Robb Combs
Brian Geary

Team Olds
Justin Dermody, owner
Trent Lower
Clay Koenig
Dustin Bernacki
Mike Drapac, software help/coaching
Dan Bernacki, Dustin’s father