

WILL RUN 5'S



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Former Street Racer Mike Moran Has Come a Long Way Since the First HOT ROD Fastest Street Car Shootout. His Turbo 540ci Monte Carlo Is the **World's Fastest Doorslammer**. Now It Needs to Be the Quickest.

By Matt King

Photography: Randy Lorentzen/Planet R and the HOT ROD Archives

In 1992, a Detroit street racer showed up at HOT ROD's very first Fastest Street Car Shootout in a memorable 8-second Pinto station wagon, but what the staff remembered most was the guy literally beating a piston back into the engine block with a ball-peen hammer in the hotel parking lot. Today, the same Mike Moran holds the distinction of having the world's fastest doorslammer, a successful racing engine business, and a reputation as one of the country's top EFI and turbo experts. We could never have guessed.

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His own tubbed '79 Pinto ran 8.60's with a fuel-injected and nitrous'd Cleveland-headed Ford SVT block that was competitive with big-block cars in the early days of the street-legal drag racing scene. So competitive, in fact, that his roof-racked Ford was quicker than all but 6 of the 26 cars at our first Memphis showdown, even though it was his first race on a sanctioned track. You read that right: "Back then I was a street racer. I'd never actually raced on a dragstrip," Moran says. "But after Memphis, I never raced on the street again." His rookie effort was even more impressive considering the near-perfect reaction times he cut pass after pass.

It was that uncanny ability at the 'line that prompted the owner of the winning car, John Carter, to hire Moran to drive his '67 Chevy II for the next two seasons while Moran built a new car. Together they won the first Orlando World Street Nationals in 1993 and took Second at Memphis in 1993.

During his stint as a hired shoe, Moran sold the Pinto to a racer in Cleveland who still campaigns it in virtually unaltered form. He then began work on a '94 Camaro that would become a Pro Street legend. Nicknamed Casper after the friendly TV ghost, Moran's fourth-gen Camaro started as a salvage-titled street car with a custom Jerry Haas-built chassis and a 6.5-liter naturally aspirated big-block that ran 7.90s out of the gate at its debut in 1994. By 1995, Fastest Street Car racing was in full stride under the auspices of the National Muscle Car Association, and heavy hitters like former NHRA Pro Stock racers Tony Christian and Pat Masu had joined the fray. Competition at the top of the Pro Street heap jumped a notch in early 1996 when Mike's Popeye, a nitrous-injected '69 Camaro flew into the 7.40s and right past Moran and Christian's naturally aspirated combos, forcing both of them to step up to keep up.



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"We took that abuse for two races before. Tony and I both put on nitrous—reluctantly. We didn't want to because, you know, it's hard on parts," Moran says. Not only did the juiced combination burn through more hardware, it was harder on Moran's fledgling racing engine business, which he started part-time in 1994 before going full-time in 1999. But despite the extra time and expense, after the nitrous switchover, Casper leap-frogged past Masi into the 7.20s, eventually posting an all-time best 6.77. Adding to its glory, at an exhibition at the 1996 NHRA U.S. Nationals, Casper was the first Pro Street car to exceed 200 mph, with a 6.96 at 201.

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the use of EFI in drag cars, teaming with John Mecney—the godfather of aftermarket EFI who developed ACC/FI Digital Fuel Injection and now markets his own system under the Big Stuff (H label)—to develop and tune electronic fuel management for his race engines, all of which have run EFI, including the Pinto. "Everything I've done has been with EFI—I don't even know what to do with a carburetor," Moran says.

But Moran's well-publicized first stab at a turbocharged race car was ultimately stillborn. His quad-turbo 442ci big-block laid down a staggering 2,200 hp on the dyno and was featured in several magazines, but according to Moran, "It got banned [by the NMCA] before I even got it done, and then I didn't really have any incentive to finish it. We ran it at one race in Orlando and couldn't get it down the track."

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Despite his poor record in convincing sanctioning bodies to let his cutting-edge turbo combinations in on the action, Moran is trying again, and this time he'll be gunning for the ranks of the PRO-Edelbrock Fastest Street Car series' Pro Street class with an all-new engine and chassis, a '99 Monte Carlo-bodied former IHRA Pro Stock chassis that made history

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> Beyond the capabilities of most dynos, Moran's twin-turbo 548 makes an estimated 3,000 hp based on the car's 239-mph trap speeds. "It's probably closer to 3,500," Moran says. "But nobody can argue with 3,000."



earlier this year when a succession of 230-plus-mile-per-hour passes during an exhibition at Virginia Motorsports Park, capped by a 6.25-second, 239.70-mph blast, cemented Moran's claim to the title of world's fastest mile-per-hour doorslammer.

"There's some guy in Australia who claims he's run 241 or 245 mph, but you ask what he ran on the next pass, and he says 228 or something like that. I think he got a hot-dog-wrapper pass with that 245," Moran says mockingly. Moran's backed-up 239 mph run was about 8 mph faster than Mitch Stott's IHRA Pro Mod Corvette, which ran a 5.985 at 231.42 mph in 2003 (see "First in the 5s!" July '03) and holds the distinction of being the first and only doorslammer to run an elapsed time in the 5s, a mark that Moran has his eye set on as well.

**"It's only a matter of time before turbochargers become the power-adder of choice. It might be 5 years, or 10 years, but the time will come."
—Mike Moran**

"I think it'll happen here in the fall or next spring, as soon as we get into the better air," Moran says confidently, noting that the 548ci twin-turbo big-block in his new car, which he estimates puts out around 3,000 hp, makes too much power to run for a record under anything other than top-notch track conditions. "We detuned 1,000 hp out of it and still couldn't get it down the track" at a recent exhibition in Wichita, Kansas, Moran says. "I was lifting at the eighth-mile and running 6.70s at about 150 mph."

But Moran has no intention of stopping there. He already has an even wilder 700ci engine in the works, which he hopes to debut in a Pro Mod exhibition at the NHRA's 50th Annual U.S. Nationals in Indianapolis this year. Considering the NHRA's long history of holding out against turbocharger technology, that's a victory in and of itself for Moran. It says a lot about just how far this ex-street racer has come since we saw him swinging that hammer in Memphis.

Quick Inspection: '99 Chevy Monte Carlo

Mike Moran • Taylor, MI

POWERTRAIN

Engine: It's hard to condense an engine like Moran's twin-turbo 548 Chevy into digestible form because the hardware ultimately tells just a small fraction of the story. But to get the basics out of the way, the foundation is a Dart iron block with 4.670-inch bores, a Bryant 4.00-inch-stroke crankshaft, GRP aluminum rods, and JE spherically dished pistons with Speed-Pro rings. Dart 14-degree Oldsmobile heads ported by Carl Foltz Engineering flow through a fabricated sheetmetal intake designed by Moran and built by Wilson Manifolds, which also built the custom 4.5-inch throttle-body mounted inside the cockpit near the fabricated water-to-air intercooler that features an external pump to keep ice-cold water flowing through the core from a remote-mounted tank. A secret Crane solid-roller cam runs on Jesel lifters with a Jesel belt-drive and shaft-rocker setup with LSM valvesprings. To manage the forced induction generated by a pair of prototype 94mm Garrett turbochargers built by Precision Turbo and exhaust-driven off the Larsen Race Cars headers through stainless ducting, Moran uses a Big Stuff III controller developed by EFI guru John Meaney. An MSD 10AL Plus ignition and crank trigger provide spark, and Bosch 160 lb/hr injectors supply the fuel from a Weldon electric fuel pump. A Moroso dry-sump oiling system helps sustain the forces of 1.04-second 60-foot launches.

Power: Estimated at 3,000 hp

Transmission: A Liberty five-speed clutchless manual with a 2.66:1 First gear spins an AFT clutch and flywheel inside a Trick Titanium bellhousing. Moran solved a recurring driveshaft-breakage problem by switching to 1480-series U-joints from a heavy-duty dump truck.

Rearend: A fabricated housing built by Larson Race Cars contains Richmond 4.57:1 Pro Gears and Strange 40-spline axles with a spool and billet housing ends.

CHASSIS

Frame: The former IHRA Pro Stock chassis was built by Larry Larson of Larson Race Cars in Oak Grove, Missouri. It ran during the 2002 season before Moran purchased it as a roller for about \$45,000. The complete car weighs 2,334 pounds without driver.

Suspension: Up front are Lamb struts with titanium coil springs. The rear is a Larson Race Cars four-

link with Koni remote-adjustable shocks.

Brakes: There are Lamb carbon-fiber rotors with Lamb calipers at all four corners.

Wheels: Weld 15x3.5-inch Magnums, front; Weld 16x16-inch Magnums with beadlocks, rear

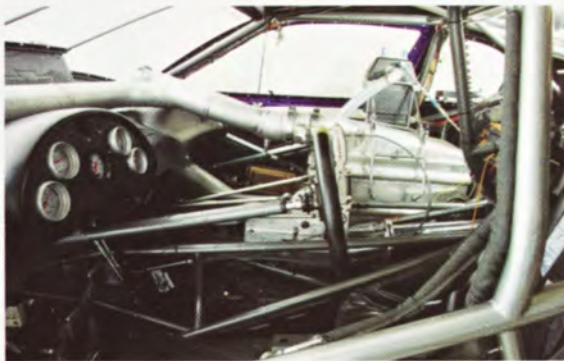
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STYLE

Body: '99 Chevy Monte Carlo with steel roof and carbon-fiber fenders and hood

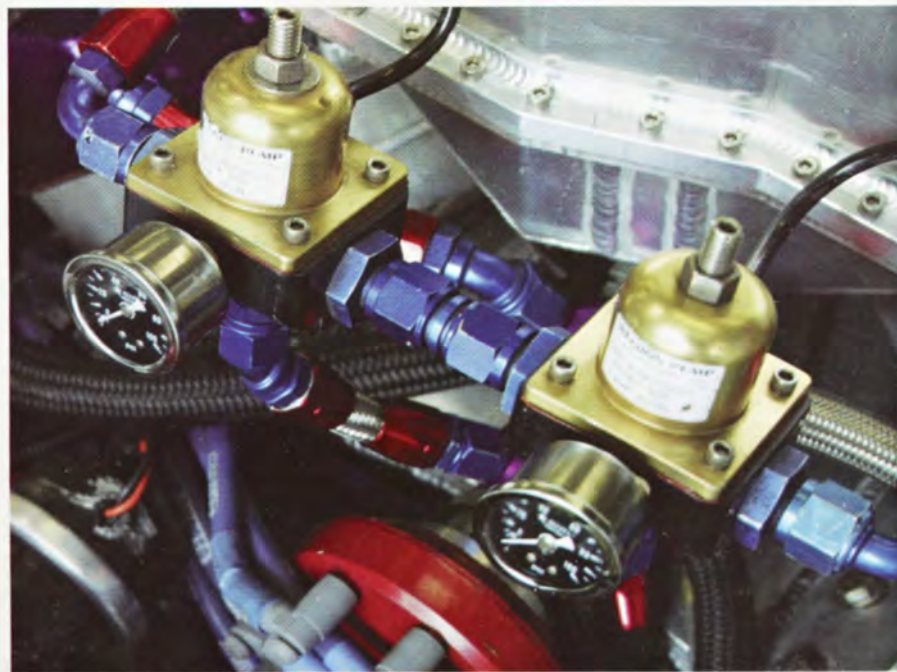
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> Left: Custom-built 4.5-inch Wilson Manifolds throttle-body is plumbed in the cockpit between the engine and the massive air-to-water intercooler by several yards of fabricated stainless tubing.

> Bottom: A custom Moran-designed sheetmetal intake built by Wilson Manifolds sits atop the 540ci big-block feeding air to Dart Pro Stock-style heads. Copious amounts of fuel are passed through Weldon components.



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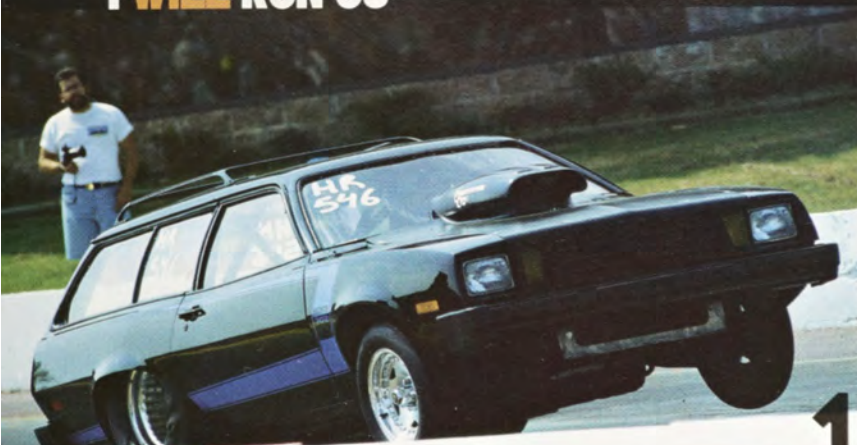
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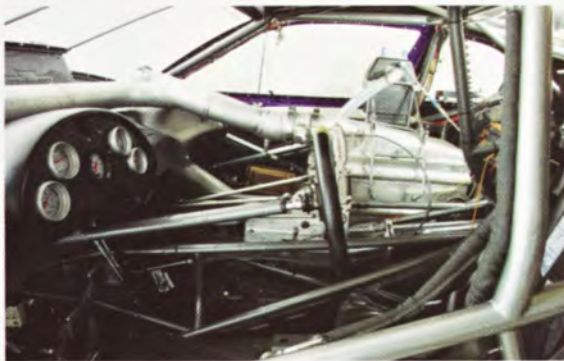
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