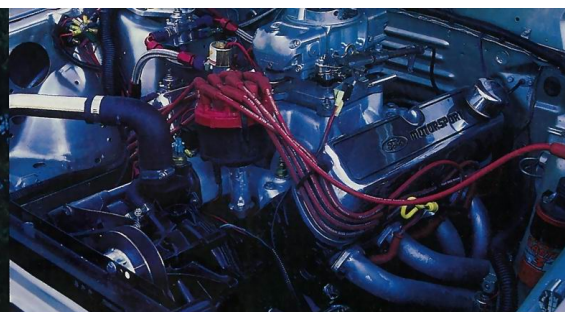


Oh, Brother!

No rivalry here! Frank Iacobelli shares the Mustang passion with older sibling, Lidio.



Frank and Lidio yanked the Pace Car's original four-popper and dropped in a used, 100K-mile 302. Fortunately, it was a motor with forged pistons and it's still running strong. A mild Lunati cam, Performer RPM Air Gap Intake, 650-cfm Demon carb and ported iron GT-40s make up the engine's straightforward combination. There's a 200hp squeeze from the bottle, too.



Frank Iacobelli's '79 Pace Car is all original on the outside, except for the re-painted hood scoop. The original pewter-over-black paint has held up well, although some of the red and orange stripes have begun to fade. Still, it's in great original condition.

By BARRY KLUCZYK
PHOTOGRAPHY BY THE AUTHOR

Brotherly relationships always seem to have a tinge of competition to them. Whether in sports, careers or cars, there's a natural tendency to put yours up against your sibling's. Frank Iacobelli seems to have a good, mature relationship with his oldest brother, Lidio, however.

Lidio Iacobelli, of course, runs Alternative Auto in Mount Clemens, Michigan. It's one of the most respected Ford power shops in the business, and both Lidio and Frank are into early year Fox cars. So, when Frank crossed paths with a

clean, original '79 Indy Pace Car (one of 10,478 built) a couple of years ago, he couldn't let it go.

The car was in remarkably good shape for a 104,000-mile driver; it was one of 5,970 equipped with the turbocharged 2.3-liter four-cylinder and four-speed manual trans. Yes, the stripes are a little faded in some areas, and Frank re-sprayed the faded hood scoop, but overall the car is a great survivor. He removed the original Marchal fog lamps, too, to preserve them.

"They're in mint condition," he says. "Besides, I think the car looks a little better without them."

But though Frank appreciates the histo-

ry of these cars, strict mechanical preservation just isn't in his blood.

"I always wanted to get one of these and put a good motor in it," says Frank.

Luckily, his big brother had the facilities to help out. (We understand there's another Iacobelli brother, but rather than cars, he's into golf and other sports—he must be missing a gene or two.) In fact, it was through Alternative Auto that a budget engine presented itself.

"One of Lidio's customers was getting a whole new motor and didn't want the old one anymore," says Frank. "It was one of the 5.0s with forged pistons, so I got it cheap and we cleaned it up."

The 100,000-mile engine was stripped down, but to this day retains the original crank, rods and pistons. The only part of the short-block that's been touched is the camshaft. It was replaced with a mild hydraulic roller grind from Lunati.

"It's just an off-the-shelf part," Frank says. "Nothing special, but it's streetable."

The stock heads were replaced with fully ported iron GT-40s, which were topped with an Edelbrock Performer RPM Air Gap intake manifold. The air/fuel mixture is drawn through a 650-cfm Demon four-barrel, and lighted by a complete MSD ignition and distributor system. Exhaust is routed through 1.5/8-inch MAC

long tubes and is dumped under the car via two-chamber Flowmasters.

A straightforward nitrous system adds an additional 200hp kick. Also, a pair of Holley "blue" fuel pumps (one for the engine, one for the nitrous) ensures the small-block gets all the gas it needs.

Backing the simple, but effective used 302 is a C-4 prepped by JPT (Jim's Performance Transmission). It's equipped with a Precision Industries Stallion 4,000-stall converter, while gear changes are handled with a Turbo Action Cheetah SCS reverse-pattern shifter.

The automatic sends power to an Auburn-equipped, 8.8 rear end that's been

stuffed with 3.73 gears. There's nothing exotic here, but the car hooks well enough, thanks to tied framersails, Mega-Bite rear lower control arms and a tubular front end. The battery's been relocated to the hatch, too. Lightweight Front Runner tires, and 26x10 Mickey Thompsons in the rear, all mounted to Pro Star wheels, help the car launch without drama.

So far, Frank's best c.t. on motor is 11.73 at 116 mph. With spray, he's gone 10.40 at 129—and that's with a 100,000-mile 5.0 short-block, remember!

"It's such a fun car," says Frank. "It's really streetable, gets tons of attention and is just a blast to drive."

Oh, Brother!



A little clue there's more than a turbo four-banger beneath the Pace Car's hood scoop is the pair of Auto Meter fuel pressure gauges—one for the motor, one for the nitrous system.



A reverse-pattern Cheetah SCS shifter from Turbo Action handles the gear shifts of the car's JPT-prepped C4, which features a 4,000-stall Stallion converter from Precision Industries.



The Pace Car's interior is mostly original, including the rare Recaro seats, though he does use covers on them. Frank replaced the stock gauges with Auto Meters and mounted switches in place of the stock heater controls.



The hatch's storage space is taken up with a battery box and big blue bottle. The NOS system provides an instant 200hp hit to propel the Pace Car from 11-second e.t.s to mid-10s.

Our brief spin in the car proved Frank isn't boasting. The car retains a complete interior, including somewhat worn, but original black-and-white Recaro seats that were part of the Pace Car package. There's no cage to climb over, and the original gauges have been replaced with a set of Auto Meter Ultra-Lites. The HVAC controls have been replaced with a series of switches and indicator lights, too.

Near-future plans call for replacing the venerable 302 with a 392 stroker and ditching the squeeze.

"I want to go mid-10s on motor," Franks says emphatically.

It's an admirable goal, but with Lidio's help, it shouldn't be too hard to reach.

What are brothers for, right? 