

# FIRST DRIVE!

## ZOMBIE COUPE HITS THE STREETS, READY TO TERRORIZE THE TRACK

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PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

**W**e embarked on a mission to revive a 1989 Mustang LX coupe as we are going from a barnyard style find to a street/strip stromer and the journey is almost complete. The short story behind our latest project, dubbed Zombie Coupe, is that your author's brother parked it many years ago as family life took a front seat. The notchback served a healthy existence of daily transportation and a street race life but had been left dormant for approximately seven years. Race Pages enlisted the help of Dez Racing to "borrow" the coupe and bring it back to a life of street/strip prominence.

The journey began with simply getting the car fired up and making some baseline pulls with the original combination. The baseline setup included a stock bottom-end with Trick Flow High Port heads, custom Down Ford blower cam (cut by Lunati), Ford Performance roller rocker arms, GT40 intake manifold, upgraded fuel system, and a Vortech S-trim. We had to borrow a set of 55 lb/hr injectors and add a Pro M Racing stand-alone EFI system in order to accomplish that task. Much to our surprise, Zombie Coupe produced 374rwhp through the Dynamic-built AOD transmission.



Nitrous Express provided a little extra kick to go on top of the boost.

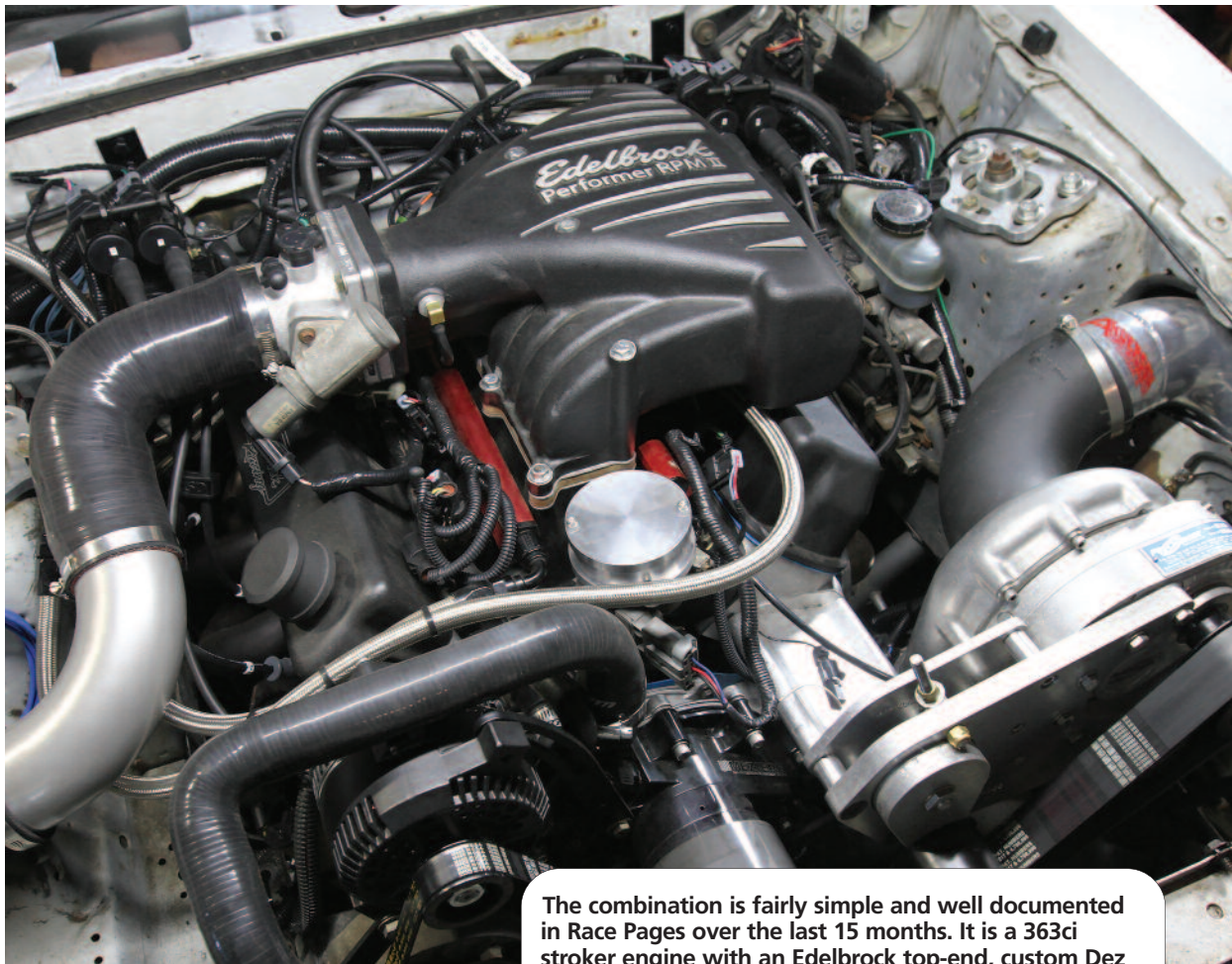


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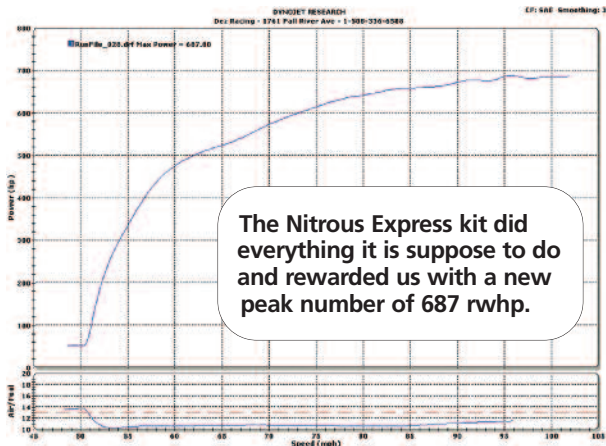
We didn't let the old school setup get too comfortable, making a hero pull on the engine dyno is one thing but our goal was to modernize Zombie Coupe and that was step one with many to follow. The AOD was swapped for a Dynamic Racing C4 and TCT torque converter, with the hope of charting the differences on the chassis dyno and maybe head over to the drag strip. A blown head gasket from our initial dyno test prevented that from happening and rather than fix it, we forged ahead with the stroker engine and the ancillary components that go with it.

Dez Racing made quick work of yanking the old engine and putting a new 363ci stroker in its place. The Dart Sportsman block is filled with the usual steel crank and rods and Coast High Performance pistons. Edelbrock provided E-205 heads and Performer RPM intake manifold while Mike Dezotell spec'd the camshaft that Comp Cams cut for us. A ProCharger D-1SC supercharger kit with front mounted air-to-air intercooler was bolted to the engine. Other items added include a larger Pro-M 80mm MAF sensor and Ford Performance Cobra Jet 80 lb/hr fuel injectors. The Pro-M Racing EFI system really shined in this scenario with its self-learning capabilities. Dezotell simply had to input a few parameters into the software and the ECU developed its own strategy to get it fired up.

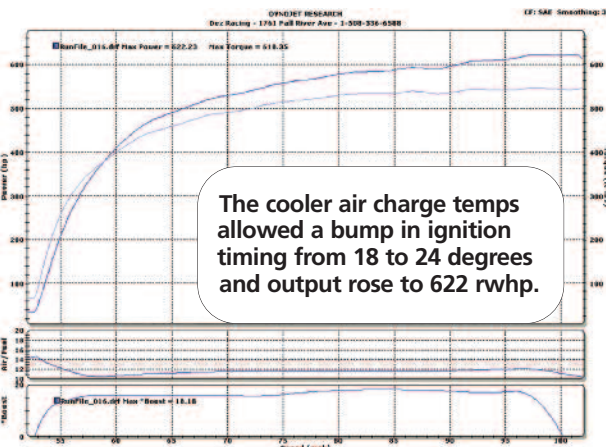
We ran into our first bit of trouble—a dead MSD box (it was over ten years old) so we swapped it out for a Coil On Plug ignition system from Pro-M Racing. Zombie Coupe didn't disappoint us and cranked out 622 rwhp with 18 psi of boost and on 93 octane pump gas. But we were far from finished—adding a Snow Performance water/meth kit jumped that output to 655 rwhp as ignition timing was safely raised from 18 degrees up to



The combination is fairly simple and well documented in Race Pages over the last 15 months. It is a 363ci stroker engine with an Edelbrock top-end, custom Dez Racing camshaft, and a ProCharger D-1SC supercharger.



The Nitrous Express kit did everything it is suppose to do and rewarded us with a new peak number of 687 rwhp.



The cooler air charge temps allowed a bump in ignition timing from 18 to 24 degrees and output rose to 622 rwhp.



The water/meth jug is mounted cleanly in the trunk along with the Snow Performance electric pump. The system is tied into the ECU and a sensor gives a feedback so the Spanish Oak processor can make adjustments to the tune using real-time water/meth flow numbers.



Dez Racing mounted the Nitrous Express bottle in the trunk, mostly to keep the driver from turning it on at every stop light.

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24 degrees. We integrated the Snow Performance kit with the ECU for a complete hands-off tuning solution. A flow sensor is tied into the ECU to provide data for closed loop tuning, keeping the air/fuel ratio dead-on.

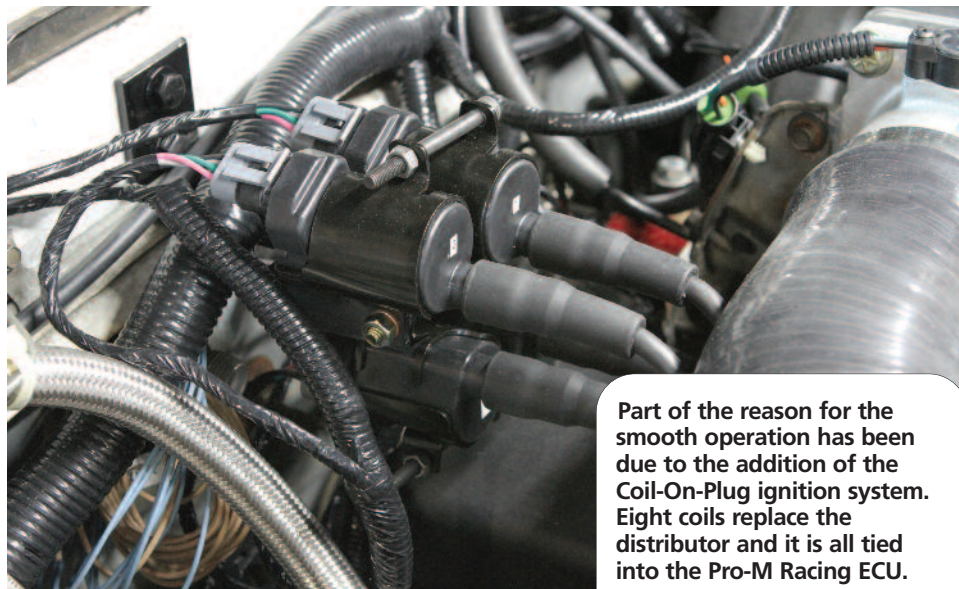
The next step in our horsepower paradise was adding a single stage of nitrous to the mix. Like the Snow Performance water/meth kit, Dez Racing would be integrating the juice into the Pro-M Racing ECU for complete control. The tuning software progressively controls the flow of the nitrous and references the Throttle Position Sensor to activate the system. The air/fuel is corrected in closed loop mode and was rock solid on the dyno at 11.4:1. The Nitrous Express kit, with its prescribed 75 hp jetting, bumped output to 687 rwhp. On the surface the gain would be 32 rwhp, but in reality the increase is higher as Dezotell reduced base ignition timing in order to be safe on the jug.

And that brings us to now—Zombie Coupe makes great power and runs really well but has only been on the chassis dyno. The next question begging to be answered pertains to its street manners. Cutting right to it, the car drives smooth—exceptionally smooth, actually. The rpm needle on the tach sweeps pleasantly as you progressively feed the throttle while pulling into traffic. Clicking the shifter back one gate engages Second gear and the engine just pulls right through the shift recovery without a hint of a stutter or shutter or anything other than a nice run through the revs. The mannerisms are repeated when going from Second to Third and cruising down the road in high gear. Coming to a stop is effortless and there is no fear that the engine will conk out. It falls back to idle instantly with no rpm hanging up.

We would never call this car a sleeper, but this Mustang is relatively quiet with its Kooks long-tube headers and X-pipe as well as the Flowmaster after-cat exhaust system (three-inch). The idle is solid with zero hunting for the sweet spot, no fouled out spark plugs, and the kind of street manners that would make the Coyote crowd jealous. Dez Racing's Doug Paradis handled the burnout for our lead photo and got to experience the exceptional engine response. He expressed how crisp throttle felt and how steady the engine went through the rev range as he smoked the Mickey Thompson ET Radial Street tires.

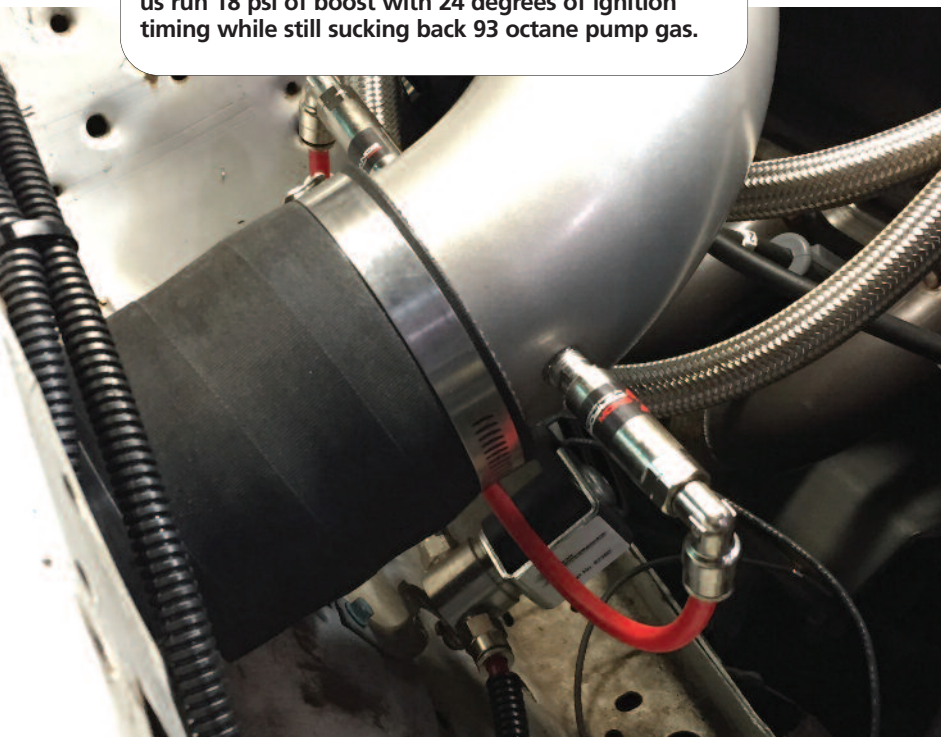
Great power on the dyno followed by great street manners means we have one more task to accomplish—the drag strip. Check back in the following months to see how Zombie Coupe runs once we cut it loose on the 1320. ■

Zombie Coupe's street manners are everything that the Pro-M Racing crew promised—smooth, responsive, and reliable.



Part of the reason for the smooth operation has been due to the addition of the Coil-On-Plug ignition system. Eight coils replace the distributor and it is all tied into the Pro-M Racing ECU.

A Snow Performance water/meth injection kit helps us run 18 psi of boost with 24 degrees of ignition timing while still sucking back 93 octane pump gas.



## SOURCE

**Dez Racing**  
DezRacing.net  
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**Edelbrock**  
Edelbrock.com  
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**Pro-M Racing**  
ProMRacing.com  
336 | 644 | 8668

**Dynamic Racing Transmissions**  
DynamicRacingTrans.com  
203 | 315 | 0138

**Nitrous Express**  
NitrousExpress.com  
940 | 767 | 7664

**Snow Performance**  
SnowPerformance.com  
866 | 365 | 2762

**ProCharger**  
ProCharger.com  
913 | 338 | 2886