

# The Funny Car Crisis

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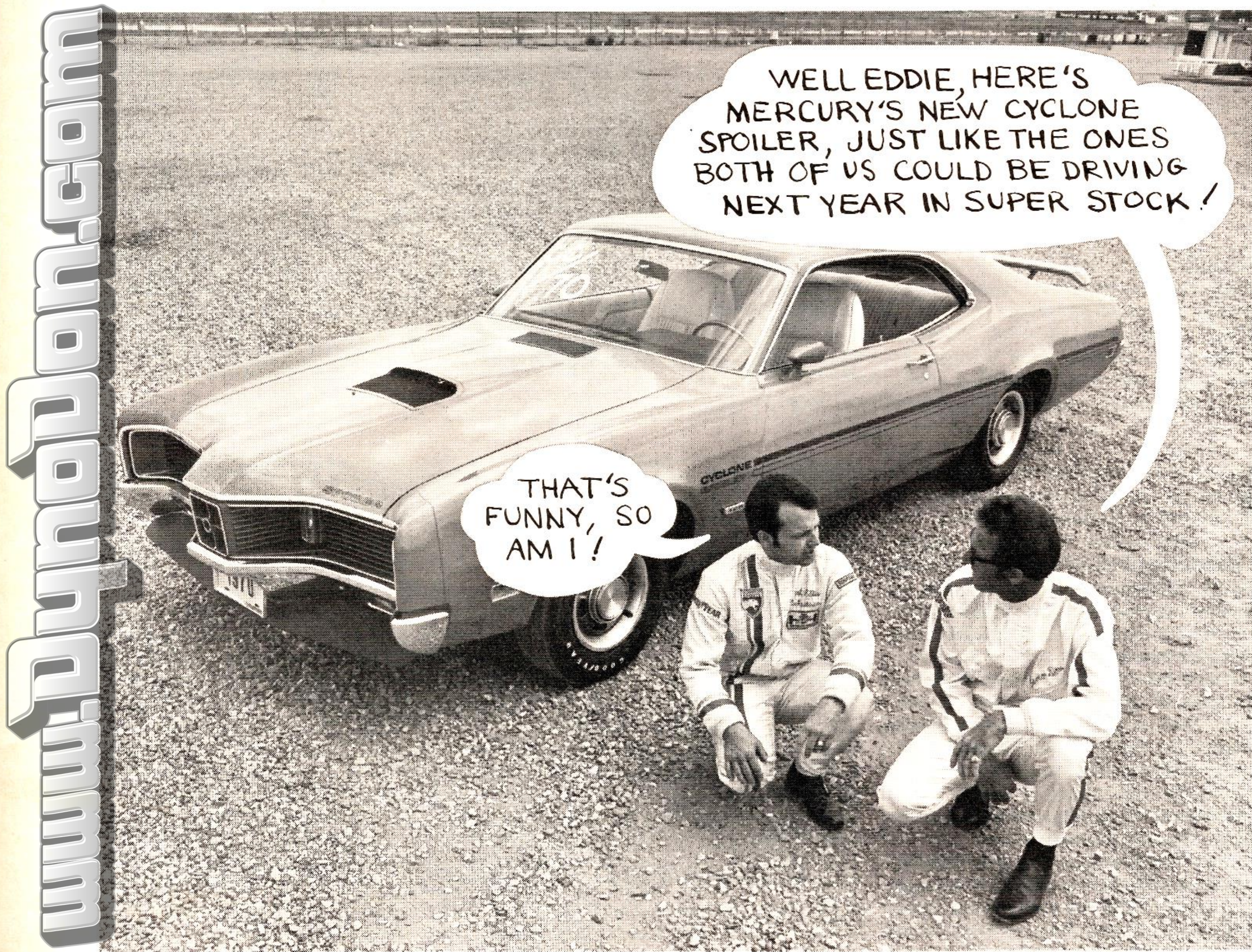
## FIRST '70 DRAG STOCKS



*Mercury Cyclone "Spoiler"*

Report from Dallas: A SPECTATOR'S VIEW

# First of the 70's: Mercury's Muscle Cars



If the visual thing is important for 1970, then the new performance cars from Mercury get it! To be brief, this Division takes maximum advantage of the new freedom in usage of spoilers and special paint treatment, and the result is impressive. While the Mercury name may not be synonymous with performance, due to their long lineage of luxury flavored vehicles, make no mistake, the new Merc's are ready! With all the performance hardware advantages of their Ford brethren added to their strong styling, the Lincoln-Mercury Division is looking to increase their currently meager market penetration in the youth/performance areas with the Cougar Eliminator and the new Cyclone Spoiler. Last month we filled you in on Merc's entirely new entries into the intermediate engine size field, the 351 inclined valve engines. That, together with three

by Terry Cook

different high performance versions of the 429 cubic inch engine (which replace the 390 and 428 inch V8's of yesterday), gives Mercury ample ammunition with which to do battle. While the '70 Mercury performance cars might not be quite ready to do battle with the Woodward Avenue set, remember that what they offer is a refined approach to the muscle car idea. All the new engineering Dearborn can muster cannot shake the ingrained plush ancestry.

Understandably, the Cougar continues to be the mainstay of the Mercury performance offerings, this year introducing a new vertical grille/front end treatment which has almost Edselesque overtones. In the engine room the 351-2V is the stan-

dard power source for the Cougar, while the Eliminator uses the 351-4V as standard equipment. The Boss 302 engine option is available only in the trendy Eliminator, for obvious Trans-Am homologation reasons. As for the "stump pullers," the 428 non-cold air Cobra Jet is available on all models, and the Boss 429 is available in limited quantities in hardtop models. In an attempt to get all the power to the ground, a Traction-Lok differential is standard for all axles with the exception of the 4.30:1 ratio rear. In the instance of the 4.30, a "No-Spin" differential of Detroit Automotive (Locker) design is used.

Mercury is jumping into the specialty sporty car market with both feet, and it's hard to tell which of their best feet—Cougar Eliminator or Cyclone Spoiler—they are putting forward most. Available only as a hardtop, the Eliminator features a rear

deck mounted airfoil as well as a valance panel mounted "plow"-type spoiler below the front bumper. Additional exterior distinctions include an all-black grille, black hood scoop (functional on Boss 302 and 428-4V Cobra Jet engines) and black hood accent tape in the racing stripe tradition. Continuing the theme, black tape stripes are used on the sides of the Eliminator,

formance line, as the Cyclone is also available as the Cyclone GT (351-2V engine, three speed manual trans, and specialized exterior trim), and in standard muscle car trim (performance without the frills—429-4V engine, four speed, and "plain Jane" exterior) as the Cyclone. The Cyclone Spoiler is fat for both show and go with a ram air 429-4V Cobra Jet engine,

four-speed Traction-Lok 3.50:1 axle, along with a complement of wings and plows. Similar to the Cougar Eliminator in its approach to aerodynamics, the Cyclone Spoiler has a deck mounted foil and valance-mounted spoiler. Additional exterior trim, best depicted in the accompanying photographs, sets the Spoiler off and earmarks it as a supercar for certain.

A few words are in order concerning the Hurst four-speed shifter which is employed on all four-speed Cougars and Cyclones as standard equipment for 1970: Unfortunately, not all of the words are good ones. Hurst is a name synonymous with high quality shifters, but because the production costs must be kept very low in order to qualify anything as OEM equipment, a "lo-ball" Hurst shifter is employed. In addition, Hurst linkage is not used, but rather some Mercury equipment, and the total shifting package falls short of what a power shift proponent would hope for. The 1970 Mercury/Hurst four-speed shifting packages we encountered at the long lead press preview had a mushy, indistinctive feel, and lacked the solid *click-click* total command feeling you usually expect and get from a product with the Hurst name. While the shifter/linkage was not as good as those OEM Hursts offered on other cars (Pontiac, Plymouth, etc.), it must be construed as a step in the right direction. Hopefully the slushiness can get worked out of the units in time. Until then, a conventional Hurst, or similar,

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Graceful new 1970 Cougar features restyled front end with unique grille treatment.



*Clorox anyone? We're not trying to tell you that the new Cougar has suds, but . . .*

along with body color matching dual racing mirrors. The Eliminator package is available in six colors: Grabber blue, orange, yellow, green, coral and platinum.

In the quickly expanding intermediate field, the impacty new Cyclone Spoiler pictured on this month's cover may share many of the same body, power train, and chassis components as those of the car Mercury admits is their "sister" car, the Ford Fairlane, but in our book it's an entirely separate entity, due to the clever body sculpting. When it comes to performance cars, Mercury seems to be making the best of what they have to work with in the way of, if you will pardon the term, "hand me down" parts from FoMoCo. Actually, the Spoiler is the top of the per-



Cougar Eliminator is the sportiest of the line, with the deck wing and trick stripes.

*Mercury's aptly named Cyclone Spoiler has rear wing and front plow. It moves.*

shifter and linkage from your local speed shop may be the only solution.

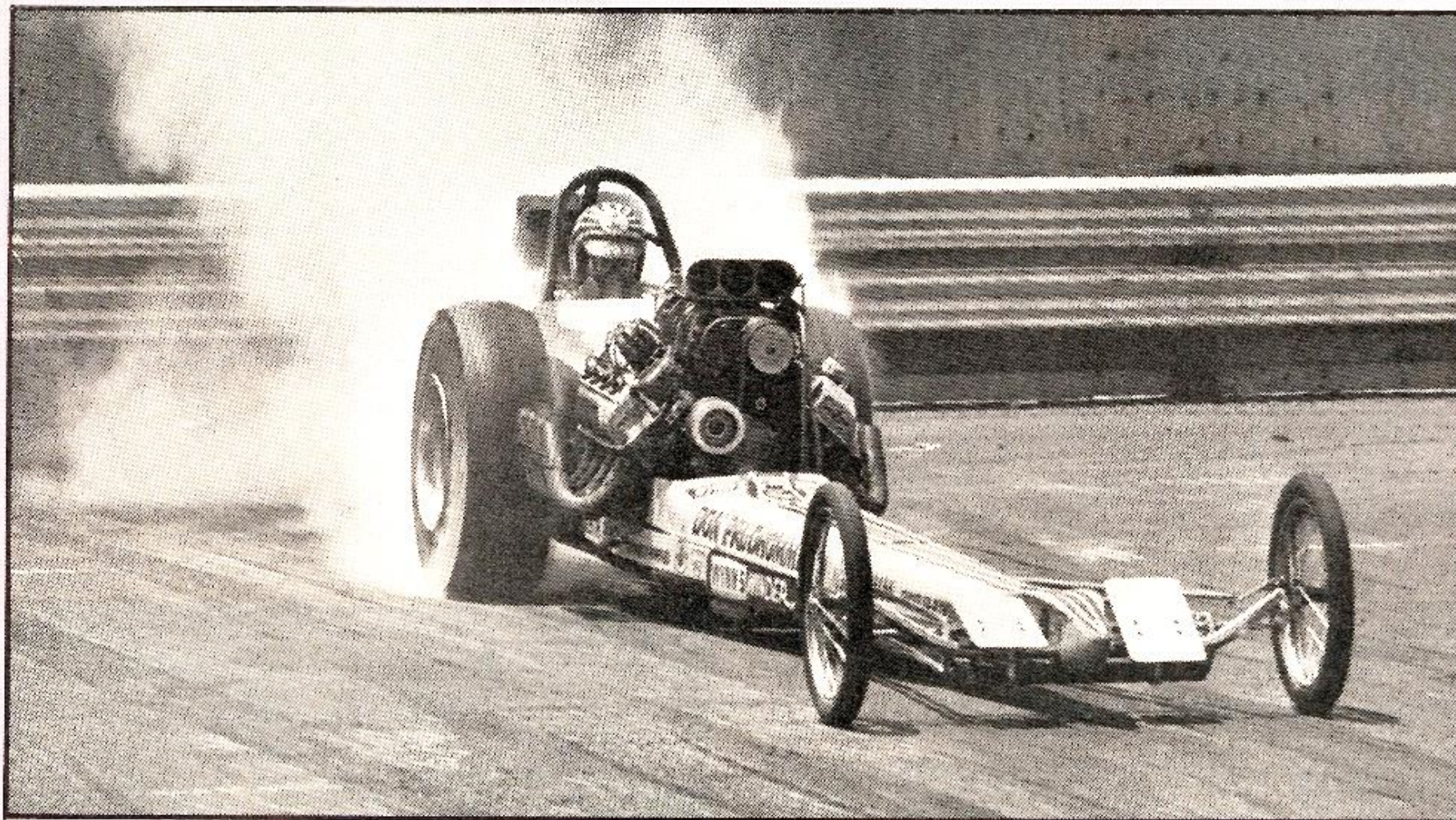
There are some neat details on the '70 Mercs we feel deserve special mention, such as the electrically operated seat back release that eliminates the fumbling for a micro lever when you want to reach into or gain access to the back seat. Another good one was the non-reversible odometer, so that used car salesmen cannot turn the odometer back. In all, the new performance cars from Mercury constitute what appears to be their strongest attempt ever to penetrate the youth market scene. From their spoiler and exterior trim decor offerings, to their 429 Cobra Jet engines, the new Mercurys, as a whole, are definitely with it.

# Springnationals

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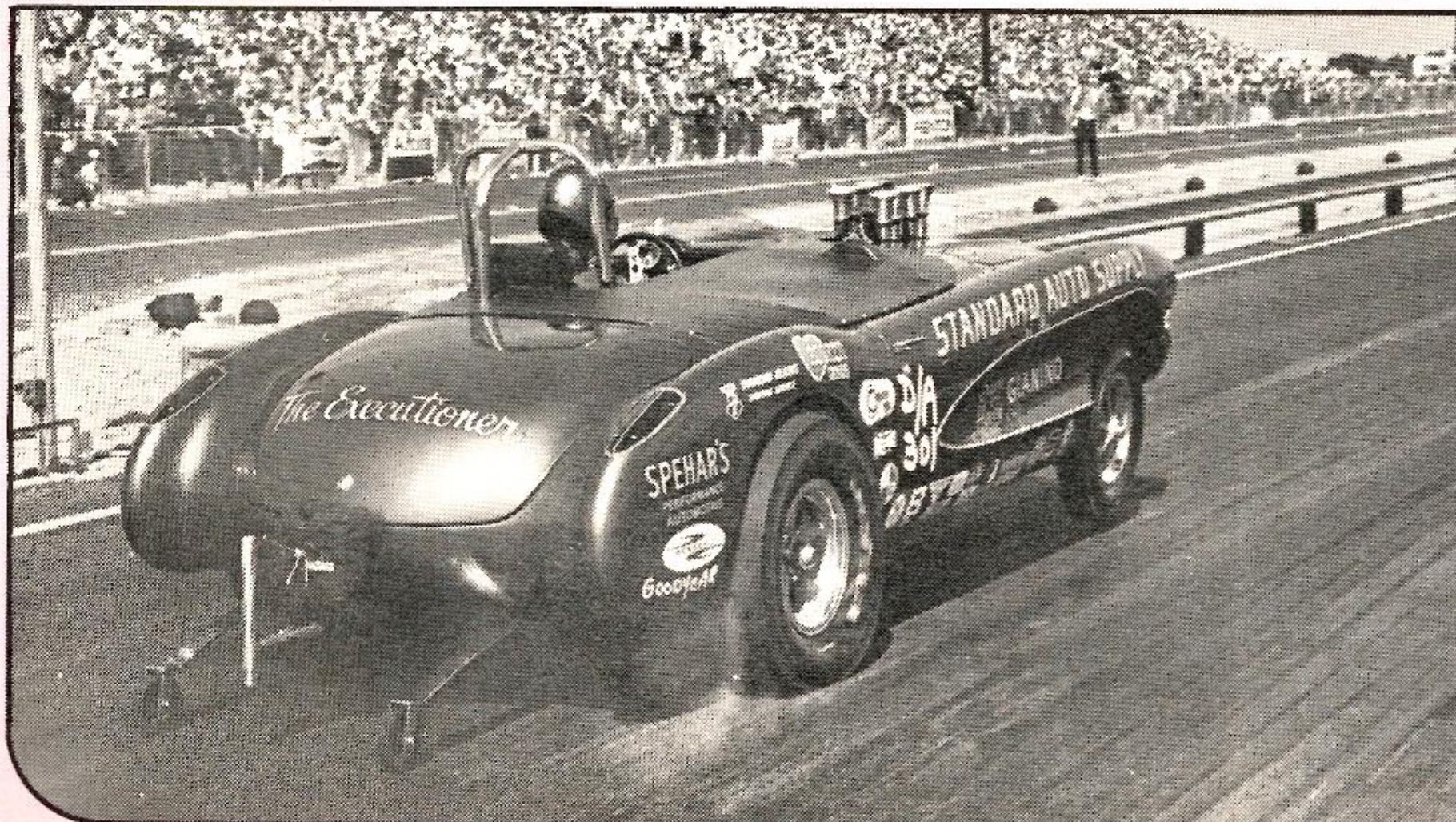


Street Elim fell to Don Nicholson's Earl Wade-tuned SOHC Mustang, which set new A/MP record of 10.49 on final against Ralph Smiderle. Before that, Don beat out Bo Laws.



Smoking it out of the "bleach box," Don Prudhomme heads for the line and a low e.t. of the meet blast of 6.586. Burning out in Clorox turned slicks into gooey grabbers.

Converting their '68 Nationals Street Eliminator Winning D/Gas 'Vette to a D/Altered, Sam and Heidi Gianino took class with a 10.94-126.22 final, later turned a 10.87.



into drag racing with their new Drag 500 tires. For Dallas, they only had one size slick available, a 29½" tall, seven inch wide 7.10/9.10x15, but they hope to complete testing on the full line in time for the Indy Nationals. They also had a very light, narrow 8.45x15 front tire that looked good. An informal count showed that five Stock class winners were on Firestones. One of the company reps camped near the starting line and taking a deep interest in the goings on was young Roger Ward, Jr.

Saturday morning was grim. A steady rain had delayed the start of class runs, turned the grounds to mud and thereby led to a monstrous parking snarl. After the rain stopped, push cars were pressed into service to dry off the strip, aided greatly when that warm south Texas sun came out. Qualifying for the various eliminator brackets and the Super Stock and Stock class run-offs highlighted the early action. Arlen Vanke beat Melvin Yow for the final in SS/B, but Sox & Martin's Li'l Boss would still be in the Eliminator running by virtue of e.t. Ed Miller's '65 Plymouth soloed for SS/C. SS/D is Ford country, and two '67's met for the final; Dave Van Luke's hole shot 11.63-121.54 beat out Jim Morton's better 11.56 - 120.16. The AMX's showed up in droves for SS/E, but most (including Shirley Shahan and Peterson Motors' Pete's Patriot entry) didn't make it through the first round. John Beachy, in the sharp Ray-Wel Motors AMX, out of Kokoma, Ind., went on to the bitter end, losing to Dickie Aron's Camaro, 11.32 to 11.36, but he had run quick enough to come back on Sunday. Ed Terry's SS/I Ford Drag Team car had an easy win over Ken McLellan's colorful and red lighting Friona, Tex., Cobrastang. East Coast Ford Drag Team man, Randy Payne, took SS/J the same way, as "quiet one" Jerry Harvey fouled in his Mustang, allowing both Fords to run on Sunday (Harvey was in with his low e.t.).

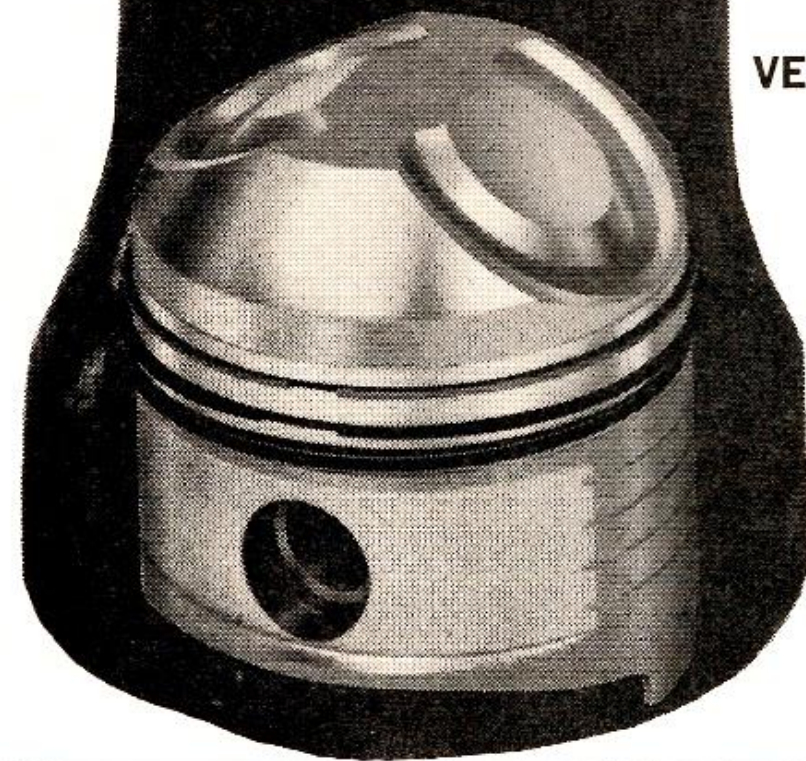
In the automatic classes, Don Grot-heer, who has just formed a Plymouth Supercar Clinic as a counterpart of Sox & Martin's traveling road show, beat out Bill Stiles for SS/BA with a 10.83. Ron Mancini's Zoom-o '64 Dodge did it to Wren & Danielson for SS/DA, and Bob Lambeck smoothed Landy's SS/EA Hemi Super Bee on by a fouling Steve Christian. Canadians Sandy Elliot and Lance Hill took SS/GA and SS/HA, respectively, Elliot in a striped '68 Mustang and Hill in his '68 Camaro. Barrie Poole, in the Sandy Elliot SS/J Mustang, was also still in the Eliminator running. Hubert Platt got a reprieve in SS/IA when class winner Bill Allie was disqualified, giving the win to Platt. Incidentally, there were no facilities for complete teardowns due to the weather-delayed construction. Tech inspection was limited to a strictly visual



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## NHRA SPRINGNAT'LS

(continued from page 74)

# STREET

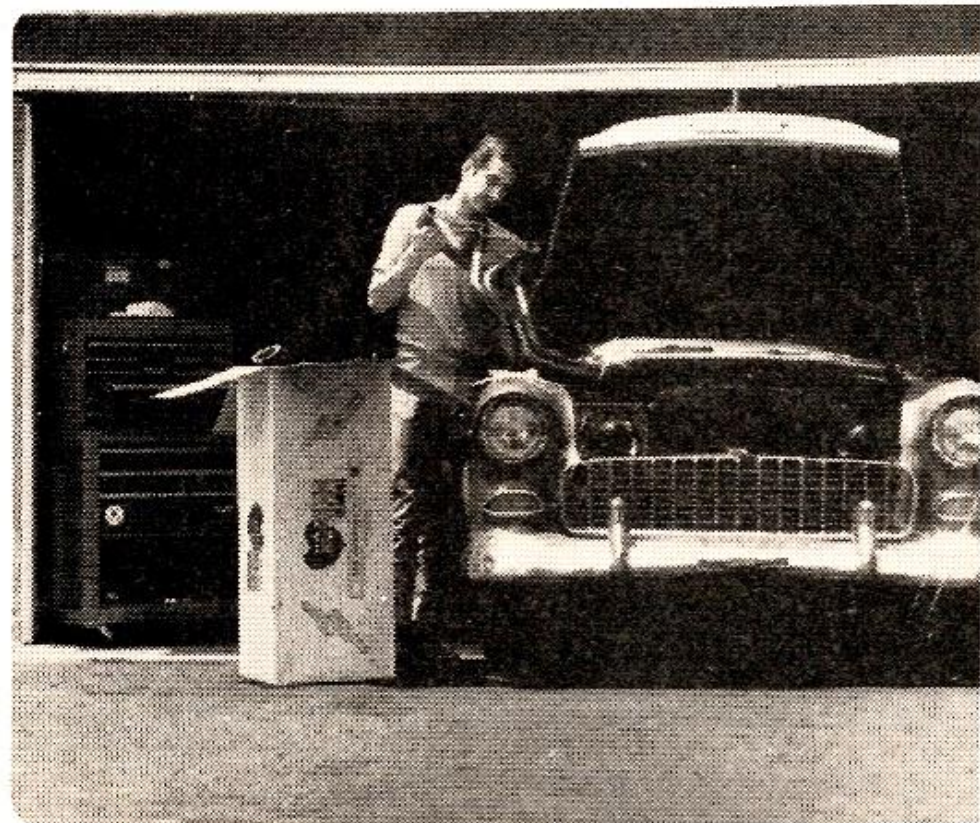


This battle between Gas-sers, stock Sports cars, Modified Production machines and Street Roadsters was action-packed all the

way. Things started off with '68 Spring-nationals Street Eliminator Bo Laws taking an easy win over John Fish's B/MP with an 11.75. Earlier in the day, Bo lost the clutch on a trial run, slipped in a new one in the pits, then came back and ran almost .3 under the D/SP record. Ralph Smiderle kept the C-W Motor Parts Chevy powered '29 roadster pickup out ahead of Fred Hurst's A/G 'Cuda and Don Nicholson made an easy single in the gold Paul Harvey SOHC 427 A/MP Mustang after Mitch Mitchell's C/G lost fire on the line. Texan Jackie Mize held off George Freymuth's B/G Barracuda with his E/G machine and went on to race Ronnie Stewart's C/MP '61 'Vette in the second round, Mize taking the ru with an 11.61. (Carroll Caudle's C/MP lost out earlier in the day, when it rolled backwards out of the staging lights.) Bo Laws collared Glen Self's usually top running F/MP, Smiderle's B/SR passed Bob Yowell's E/SP Fidget II, Nicholson's Earl Wade-crewed Mustang made another easy single as Ralph Hope's G/G red lighted and Ronnie Smith's D/MP made a bye run (due to the eighteen car show) to finish off the round.

In round three, Laws beat Mize with an .05-under 11.56, in a fine job of driving, Smiderle put the Kabosh on Smith, and Nicholson made another easy single, as he got the bye run this time. No one knew what to expect when "Dyno Don" faced Laws' '67 'Vette in round four, but Bo might pull it off. The fans were on their feet for this one. Bo got the headstart, hitting the brakes hard on the top end as Nicholson came flying by. Laws ran a .01-under 11.598, at 84.04, while Nicholson's .04-over 10.57-112.07, kept him from breaking out. Apparently, Don was just a little bit sharper on the lights. Smiderle got the bye, made it an easy one, and came back to face the gold Mustang for the final. The B/SR got a .07 handicap headstart, but was

(continued on page 78)



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