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E. Subframe Connectors

It will be necessary to reinforce the structure of the underbody, because once the car hooks hard on the starting line combined with a substantial dose of torque, it will twist and flex. This problem is especially prevalent with a T-Top car. These cars don't have a true "frame" so to speak, and are just punched out of flimsy sheet metal which develops strength through design. The high stress areas are merely double/triple thick sheet metal stampings sandwiched together.

Southside Machine Company (6400 Honeytown Road P.O. Box 537, Smithville, Ohio 44677 (216) 669-3556) produces a kit for these cars under part number 1316. It includes subframe connectors, their unique 32" lift bars, crossmember, and driveshaft safety loop. **This is the setup to use if maximum E.T. is desired from the car. This kit eliminates the factory torque arm and lower control arms.** Some welding is required to install these parts. Double check all measurements and pinion angle before final assembly. The price of the kit is very reasonable compared to other alternatives, such as custom fabricating the frame ties and crossmember. I have posted my best 60 foot times

and best E.T.'s with the Southside lift bars on the car.

While this is being done, keep in mind the installation of a roll bar, and it would be best to anchor the main hoop and front support bars into the subframe connectors through the floor. Special outriggers need to be installed so everything is tied together solid.

F. Roll Cage

As per NHRA rules, once the car becomes quicker than 12.0 seconds or 120 mph a roll bar must be installed. Consult a current NHRA/IHRA rulebook [whichever applies to you] for exact details and construction requirements. The installation of a six-point cage will dramatically stiffen up the car, make it easier to tune the suspension, and add obvious safety features in case of a crash or upset.

G. Shocks and Struts

Before changing the shocks and struts in the car, try it out first with the original equipment. Make several passes, and pay close attention to the way the car reacts. If possible, videotape the car doing a dry hop, and leaving the starting line. Watch the tape to see how the car launches. If the car does not lift and squat to provide adequate load transfer, then it may be time to test some different shocks and struts.

Test the rears first since they are the easiest to replace and less expensive. Before removing the shocks, try this. Remove the bolt from the bottom where it is bolted to the rearend bracket. Now, push upward on the shock as

hard as you can to compress it. If it compresses quickly, it is what we are looking for. If the shock compresses very slowly, they will hinder the car in squatting, so try a shock with less bump resistance. Buy a pair of "cheapie" shocks, that offer the least amount of dampening. Don't buy a gas charged shock, instead just a regular oil filled shock. Above all do not use air shocks. These shocks should be easily compressed with both hands with little resistance.

After the shocks are replaced in the rear, try the car again. It may be necessary to play with the air pressure in the tires (14 p.s.i. works good) to try and get it to hook. Make sure the tires are heated up properly [it is not necessary to do a glorious 30 second burnout].

The conditions of the track will have a significant effect on traction and load transfer. Talk to others and see if their cars are working on the starting line before making any changes. This will take some time to sort out the tire pressure / shock absorber combination. If the car annihilates the tires on the starting line, it may be time to work with the front end.

We want the front of the car to extend readily for good load transfer, to help plant and apply the rear tires to the ground for maximum traction. The best choice is to use a Koni adjustable drag racing shock absorber. The part numbers are: 87-2223 SPA1 [front] and 80-2501 SPA1 [rear]. These are a great improvement over the old "90/10" designs, because they compensate to help the nose settle after the initial