

Officer John Edwards doesn't give as many citations as he gets, but that's no consolation to his competition.

By John Hunkins
PHOTOGRAPHY BY THE AUTHOR

The Ashland, Ohio, police officer gets chased much more often at the track than on the streets, thanks to ETs in the 11.30s. Edwards' best time in Fun Ford Weekend competition so far is 11.26/120 with the naturally aspirated combo.

SPEEDING TICKET



Edwards' '87 LX coupe leaves hard and straight thanks to Southside subframe connectors and lift bars, Lakewood 70/30 front struts (50/50 rears) and Mickey Thompson 10.5x28-inch slicks. For '96, he plans to upgrade the camshaft to a solid roller grind and switch to a set of ported aluminum Stage II Twisted Wedge Trick Flow heads and DFI fuel injection. This should easily put him in the Street Stock hunt with 10.80s and 10.70s.

Like many dyed-in-the-wool heads-up racers, John Edwards graduated from the ranks of bracket racers. The Ashland, Ohio, police officer traded his bracket car—a '78 Fairmont—and a few extra bucks for an '87 LX 5.0 and hasn't looked back. Readers familiar with our coverage of Fun Ford Weekend heads-up racing are certainly familiar with John's activities. He's won a raft of Street Stock victories and held multiple ET records in the same class.



Edwards' combination is simple yet deadly effective. An 11:1-compression 306-cubic-inch DSS short-block with a hydraulic Lunati cam gets breathing help from a ported box-style manifold and cast-iron Trick Flow heads. The speed density system has been upgraded to mass air with help from a 77mm Pro-M mass air meter and an SVO Extender computer. Gases exit via RCI long-tube headers and Dynomax mufflers.



Edwards relocated his battery to the trunk for better weight distribution. Note the NHRA-legal weight box that helps Edwards make the Street Stock 3,000-lb. minimum.

The fact that John's current best ET, an 11.26 at 120 mph, was extracted from a naturally aspirated, fuel-injected, 306-cubic-inch, 3,000-lb. LX highlights just how much can be achieved with a relatively modest combination. Yet the grassroots Street Stock class that John competes in demands it, and that's where the exciting challenge lies for him.

The Fun Ford Street Stock class (as of 1995) requires that all entries ('79 and later 2-door Ford passenger cars) use a 5-liter block with a maximum displacement of 310 cubic inches. Power adders (nitrous, blower, turbo) are prohibited, as are aluminum cylinder heads. Camshafts must be hydraulic, and bolt-on parts (i.e., heads and intake) are limited to commonly available aftermarket offerings. Minimum weight is 3,200 lbs. with driver; automatics get a 200-lb. weight break. (The '96 rules are different; more on this later.)

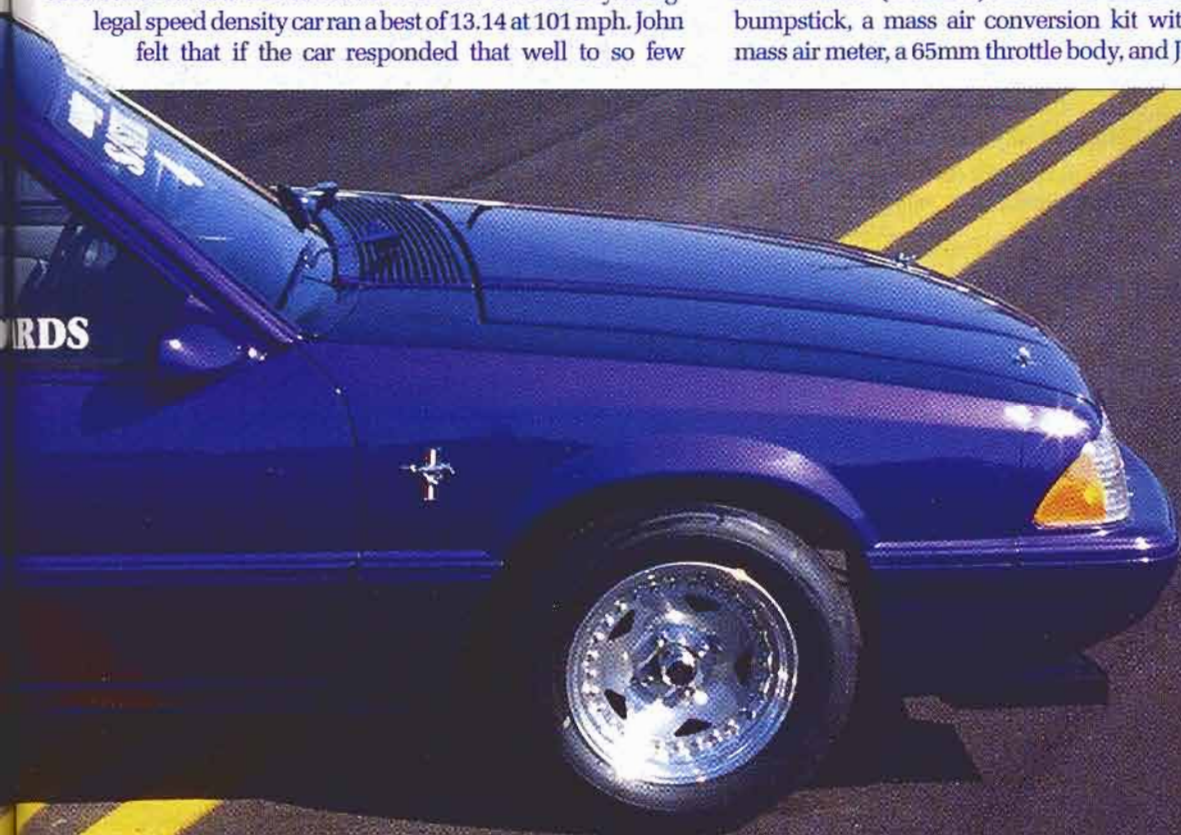
As you can see, there's not a lot of leeway in the rules (these are only a small sample). Success in the Street Stock class depends on mechanical ability, tuning prowess and driving skill, a fact that hasn't escaped the g-hungry peace officer.

Edwards, as we shall see, was well prepared for the Street Stock adventure that lay before him. After he purchased the bone-stock 5-speed LX in late '91, he installed 3.73 gears, 1.7-ratio roller rockers and some M&H slicks. The healthy smog-legal speed density car ran a best of 13.14 at 101 mph. John felt that if the car responded that well to so few

modifications, he must surely be on to a good thing.

Spurred by his early success, John added a cat-back Dynomax exhaust system and catapulted the LX into the 12s, running a best of 12.86/104. Arguably the best of the 5.0 breed, the speed density 5-speed coupe was really strutting its stuff, especially when combined with John's hungry driving style. (We can only imagine how he felt after bracket racing a Fairmont for so long.) John was now drinking in his newfound love of the 5-liter Mustang with reckless abandon.

More parts soon followed. A discussion with Trick Flow airflow wizard Rick Smith convinced Edwards to invest in a set of cast-iron Trick Flow cylinder heads. They were ported, along with a GT-40 intake manifold, by Pat Tyner at True Street Performance (Ashland). Edwards installed a Comp Cams bumpstick, a mass air conversion kit with a Pro-M 77mm mass air meter, a 65mm throttle body, and JBA shorty headers



along with the heads, intake and cam, and began tuning and testing in earnest.

Until late '93, John's only interest in the Fun Ford Weekend series had been with its bracket classes. A new heads-up class called Street Stock 5.0 had been created for entry-level racers who wanted to race straight up on a limited budget. This was just what John was searching for; it made his blood pressure rise just thinking about it, and with good reason. He would totally dominate his very first Street Stock Fun Ford race at Morocco, Ind., in October 1993.

He not only won the event, but he set the Street Stock ET record at 11.85.

needed. Bill Gray (Ashland) welded in the S&W 6-point unit, and Edwards commissioned DSS Competition Engines (Lombard, Ill.) to build a fresh .030-over short-block. The 306 consisted of a balanced and blueprinted rotating assembly using SVO rods, Manley 11:1 flat-top forged pistons, C&A rings, a prepped 5-liter crankshaft and a larger Lunati camshaft.

The upper GT-40 manifold was also replaced by a Pat Tyner-ported box-style upper plenum. To take advantage of the high-rpm breathing capability of the new long-block, John installed an SVO Extender, larger RCI 1³/₄-inch long-tube headers, a 75mm throttle body, 30-lb./

to change the car's color from its original Silver Metallic to a new eye-catching Ford truck hue called Sapphire Blue Opal Metallic. Friend Wayne Weiler (Lee's Body Shop, Ashland) slathered on the electric pigment with jaw-dropping results.

The new color made its appearance at the second '95 Fun Ford event, and its rejuvenating effect was duly noted. Edwards went on a tear and set another ET record (an 11.26 at Bradenton, Fla.) and earned six more second-place runner-ups (Bradenton; Houston; Baton Rouge, La.; Leicester, N.Y.; Norwalk, Ohio; Morocco). By the end of the year, he had accumulated enough points to



Hey, where's the police radio, the shotgun, the radar, the computer? This officer's office can't be loaded down with all that stuff. An S&W roll bar, Auto Meter tach, a Hurst shifter and RJS safety harnesses are all Edwards needs.

Based on this win, John decided to make the relatively long tow down to Dallas to try his luck. He won again, which topped off his year in fine fashion. But John and his competition wouldn't sit around idly over the long winter of 1993-94.

Concerned about the strength of his T-5 transmission, John turned to Performance Automatics (Gaithersburg, Md.) to build a racing C-4 automatic and trans brake. This would also give him a 200-lb. weight break for the following year. A Hughes 8-inch 5500-rpm-stall converter (Phoenix) finished the tranny combo. Rear end breakage was also put to a halt with a Ford 9-inch rear with 4.56 gears and Moser axles.

With ETs now regularly in the 11s, an NHRA-legal roll bar would be

hr. injectors and an SVO 190-lph in-tank fuel pump. Launch rpm now went up to 5200, and shift speed went up 7200.

Unfortunately, the extensive changes set Edwards behind schedule and he missed the first two races of '94. It was just as well because competition had heated up considerably in the Street Stock ranks. Edwards garnered only two second-place runner-ups in '94, one at Maple Grove, Pa., and one at Dallas.

By the 1995 season, Edwards had placated the parts gods and settled on a decent state of tune. With the '87 pulling down regular 11.30s, he could begin having more fun with his wonderful machine. Perhaps out of a need for renewal, or just boredom, John elected



finish second in the Fun Ford Points Championship, his best finish ever.

But Edwards knows he can do better. Winless since 1993, he wants to mount his most serious assault for 1996. He's currently preparing the LX to take maximum advantage of the Street Stock rule changes that go into effect for '96. Some of the planned changes include a solid roller camshaft to replace his hydraulic roller unit, DFI fuel injection and a race-ported set of Trick Flow Stage II Twisted Wedge aluminum heads. He shares the same sentiment of many other Street Stock racers: It's going to take consistent 10.80s to be competitive in '96.

With his new combo, John has no doubt that he'll find himself in the winner's circle in 1996. Even though the competition is tougher than ever, he knows he can rely on his extraordinary stallion to get him across the finish line first. And that's one ticket this officer won't mind receiving. ▶