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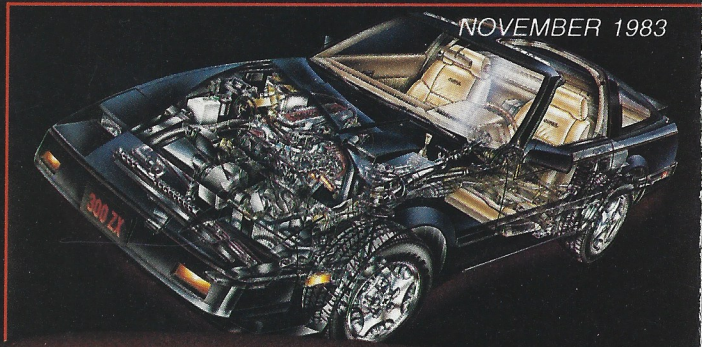
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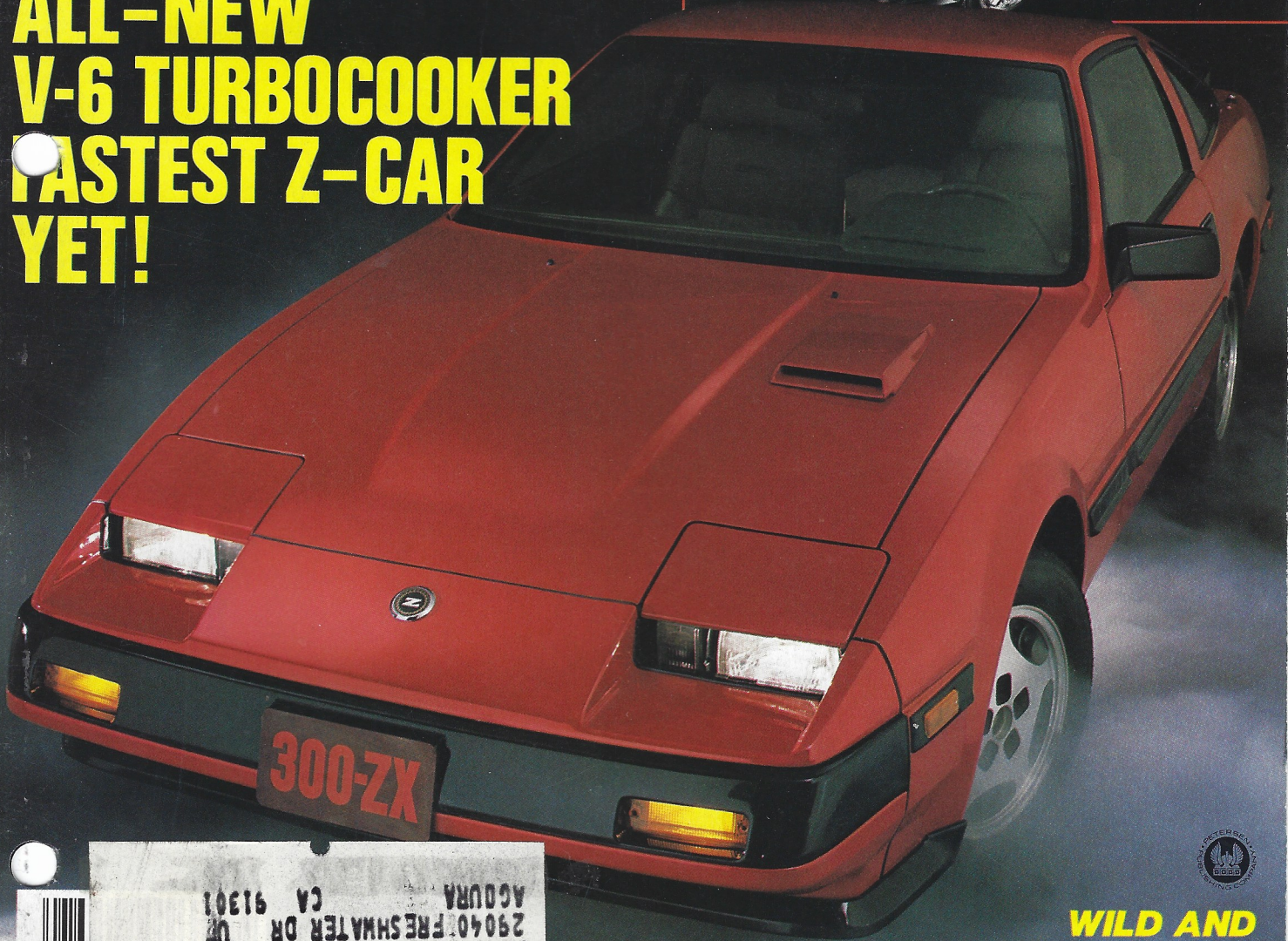
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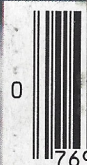
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## The Bandit ripped the quarter mile in consistent 14.2s at 102 mph

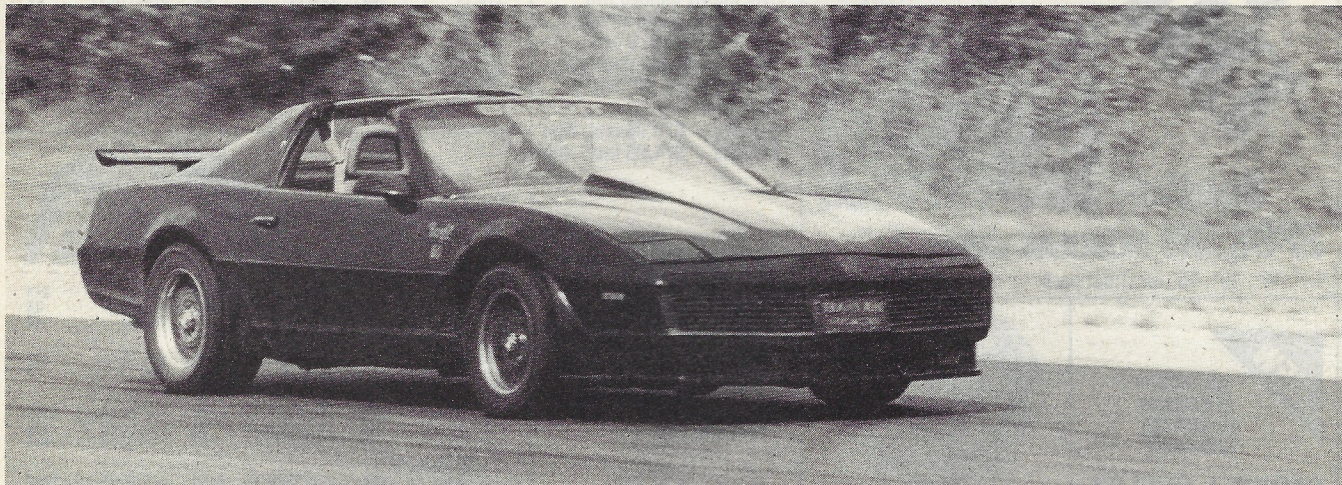
way in Posey's Bandit.

When Posey applies his rakish fiberglass wrappers, the Trans Am's guided-missile good looks become undeniable. A local company makes the apron spoiler, sturdy hood with its exaggerated air duct and the Lamborghini-esque deck wing. That is the

Bandit, a darkling motorcar that exudes competency, comfort, and the intangible factor of intimidation. Not your intimidation, you understand; *theirs*. (Your intimidation came and, presumably, went when you faced up to this Bandit's \$24,000 price tag. Without the engine mods and BBS

wheels, you could drive away with your own Bandit for \$18,000.)

Driving the Bandit is much like driving the original, though passage over rippled road is much less upsetting to the rear suspension. The ride is firmer but doesn't disturb the kidneys, and the tires' breath



### Bandits on the High Bank—A Very Special Education

**I**t was late fall when Chuck Posey decided to go racing. He was tired of seeing Herb Adams and Dennis Mechem getting most of the publicity for high-performance Firebird modifications and parts. He's convinced he does it better.

What to do?

Posey sat back in his chair, adjusted the Burt Reynolds cowboy hat that perpetually covers his curly head, and grinned. "I've got it," he said, "we'll go racing! We'll build a brand-new Bandit, and we'll race it." The Daytona 24-Hour, America's longest and toughest professional road race, was at that point just three and a half months away.

Posey went down to his Pontiac dealer and bought a new '82 Trans Am. He got an IMSA rule book and opened it to the GTO (GT Over 2.5-liters) section. His crew took a blue wrench to the car and started stripping weight out of it.

On November 7, they delivered it to Tommy Riggins' shop in Jacksonville Fla. One of the best road-racing chassis men around, Riggins would build a proper rollcage/chassis structure within the existing unibody, fit it with NASCAR-type suspension and brakes, and set it up for Daytona's high banks.

On December 23, the body/chassis was done. It was picked up and trucked back to the shop in New Jersey. The crew worked on it day and

night through the holidays and the first week of January, fitting a 530-hp LT-1 5.7-liter engine, a Doug Nash 5-speed with custom linkage, flared fenders, big (P265x15) BF Goodrich Comp T/A street radials (instead of racing slicks) on BBS modular racing wheels, gauges, electricals, fuel system, and everything else a race car needs.

On January 9, they trucked it up to Pocono (Pa.) Raceway. I flew out to test it. It snowed. Instead of melting as predicted, the snow turned to slush and then froze. A heavy fog and freezing rain set in. With no visibility and zero traction, the test was scrubbed after one tentative lap of the road course and a few passes up and down the pit lane.

Work continued day and night. A test day at the Charlotte (N.C.) speedway was snowed out. We had to test the car before going to Daytona. The Goodrich engineers had to be sure how their tires would work under heavy loading on the Trans Am. They scheduled a January 24 session at Ohio's Transportation Research Center, and the team traveled all night to get there. The temperature was just over freezing, and the track was wet. We had some trouble with the clutch and shift linkage and the car shuddered unnervingly under hard braking, but it ran and handled well. Still, we needed high-speed, banked-track time.

They drove all night to Jersey. Posey booked Charlotte for Saturday, the 29th, and they worked on the car for three more days and nights. Kyle Petty, who was scheduled to co-drive, backed out (due to Goodyear contractual obligations) on Thursday. On Friday, 1982 SCCA Trans-Am Champion Elliott Forbes-Robinson agreed to do the Charlotte testing and co-drive the race. The editor of a major automotive magazine rounded out the complement of drivers. The team hit the road for Daytona, via Charlotte.

The weather cooperated for a change, but the shift linkage didn't. A water hose broke, sucking air into the system and causing the engine to overheat every few laps. EFR circulated at 148 mph, 12 mph off the course record, but he couldn't stay out long enough to get the tires hot. They booked the track again for Monday, air-shipped in a Hurst linkage and worked all day Sunday. Monday's testing went reasonably well, so they loaded up and left for Daytona.

It rained throughout Wednesday's practice, and the infield course was slick as silicone, but the g's worked great on Daytona's banking. We had minor problems, but nothing serious. The car was 500 lb overweight, down on horsepower, up on wind drag, and depressingly legal compared to most of our GTO-class competition. It topped out at just 6000 rpm in 5th,



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## Here is a darkling motorcar that exudes competency, comfort, and intimidation

draws the road's raggedness away from the occupants instead of amplifying it. The throttle is connected to smooth, manageable power that, when spurred, revs the engine quickly up the scale. That power is not always apparent, but it's always ready when you are. The clutch is light and the gearshift, which was thoroughly modified by T-A Spec's Rocco D'Antonio, works very close to the hand and can be flat-shifted imperiously. First gear is a little notchy and the gearbox whines in all gears except direct, but the ratios within are spaced right for the Bandit's on- or off-track duty.


We drove it straight to Raceway Park in Englishtown, New Jersey, and ran it as it came from the road. The Bandit ripped the quarter mile with consistent 14.2s at 102 mph! Then we long-legged it south to a test track with a start-finish line. With the air conditioner on gale force, the Bandit knocked down nearly 16 mpg in 100° heat.

Then, as we approached Bill Scott's Summit Point Raceway on the West Virginia border, the road knotted and narrowed to a car width. In minutes we were out there going around and around in the still, thick air, punishing the Bandit for

everything bad that happened to us last winter. It endured at least 60 bouts with Summit's intense 1.9-mile course, and despite the broiling air, the Bandit ran consistent 1:39-1:40 laps.

Even though the brakes generated a year's worth of dust in a single day, they never felt soft and they never gave up. The engine grunted a few times on the big straight when fuel began to vaporize, but it came back strong under a hosing of deep well water.

Driving the Bandit is like telling the story instead of having it told to you. Posey's changes fit together without seams so the car can be driven as hard as you dare and still remain almost neutral—unless you make a basic error in judgement. The Bandit is light, easy to handle, and always has the power for a quick getaway. The Comps turn in quickly and with the ferocity of race tires (the skidpad revealed 0.88 g).

Although it appears terribly overloaded with bravado, the Bandit Trans Am nevertheless has the tenacity of a shark. Its grit stands straight alongside its macho image, and when you're done squealing the tires, you can close the windows, turn on the comfort, and *drive* it home. 

over 170 mph, and felt strong like bull and likely to run forever.

Elliott qualified us 38th fastest overall with a 2:07 lap (109 mph) Thursday morning, and we got in some practice that afternoon and evening. They took the car to a garage in town to swap our test "mule" engine for a super-enduro Vanderley Engineering 5.7-liter that had been delivered to the track the day before—and that was the last we saw of the car until two hours before race time on Saturday. Seems the headers interfered with the body, so the crew had to cut and fit and fabricate the entire new exhaust system from the engine back. Under the circumstances, the welding was nothing short of inspired.

We'd missed a second qualifying session on Friday (slipping to 66th in the 79-car field), plus all Friday's practice time and the Saturday morning warmup. Our confidence level hit a new low, but the crew kept working and Posey (to his credit) kept cool and smiling under his cowboy hat.

Elliott took the green flag for the 3:30 p.m. start and moved up several positions before pitting with the shifter jammed in 2nd—for the first of many times. I drove the second shift and had no linkage problems, but the engine temperatures were hot and the oil pressure low. More linkage problems in the third driving shift, and plenty of TLC

with the throttle. It was the beginning of the end.

We babied the car into the night, spending a lot of time in the pits, before parking it for good at a few minutes after 11 p.m. with a suspected cracked cylinder head. Too much water in the dry sump reservoir, that was for sure. With 121 laps of Daytona's 3.84-mile road course, we were classified 55th at the end, tying the Nimrod-Chevy prototype of A.J. Foyt and Darrell Waltrip and beating 24 other cars, many of them big-buck factory efforts.

Our race probably could have been better. But it unquestionably could have been worse. The Comp T/A s performed flawlessly on a car 1000 lb heavier than anything they'd been raced on before. The Trans Am Specialties crewmen (Joe Sheridan, Brad Alman, Rocco D'Antonio, Jim Grady, Glen Wallach, and Ron Reichenbach), led by crew chief Gary Wysocki, worked as hard as any I've ever seen and never lost their spirit. For their first race of any kind, they had taken on the toughest one of all and acquitted themselves well. They learned a lot and say they will definitely be back, much wiser and better prepared, next year.

As for Chuck Posey—there may be a few more curly gray hairs under his hat, but he's still smiling.

—Gary Witzenburg