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# SUPERCAR SURVIVOR

A FULLY BUILT ROCKET FOR EUROPEAN GT RACING FINDS NEW LIFE AS A TROPHY FOR ONE AMERICAN NSX COLLECTOR.

By Bob Hernandez  
Photography: RodRez

When the NSX first went on sale in the summer of 1990, it was the most expensive Japanese-brand car on the U.S. market. In spite of this, the mid-engine two-seater was still a remarkably good seller. Upon seeing the brisk pace of sales, dealers lapsed into expected price gouging. It was common to find the sports car, shipped from the factory with a \$60,000 MSRP, going for \$100,000 at Acura dealers.

This significant bump discouraged many from buying the coupe, including NSX enthusiast and collector Mark Johnson. Johnson has loved the car since its introduction but wasn't about to pay the inflated prices. Instead he found a '92 NSX in Salt Lake City, Utah, with only 5,000 miles advertised in the *Los Angeles Times* for "way too low a price."

The owner was having tax problems and needed to unload it quick. Within days Johnson was in SLC to retrieve the car and even earned himself a traffic violation on the drive back to San Diego (doing 90 in a 55 zone at 3 a.m.).

Johnson has since set up his online business—Dall Racing—to serve the NSX aftermarket (see sidebar). In addition to running D.R., Johnson also collects cars. This NSX is one of five that he owns, a works car built by Germany's Seikel Motorsports for Honda Racing's European GT efforts in '93 and '94. Piloted by Danish driver John Nielson, the coupe also raced in the 1993 24 Hours of Le Mans (a later, turbocharged version appears in *Best Motoring International*, Vol. 4: VTEC Battles at 10,000 RPM.)

"If you bought this car in '92, took it to a race shop and told them you needed a racecar in one month, this is what you'd get back," Johnson says. He picked up the car in 2000 for \$45,000 from Herr Josting, a German NSX fanatic who bought two of the original five Seikel cars. Josting died before the sale was completed and his wife decided to clear house. Johnson stepped in to save the cars.

"Since we knew they were actual factory cars





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that had history, we decided to buy them and this car is the more complete of the two."

Now referred to as the "Nielson" by the D.R. crew, the sports car is still trimmed for endurance road racing. It has several elements normally not found in a circuit car built for shorter track sessions or even a time attack. That's not to suggest the car is currently competitive, however. In fact, its weight is its biggest disadvantage.

"The series it ran in had a very high minimum weight and low maximum allowable horsepower, so they left a lot on the car. It still has a heater and power windows. The doors are essentially stock," says Johnson.

Nor is the coupe street legal. It has no emissions controls, a modified ECU, and a rigid roll cage. The only way Johnson could import the vehicle to the United States was to certify to the DOT and EPA that he would never register the car for street use [he brought it in under

#### DALI RACING

Johnson has cemented his place in NSX annals by launching Dali Racing, an online retailer specializing in NSX (including Type R) and Integra R aftermarket racing parts. The name means nothing he says, and especially has no familial relation to the famous Spanish surrealist painter.

"I've always liked the 'Persistence of Memory' painting and thought it might make a good [Web site splash page] with the timepieces replaced by NSXs."

With Johnson setting his sights on competing against heavyweight NSX parts maker CompTech, he started with a harness bar based on a friend's road racing needs. He designed a version, found a manufacturer and began offering his bars in five colors. Shortly afterward he developed a fire extinguisher mounting bracket (inspired by a guy at the track who zip-tied his extinguisher to the passenger-side grab handle) and a Koni shock adjustment tool. DR's catalog now features more than 1,400 parts.

"We looked at all of the aftermarket parts for the NSX to see if we could make them better for the same price or less," Johnson says simply.

Engine research and development typically happens on one of the many salvaged motors Johnson keeps at Dali, and he tests for power and reliability on the engine dynamometer at DVOT Engineering. Then the parts typically find their way to one of a few street lesters Johnson uses from the local NSX populace before they get to the catalog.

On tap Johnson plans to gull apart the head from the Seikel works NSX to profile the Honda Racing cams. The profiles are for bumpsticks Dali Race is developing with DVOT for an individual throttle body kit that will be similar to Toda's. Initially Johnson was going to use the same Toyota manifolds most companies use, but DVOT's engineer has already figured a way to CNC the throttle bodies, which should make them easier to test and mass produce.

## bolts&washers

MARK JOHNSON'S '92 NSX

### PROPULSION

The NSX's previous owner passed away suddenly before the sale was final, so much of the car's build details and history is unclear. Through disassembly and reassembly Johnson knows the bottom end is essentially stock, with the only real mod consisting of a switched gear in the oil pump that increases flow. The engine builders also incorporated an oil cooler and remote filter.

The cylinder heads are upgraded with custom cams from Europe's Honda Racing division. The same people also developed the intake, headers, exhaust, and catch can system. Fueling gets a goose with three Bosch pumps in the fuel cell, B&M pressure regulator, steel-braided lines, and injector duty cycle determined by an ECU reprogrammed by Honda Racing.

The mid-engine package spins power to the transaxle through an Exedy flywheel and semi-metallic clutch, replacements for the original AP Racing custom parts, and the gearbox has been rebuilt using JDM gears (basically providing shorter second through fourth gears) and a Honda Racing locked two-way LSD.

### EVIDENCE

The ex-01 racer puts down 296 hp on the DynoMax dyno.

### STANCE

Seikel enhanced the NA1 chassis for track battles with a Honda Racing FIA-spec roll cage, front chassis brace, stabilizer bars, and HR-branded Bilstein race shocks and springs.

### RESISTANCE

At each corner Brembo Monobloc four-piston calipers chew on custom rotors with Pagid race pads. ATE brake fluid finds its way to each caliper via stainless lines from twin Tilton front and rear master cylinders. In the cockpit sits a brake bias adjuster. Custom brake ducting replaces the A/C condensers and is another part that has come to the market from this car.

### RIMS & RUBBER

BBS three-piece magnesium-center race wheels are dressed in Yokohama skins, AVS Sport tires for practice and the rain and A005 slicks for race days. The 18x8-inch rollers weigh 12.5 pounds each, while the 18x10's in back weigh 13.5 pounds.

### FASHION

Outside: Still adorned in its original red, only a handful of changes were made to the NSX's body, namely the addition of front hood vents, trimmed wheel wells (for the bigger diameter tires), and the Honda Racing trunk lip and adjustable rear spoiler.

Inside: The cabin's occupants are strapped down with five-point Schroth harnesses to Cobra race shells. A Stack ST8000 data display gives the pilot critical driving input as he reaches for the Honda Racing shift knob and pedals.



special clauses for race vehicles).

Rather than race it seriously or risk the daily drive, Johnson uses the car to test parts and participate in local track events. He's currently developing an individual throttle body setup for the C30A with fabricator DVID Engineering.

Johnson's main goal is to get it looking like its former glorious self. He's replacing the fire suppression system and restoring the NA1's air jacks with Applied Motorsports' Nick Eustace.

And since none of his six NSXs are street legal, Johnson is looking for another NSX to drive on the street and leave alone. We're not taking bets on how long that arrangement lasts. ■

### connect

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