



RACE GODS

For many years I have observed the luck or non-luck of people who race. Myself included. Many believe luck has to be earned. You know, sayings like "diligence is the mother of good fortune" and "you make your own luck". We had a customer who won races with an engine purchased from a wrecking yard. He stuck it directly in the boat and won. Over the years I have seen many people get away with using parts or plumbing the engine in a way that I'm sure I couldn't have gotten away with. In fact I now look back on some of the ways I used to do things and realize I was very lucky to have gotten away with them as long as I did.

Years ago I came up with an theory, based on these observations, of how this can all be so. The only possible explanation for people getting away with things that other people can't is because they still have coupons.

As I see it, when you first start racing the race gods issue everyone a certain amount of luck coupons. This is how someone can get away with using junk parts in their engine when if used in my engine would break - or by using a -6 hose when I can't get away with anything less than a -10. When you "get away" with these kinds of sins you are turning in coupons. I saw a guy road race for years without a dry-sump system and all of sudden started failing engines. He failed over a half dozen or so before he even added an accusump. He had obviously run out of coupons. When you run out you are in deep "doo-doo". From then on the race gods have no mercy on you and they don't let you get away with anything. They are cold hearted, ruthless folks who get their fiendish kicks by inflecting chaos on unsuspecting racers.

Once you're coupon-less they watch you continuously and heaven can't help you unless you are willing to make sacrifices to them. Sacrifices in the form of changing the ways you do things, and by not using cheap parts any longer, and perhaps the most important sacrifice is turning in your confidence and arrogance in your ability for a large dose of humility, wariness and respect for them. You must never say things that imply you are good or smart. You must **never** make predications based on your experience. Especially don't spout off theories about how an engine ought to react to a change, for if the mood strikes them, they can certainly give you a new experience.

One thing they will not tolerate is someone who doesn't learn from his mistakes. When

they point mistakes out to you they expect you to not repeat it. They like it when you can see right away that they have sent you a message and you don't just assume that you're the victim of some strange quirk of fate. For instance when our flywheel broke at 8000 rpm on the dyno it only took us minutes to realize that we had received a message when just a minute before I was standing directly in the path of where a ten pound piece of it came through the wall (if they had killed me they wouldn't be able to have fun with me). Also everything around the dyno received damage from the flack - except my new \$3000 Snap-On tool box. It was obvious they were saying, "you shouldn't have been using that flywheel - you've been using it long enough to realize you're doing something stupid - and we are going to let you off with just a warning this time".

The more we observe the nature of the race gods the better understanding we have as how to placate their feeling toward us. When we make breakthroughs in dyno testing we like to reward ourselves. In THE GOD PARTICLE Lederman talked of drinking champagne (in paper cups) to celebrate these kinds of events. Instead of champagne we have an olive. (It's best not to dyno while intoxicated). We had a customer once who brought us a jar of Jalapeno stuffed olives which are really good. So when we set a new horsepower record (for us), or reach a new hp per cubic inch record, or make a unique discovery, we celebrate with an olive or two. At the same time we feel they don't like it when you have serendipitously discovered something and are feeling smug about it.

We got a little too carried away with olives a few months ago during the Trans-Am engine project, (maybe because we had just received a large shipment of them) and all of a sudden we started having bearing problems. We have never had these kinds of problems because that is the one area we felt we had dialed. Bulletproof bottom ends. The race gods said "NOT". It took several months and thousands of dollars to get them off our backs (for the time being), and we're still not completely sure what the problem was. That's the way they work.

As yet there are some things I haven't been able to determine about these luck coupons, such as:

- ! Why are we not all initially allotted the same amount - for instance it seems that known idiots and assholes get more than a regular person.
- ! Do you automatically turn them in when you reach a certain age.
- ! Do our customers automatically turn them in when they first walk through our door - it seems like they might not like racers with coupons left associating with racers who don't because they might find out that they are being lucky and thereby interfere with the race gods fun.
- ! After you have done or discovered something truly heroic do they ever give you any bonus coupons.
- ! Exactly what kind of sacrifices might the race gods like us to make to them. Young virgins, etc.

I think that the race gods were IRS agents when they were here on earth. Where else does a person become trained to be so brutally cruel and heartless.

Most people find this parable fits their observations also, and perhaps, like the invisible soccer ball (GOD PARTICLE), it is evidence. Evidence that there is a committee, probably made up of racers who have passed on and are serving time up there somewhere, to keep us honest, watch over us, protect us from ourselves and keep us humble.

Maybe I'm like John The Baptist of the race gods (possum the Baptist).

Pat Usher