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## OPTIMA® Faceoff Preview- Jonathan Winkler's Roush Mustang GT

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by Jim McIlvaine

Talk is cheap and maybe that's why we see so much of it? However, fixing your car can be an expensive endeavor and one most folks like to minimize. When buying a performance car there comes a desire to find a balance between preserving your pride and joy and getting it out on a track to take full advantage of it's ability to perform at a very high level. That is where Jonathan Winkler and his Roush-modified 2002 Ford Mustang GT enter the picture.

Some may remember Winkler's mineral gray pony car as the unfortunate victim of a close encounter with a wall at last year's Faceoff event

at Road America. Jonathan was nice enough to share this photo of what his car looked like shortly after that incident, as well as some background on his car and himself-



Recapping the incident, Winkler says he was in the first group on the track for the hot lap and he was trying to his best to keep up with Ron Deppert's Bentley Continental GT, while being chased down by Bret Voelkel's '33 Ford Coupe. He applied too much throttle exiting a corner and fishtailed a few times before putting the front of the car head on into the wall. Winkler says the combination of a cold track, cold tires and excitement of the competition must have gotten the best of him. Fortunately, he was uninjured, although the same could not be said for his Mustang.

Jonathan bought the Mustang in 2006 shortly after graduating high school. It didn't take him long to start adding things to the car either. He had big plans and vowed to do almost all of the work himself. While he was deployed to Iraq, he started saving money to start some major modifications, with a goal to do open track events. Eleven months into his deployment he was run over by a 54,000-pound armored truck which, crushed his left leg. He was medevac'd and sent back to the US shortly after that.

As soon as he had access to a computer and the internet, he started purchasing parts, including a Kenne Bell supercharger, Maximum Motorsports suspension, Wilwood brakes, safety equipment and just about everything else to outfit a good track car. Between Jonathan's six surgeries, he was sent home to recover, during which he spent a fair amount of time in his garage, using crutches and a rolling chair to work on the car. It was still going to be a while before he was able to drive the car on the road, because of his cast, but he did manage to modify a few things that allowed him to move it around the driveway.

Eventually, Winkler recovered to the point that he was able to walk with a cane, during which time he spent two weeks installing the Maximum Motorsports roll cage. Shortly after that, he started participating in track day events with some local clubs. His first visit to Road America resulted in a brake fire, due to the high speeds and tremendous strain the track places on braking systems. Jonathan then upgraded to Cobra brakes and added cooling ducts, but that still wasn't good enough.

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Finally, he progressed to the Wilwood setup that has been performing well for about two years.

When Winkler first heard about the Faceoff, he was very interested and excited to participate. With three to four years of open track experience and a little autocross experience, it seemed like a natural fit. Unfortunately, two weeks prior to the events, a co-worker backed into the Mustang's passenger door, completely caving it in! It was a mad rush to get parts and repair the damage to have a great looking car for the Faceoff, but Jonathan made it happen. In fact, he picked up the car from being painted on his way to Road America!

After his incident at the track, he debated for a month about what to do- rebuild or start over? It was a hard choice because he had so much blood, sweat and tears into the car, but it was pretty banged up. Ultimately, he decided to rebuild it. He had the frame straightened and bought a fiberglass fender and splitter from Paul Brown at Tiger Racing. He also used the rebuild as an opportunity to make some aero upgrades to the car, widening the front fenders by two inches, adding the splitter, as well as a large rear wing. New brake ducts and an oil cooler were also added, while the airbags were deleted. With the car mostly together, he started running open track events again, with the white fenders, no splitter and a black front fascia.

The next time we see the Mustang at the Faceoff, it will have fresh paint and be ready for action. However, Jonathan is going to install some camlocks on the front splitter, install air-oil seperators and tidy up a few other things. It would be an understatement to say that Winkler is excited about returning to th Faceoff and Road America.

This will be his first scheduled event of this season, which includes more open track days at Road America, Blackhawk Farms, Autobahn Country Club and Mid-Ohio planned as well. Of course, no hot rodders car is ever really "done" and Jonathan's is no exception. He'd eventually like to get a carbon-fiber wing and mataching front splitter and then turn his attention to the drivetrain.

The list of upgrades there starts with a T56 swap, beefier axles and T2 torsion differential. The final phase (for now) will be a rebuild of the engine, which only has 30,000 original miles on it (Winkler estimates a whopping 15,000 from track day events).

With that much experience under his belt and a car that sounds like it is finally back to where he needs it, the Faceoff could be a great event for Jonathan. If you'd like to join in on the action, [register today!](#)



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