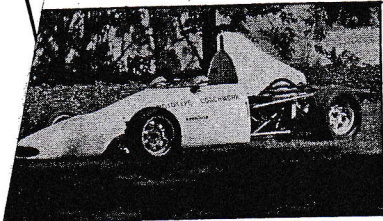


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Formula Ford Track Test: Dennis Firestone's Crossle 32F



Track Test & Photos By Hugh Mooney

By Hugh Mooney

I was with great interest that I packed my driving gear, tossed it in the back of my Mustang and headed for Willow Springs International Raceway in Bascom, California to test the Crossle 32F. Dennis Firestone had just won last year's Willow National with it, only two days earlier. Willow is a pretty circuit and the testing center for all Southern

California drivers. The track is located in the upper desert about an hour's drive from Los Angeles and is flanked by a small mountain range which sticks up out of the flat desert floor. The weather was perfect for all time: a few puffy white clouds and a full sun that warmed us to a steady 80 degrees. There was nearly no wind at all.

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Just as I arrived, the Crossle Cars Pacific van was pulling into the facilities manned by Bob Morris, who runs RPM Race Prep and maintains the car, and Alan Trux, the PR and marketing person.

Getting down to what this article is all about, Crossle has made a couple of really neat changes. With increased safety in mind, they have added forward-facing roll bar braces and a dynamite FIA-type roll bar around the dash unit, a la F1. Both items are something all constructors should be looking at.

The only real change in the 32F is in aerodynamics. It incorporates an entirely new body configuration with a semi-sports car nose and an extra large radiator opening (they nearly doubled the size of the radiator), new cockpit cowling and a super looking rear deck using a clean, filtered cold air box.

A flat plexiglass unit has been added to the rear deck and runs just above the gearbox extending to the legal length for added downforce in the rear. (They initially had an oversteer problem.) The new car is clean and visually appealing.

Getting seated in the car required the normal stuffing of various items between me and the seat so I could operate the controls and see out of the cockpit. As in most of the new cars there is no provision for making seat adjustments, so if you're under 5'7" modifications will be necessary. The pedal cluster as a unit is adjustable, which I feel is a better method than only being able to adjust the pedal itself.

Once properly seated and buckled in, all the gauges (which consist of a tach, oil pressure/oil temperature combo to the right and water temperature to the left) were easily readable. And as they would say in R&T, "The shifter falls readily to hand". The shifter really is located well and functioned perfectly with no missed shifts.

There were no Jim Russell Driver's School students on the course so I had the track to myself as I took a couple of warmup laps to familiarize myself with

the car. The tires were the same set Firestone had started the National week-end with, the latest from Firestone (no relation!).

The car felt good and the Shankle engine seemed strong as speeds built. I was expecting some oversteer in the fast corners from talk I had heard but never encountered anything bothersome.

The 32F turned nicely into turns one and two, maintained good RPM with minimum scrubbing and felt extremely stable. The brakes worked as they should as I went a little deeper each time going into turn three. The bias was balanced perfectly as there were no darting or locking wheels. Through three, up the hill and around four, all was in top order as the car went where I wanted it.

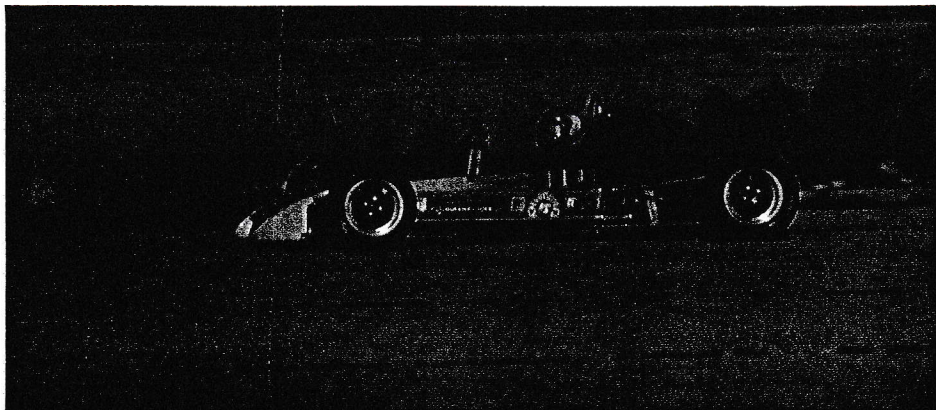
Where the car felt really good and well-balanced was coming down the hill from four. As you turn into the right-hand kink that leads to five, you must apply braking before you straighten the car up. Then, immediately, you must go back to the left to set the car for five — all in second gear. It handled this transition with ease and from there over the hill to six, around eight and through nine, everything was just fine.

This car has slightly heavier springs than the stock set-up — about 15 pounds in front and 18 or so heavier in the rear — while maintaining the stock sway bars. I found the car easy to drive, responsive to corrections and extremely well-balanced.

Crossle has come a long way over the last few years and is gaining a reputation for being easy to maintain, drive and buy. There are eight Crossle dealers throughout the country. To take a quote from the movie "Le Mans" when Claude's girlfriend asked, "Things are going well, aren't they, Claude?" "Oui, I can feel it; the machine is good."

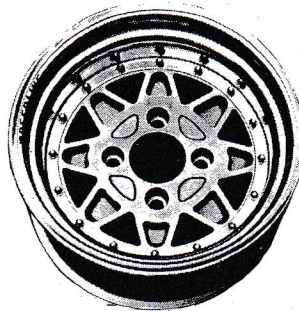
I would like to thank Ken Deiter of Crossle Cars Pacific for furnishing us such a fine race car to test. Also Bob Morris of RPM Race Prep for providing his excellent maintenance and humor. And Alan Trux for the great beef sandwich.

Sleek new aerodynamics of the Crossle 32F.



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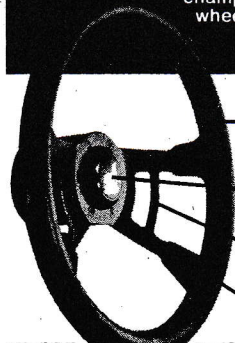
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