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## [The Great American Run Concludes, Next Stop: Mount Kilimanjaro](#)

Posted by: **bryce** on August 6th, 2007

The Great American Run Concludes, Next Stop: Mount Kilimanjaro



Looking back at this once in a lifetime 3000 mile cross country experience, it may have been the initial glamour of NYC that eventually caught up to the #18 team keeping them from a podium finish.

We pulled onto the wide open Avenue of the Americas in NYC with all 5 lanes completely traffic free due to the Sunday start. What better way to salute the fans lining the streets below flashing billboards and massive skyscrapers than to do a number of burn outs on our way to Central Park and Tavern on the Green.

Caught up in the moment, neither Fluge nor Lowblad remembered to turn off the traction control of the Ultimate Bad Boy as it made for bigger burn outs.

Arriving at the Tavern on the Green, the clutch was smoking and backing into our spot, we found reverse was non-existent.

Thankfully our factory Saleen pit crew were on hand and did a quick examination, turned off the traction control and cooled down the clutch/transmission assembly which brought back reverse.

After the cool down, all gears were back, but we did notice the Bad Boy much harder to shift.

Things were fine flying through New Jersey on our way to the Catskills until we caught up to a Ford GT and other Cannonballers and this early in the race who could blame us from testing one another's driving skills and horsepower, This high speed run was tough on the recently red hot, glowing and smoking clutch as we would have to downshift through traffic from 5th to 2nd and back up through the gears to play with our friends in Turnpike traffic. This constant back and forth through the gears, redline to redline was so hard on our gas mileage (108 miles on the first tank); we reasoned it was also very difficult on the clutch and transmission.



When we finally arrived at the Westin in Indianapolis after a long 900 plus mile night run, we were over 3 hours ahead of schedule building time in our bank for future slower sections. As the Fluge was checking in Lowblad was turning the car around behind the hotel in preparation for heading to the actual checkpoint at the Memorial Monument Circle in downtown Indy only to find no reverse again. As both UPS and Fed Ex drivers were giving the evil eye to this Black Bad Boy Saleen that was blocking the entire delivery lane Lowblad was frantically trying to get the car in reverse to complete the turn around. Finally the only way to find reverse was to turn off the car, jam it in gear and start it in reverse and let the clutch out. I'm sure the delivery guys were OK with the tire smoke in their faces as long as they were back on the road.

But this was only the first leg and troubles are brewing!

It seems that if we can just cruise at 120 plus, we have no problems with the clutch/tranny as we just stay in high gear. When we go fast and hard dicing it up with competitors or slow and easy in traffic the clutch gets hot.

We had both those extremes on the Indy to Tulsa Leg. When Lowblad was flying into St. Louis, the radar detector immediately screeched its K Band warning with enough time for Lowblad's fast reflexes to bring it down to the speed limit. As soon as that threat was gone and the pedal was back to the metal, we were hit with a laser. Our blockers worked great and we got it down in speed again. After passing the trooper we were ready to get it on again only to immediately here the X Band warning chirp and I look in my mirror and we have an unmarked car on our tail. For the entire trip through the St. Louis metro area our radar/laser detector never stopped. I wonder how much radiation we picked up in that 15 minute period. Trouble was, having to drive that slow and in a high lugging gear to keep away from the power when being followed, I'm sure was tough on the our weak link clutch/transmission.

Tulsa to Denver started out great, we woke to the clutch/transmission actually feeling fine, so the Fluge put the hammer down and did the 1st gas run averaging over 120. After the quick (or not so quick) pit stop for a new phone (remember the champagne bucket incident) Lowblad took his turn behind the wheel only to find the supercharger intercooler temperature light pegged at 200 in the red. Calling our pit crew traveling over an hour and a half behind us, we made the decision to put the car on cruise at 75 and limp in to Denver where

they could look at it.

That night during the wonderful dinner (Every Hotel, Dinner and Party was incredible) Ryan from Saleen came up and said good news/bad news. We've fixed the supercharger intercooler but you've have NO CLUTCH left.

Knowing that there was little if any clutch left, we decided, WHY not "use it till we lose it."

Denver to Vegas was a beautiful drive. What incredible scenery traveling through the Rockies. But those hills meant having to use the gears. I can just about guarantee that NO ONE on this trip could pull off the "steer with the knees and TWO hands on the shifter forcing it into a gear at over 100 mph" like the Fluge.

The real test was in the city of Las Vegas itself with all the traffic. Every time we hit a stop light, we would have to turn off the car, put it in gear and start by popping what was left of the clutch. Wouldn't you know right as we were taking off one time, we did a burn out just in front of a police car. Karma must have finally been with us as we were not pulled over.

Vegas to Willow Springs was a short run, but we were now starting in 2nd gear and 4th and 5th could not be found no matter how hard we would try and grind it in! When we finally arrived at the Track and our final checkpoint, we were ahead of schedule (We may not have had many gears, but we WERE FAST) so we shut her down and waited for last quarter mile drive down to the checkpoint. We couldn't idle as once the engine was going, we couldn't get it into gear from a stopped position, so we just sat there in the blistering 106 degree Mojave Desert heat. With 30 seconds to go we tried to find 2nd, but found no forward gears at all! The heat hadn't fried our brains completely so we looked at each other and said "What about Reverse" Amazingly, we started it in reverse and blasted to the finish line tail first.

By the time we crossed, we were 10 seconds late after over 3000 miles. Was this enough to keep us off the podium? Only time will tell.

The car was incredible on power and handling but maybe we'll beef up the clutch and transmission in order to handle the punishment that only Fluge and Lowblad can dish out.

As for the Queens of Cool, the Perlinger sisters, they made the finish line with zero problems in the lap of luxury in the 2nd FGA car. I think we may need to have the massage unit in the seats lubed after 3000 miles of magic fingers action though.



The girls not only were fast and cool, but got the most shopping in along the run. While Fluge/Lowblad have pics with the hood up or pulling off the splitter, the girls have pictures from Vail and numerous interesting places. I even hear they had many fans along the route come up and ask to have their pictures taken with

them.

Not only cool, the Perlinger sisters were incredible with calculations, as they never got lost and finished within minutes if not seconds of a perfect time to crack the top 10 while having the time of their lives.

Congrats to our Bud's Steve and Don in the #13 Saleen who took 1st place. They were true champs in our book.

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