

SPOTLIGHT

Super Street 10.5W Crew Chief

JASON GATLIN

Behind every champion there is a great crew chief. This unsung hero of drag racing is in charge of making the tuning calls, swapping cylinder heads between rounds, and making sure the car is as ready as it can be when it's time to make a pass. In 2007, Mustang racer Jim Blair and crew chief Jason Gatlin combined their efforts and were able to win the Nitto Super Street 10.5W championship with their ProCharged small-block combination and although Blair, the driver, got the glory on stage at the awards ceremony, it should be mentioned that Gatlin was, and is, a major factor in getting Blair's ride running quick enough to win it all last year. Gatlin, owner of the Automatic Transmission Factory out of Davie, Florida, is also responsible for building and tweaking some of the toughest transmissions in the country. ATF currently specializes in PowerGlides, TH400, TH350, the Ford 4R70W, and 5R55S and are also developing transmissions for the Toyota Supra and Mitsubishi Eclipse AWD as well. Although Gatlin actually has his own Outlaw Mustang in the works, he really enjoys turning the screws on the champ's ride and with Gatlin behind Blair once again this year, expect the "Silver Bullet" to run consistent and quick, both of which will be important in defending the Super Street title.



FSC: Do you do anything special to your transmissions to make them stronger or to make them shift better?

Gatlin: "The performance of any transmission is directly related to operation of the valve body. We do extensive testing with our in house valvebody dyno insuring proper shifting and maximum strength."

FSC: You rarely hear of a three speed in an Outlaw car, it's either a 'Glide or a manual trans, why is that? Is there even an advantage to having a three speed?

Gatlin: "There is an advantage to using a three speed transmission. Currently the gear ratios of the TH400 make it too aggressive to launch a heavy car with 2,000+ horsepower. I think this definitely is an area that needs to be addressed."

FSC: How did you and Blair meet? How long have you been the crew chief?

Gatlin: "We met thru a mutual friend then later I was at the track testing my car and Jim was testing his car and blew his transmission. After installing a

new one for him, I made some changes to the chassis and tune up. The next trip to the track the car performed much better and Jim was hooked on ATF. This all happened in 2002."

FSC: What are some specific jobs you're in charge of on the Silver Bullet?

Gatlin: "The Silver Bullet is built and maintained by me. I am in charge of anything to do with the car. Back at the shop I have two young protégés that I am training to do all of the maintenance work. We build and machine virtually every part or piece of the Silver Bullet."

FSC: Do you have any desire to drive an Outlaw car or do you like making the tuning calls?

Gatlin: "I have a '90 Mustang Coupe that I am building into a 10.5W car, but since my daughter was born I haven't had time to finish it. I still have hope that one day I can finish it. I do love making the tuning calls. Sometimes when we are racing NMCA on Saturday nights, I go to the hotel and study for hours all the data from the day and usually find enough to make it thru when it counts."

"I will never give up. Defeat only makes me work harder!"



Jim Blair and crew chief Jason Gatlin plan on returning to the NMCA to defend their title in 2008.