

PROJECT IMPREZA

PART 8 – SMOOTHING OUT THE RIDE



“Alright! I’ll own up,” stated Dave Pearson, whose on-going reportage on his 2001 ‘Bug-eye’ Impreza has been curtailed by the pressures related to attending myriad shows and events. “If I give you the basic information, can you perform the necessities?” As a direct result but not directly from the horse’s mouth, it is your Editor, who is providing the update on our project car. So here goes...

If you can recall, some Super Pro suspension bushes had been obtained for the Impreza, which were duly applied to the car’s underpinnings and, without putting too fine a point on the improvements, Dave suggests that the changes have been no less than phenomenal. “The car had been suffering from all manner of diverting handling issues,” he stated, “which included bump-steer, torque-steer, which is unusual enough on an Impreza, and even a sluggish reaction to getting the power down on the road.

“As soon as I spent any time on the circuit, such as at Knockhill, which is fairly close to where I live, the car felt sloppy and unfaithful, in terms of its responsiveness. We all knew that the Super Pro bushes would make a discernible difference. The thing is, I did not appreciate by how much.”

Without resorting to a comprehensive fitment guide, which we have carried out before as a ‘Tech-Talk’ feature, with our friends at Hypertech Scotland, let it be said that the installation was unproblematic and that, apart from the usual ‘loosening’ of tired rubber bushes, the job was fairly elementary. However, after Dave’s first run on the road, he scurried back to the garage, bubbling with enthusiasm for

the newly-found vitality of his car and he had only been gone for 15 minutes.

Once we had damped him down and stopped the gibber-jabbering, he was able to answer a few questions, with a modicum of sense and logic. The car’s turn-in to corners was crisper and, for the first time in a long time, the steering wheel felt properly connected to the front tyres. There was no loss of reaction between the driver’s eyesight, turning the tiller and applying throttle to drive through bends. Instead, the reaction was instant and connected, as Dave highlighted, “You know, you get used to your car and you start to make excuses for it, even though you realise, deep-down, that there is something not quite right. You expect and want a bit more but the car just doesn’t deliver it.”

In straight-line running, rather than feeling as if there were a secondary suspension motion over bumps, an effect that can sometimes be promoted by anti-roll bar bushes that can and do provide a secondary suspension medium, albeit of a torsion type that has no proper damping effect, the car felt much more positive. The Super Pro bushes were not allowing any slack in the system to be felt. As a result, while the ride quality remains fairly firm, it now feels significantly more controlled and taut. The lack of secondary springing means that bumps do not upset the chosen line through faster corners, although it has highlighted that revisions may need to be made to its springs and dampers.

However, when Dave spent a couple of hours on-circuit, the





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results were dramatic. "When you lay out the components from the Super Pro bushes box," he outlined excitedly, "you can scarcely believe the benefits that those small rings of polypropylene provide to the car. Tackling the Hairpin at Knockhill had always been a challenge to me but, with the Super Pros fitted, the feeling of incredible confidence that they instilled left me almost speechless. I tried the same tight bend time and time again and found that I was giggling like a schoolgirl inside my helmet (he does that most of the time, dear reader - Ed)."

The improvements have been astonishing, according to Dave. They have helped to improve the quality of the gearshift as well, mainly because the former 'slack' in the driveline has now been completely eradicated. However, perhaps one of the most telling improvements has been to the car's braking. It is almost too easy to become wrapped up in extolling the virtues of conventional chassis dynamics and to ignore a primary safety aspect. Light braking results in good, measured responses but carrying out a series of progressively harder braking, by increasing the entry speeds to bends, in 10mph increments, to the point of the ABS anti-lock clicking into play, proved outstanding. Dave's increased confidence in his car's capabilities is noticeable.

However, another pre-Super Pro addition has been the set of Maxxis Z1 tyres. They have been fitted to the car for just over a year now and Dave has never ceased to declare their competence. Although manufactured in Taiwan, a factor that sent an initial shudder up my spine, even I have been silenced by their overall capabilities. Even during the worst winter that Scotland has known for a number of years, once the car had been shovelled clear, the rubber mix seemed to meet winter requirements, as well as Dave's circuit forays and broader on-road use through spring and summer months.

"The grip levels are unflinching," stated Dave, "even though they are low-profile tyres and you kind of expect them to wear quite rapidly, there is still more than 6mm of tread available on all four of them, even though the car has covered well over 9,000 miles since fitting the covers. They seem to tolerate such a wide range of road surfaces and, yet, they are quiet and are showing no signs of run-out irregularities. Having carried out an alignment check recently, mainly because I was worried about all the nasty bumps on even our local main roads, a comprehensive tyre check showed no signs of anything other than normal even wear characteristics. They are good."

Finally, to resolve the interminable issues related to questionable damping and coil springs that are starting to show their age, mainly since the Super Pro bushes were factored into the car's suspension, Dave has obtained a set of KW Variant 3 coil-overs, from KW Automotive. The system will be installed shortly and Dave will provide a full review in the next issue. ■



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