

It was 1982 in Coquitlam, British Columbia, Canada, and I was on my way to the local race track known as Westwood Motorsport Park. I was seven years old and it was the first of many visits to that unforgettable place. A family friend raced a 1971 Datsun 510 to a few GT4 championships and his home track was Westwood. We often found ourselves in the grandstands or infield to cheer-on the locals. When I was asked to come down to the pits to check out the collection of race cars I didn't know what to expect. Well, all I can say is listening to the tune of a built GT4 twin-carbed L16 instantly captivated me. It wasn't long before the big family car was traded in on our own dark-green 510. These were the beginning contributors to a lifetime of 510s.

Fast-forward 11 years, many cars, and many 510s; a friend's partially pieced together rolling chassis was for sale. After nothing but four-door sedans and wagons in the past I finally had a chance to buy this rust-free two-door. I made the purchase and started to work on the car. I decided to build it into an SPO

(Super Production Over) conference race car. After a few years of sprint and endurance races I stored it away, having decided to build it back into a street machine.

The 1971 PL510 two-door was equipped with a KA24DE, fully adjustable suspension, and a big differential. These basics were already sorted so it became time to refine other areas. The technical points of the car began with the power plant. It now has a monster KA24DE built by Specialty Engineering in New Westminster, British Columbia. The motor was an experimental project for the shop. I got a call to see if I was interested in this motor and the decision has me smiling still. Modifications to this KA include a worked crank, rods, pistons, cams, valves, and match porting. The twin-cam motor has about 10.75:1 compression and makes 218HP at 5600 RPM, all with 94-octane fuel. Power is transferred through a Nismo clutch and a 4:11-gear R180 differential with a Nissan Comp LSD. The motor is fed by a custom stainless steel intake and ex-

haust exits through a 2.5" mandrel-bent stainless Borla system. Cooling system is a three-row radiator with a single 10" electric fan. An external oil cooler and remote oil filter help cool the motor oil. This motor and driveline combo makes for a comfortably powerful, reliable, and responsive ride.

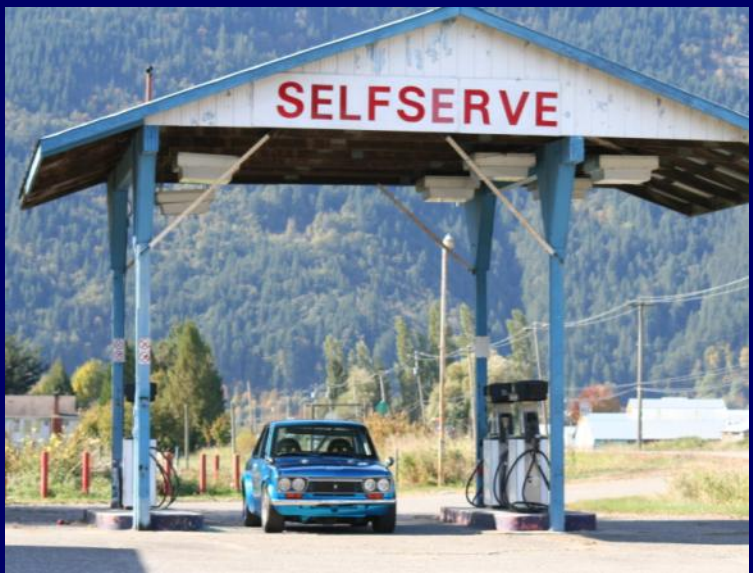
Suspension mainly consists of the same stuff most 510 owners use. The front end has shortened 280ZX struts with adjustable coilovers and 500 lb/in springs. KYB gas inserts and camber plates finish off the struts. A large sway bar was made to suit the front-sump oil pan. All of the bushings are either urethane or aluminum throughout the entire car. The rear suspension has a slotted crossmember with 600 lb/in springs sitting in the trailing arm pockets for stiffness. The suspension is well-specified but still needs just a tiny bit of refining to get it where I want it.

Brakes are certainly as important a component as anything else when tricking out a 510. The system starts with 15/16" master cylinder from a 280ZX that leads

Photo 1—Tyson's car is obviously well-modified, including flares, fender mirrors, JDM plastic grill and more. This shot doesn't show the key modification to the car, merely hinting at the major work performed.



Photo 2—Self serve is a good theme for this build, with Tyson doing the massive reworking himself.



to a brake proportioning valve for front-to-rear bias control in the cockpit. Fluid enters the four corners via stainless steel braided lines. Front stopping power is a pair of 12" Wilwood vented rotors with twin-piston aluminum Wilwood calipers. Out back is a pair of 200SX rotors and calipers with aggressive pads all the way around. The rear disc brake upgrade really helps with control while driving in wet weather.

The interior is a mix of old and new. With an IMSA cage that consumes most of the interior, it leaves you with a safer-than-stock feeling. With the aluminum dash being removed I could get creative. I started with a custom carbon fiber dash. I tried to keep a stock look to the dash by placing the gauges and switches in the same spots as original. I used a 5" speedometer and a 5" tachometer placed in front of the driver's seat and six 2-5/8" inch gauges fill the passenger's side of the dash. The original heater panel, headlight and wiper switches, and fresh air vents were all placed in the original spots. I wanted a good stereo in the car

so the system got some attention. I started off with an Alpine CD head unit and an Alpine V12 amp in the trunk. Six MB Quart speakers provide the sound while a 12" JL Audio subwoofer delivers the bottom end. An Alpine alarm system protects the car to be sure this 510 only goes home with me. Seats are a stock rear with a pair of modern Momo adjustable seats in the front to hold the occupants in place for the ride.

Rims are a set of custom shaped, polished, and gold painted 15x7" aluminum Panasport race wheels. Tires are super soft Yokohama Advan 032R at 225/50/15. These tires work extremely well.

The car was totally disassembled in 2001. I stripped the flares, all of the paint on the exterior, and everything on the underside. I sandblasted the underside of the car and engine bay on a rotisserie. All of the suspension pieces were blasted and refinished to give the underside a look as good as the engine bay. Large flares fill out the rear of the car and fiberglass fenders with flares bolted

on the front. The body color is Radiance II candy blue. It received new front and rear bumpers as well as NOS weatherstripping. This would be its configuration for the next couple of years.

The Japanese domestic market got the Bluebird Coupe that offered a sporty and unique trim package. The Coupe had a more-angled rear pillar and rear windscreen compared to the sedan. These obvious exterior features were in addition to the unique trim package that included a set of sequential, chrome-trimmed taillights, different metal pillar vents, fender mirrors, interior package, motor options, and grills. Some of these things that were different from the normal US market PL510 peaked my interest. It was plainly obvious I wouldn't be able to afford the purchase of a real JDM Coupe and keep my current 510. This is where the craziness began.

A couple of years ago I started to get some ideas that were totally preposterous. I wanted to do a body mod that hadn't been done yet. The car was flared

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Photo 3—The worked KA24DE with oil cooler installation behind the right pair of headlights.



Photo 4—Rear three-quarters photo of Tyson's car would lead anyone to believe it was a Bluebird Coupe.



and was otherwise stock on the exterior. It was at this point I started to do some research and before I knew it I had 250 hours into modifying my PL510 sedan into a "Couped" PL510. The steps had to be well thought out and lots of arguments ensued over angles and measurements. I started by Googling Bluebird Coupes and tracing out different profiles and views of the car. I did a scaled-down measurement of the car, calculated degrees, lengths, and height to come up with rear pillar angles. The hands-on part of the job came by stripping the rear windscreen, rear quarter windows, trunk lid, vents, and the rear half of the interior.

After stripping the paint I marked out my measurements and started the fabrication. With the rear pillars being leaned forward, they are longer than the sedan pillars so the rear window had to get taller. This meant I had to find and fit a new piece of glass. The only thing I will reveal about the rear window is that it is from a Datsun. The quarter window frames had to be completely reconstructed because they have a turned-up bottom corner. New glass had to be tempered and fit, and the weatherstrip had to be fit as well.

Lots of time was spent thinking about

what had to be done to achieve these changes. I used the correct plug weld seams in the rear window and factory inner structure boxing. With the new angle of the rear pillars it meant the roof was going to get smaller. After the rear window structure boxing was in place I measured and cut the roof sheet metal. Once the fabrication, welding, and grinding were in place I did the body work and finished the paint.

When the job was done, a friend called me and said there were a pair of Coupe taillights and rear vents for sale. I didn't think the vents could possibly fit but for the price they were worth having on the shelf, or at least for the SSS badges. When they arrived I immediately removed my sedan vents and attempted to fit the new Coupe vents; they slid right in place. The pillar angle couldn't have been better.

Lots of things had to be done to make the Coupe modification look right. For example, a rear window, quarter windows and frames, drip rails, and seals all had to be made or altered. The new "Couped" car wasn't built as a clone but more just for the body style. After finding the lights and vents online I found a few good JDM sellers and the badges, grill, lights, mirrors, and hood vents

came after as add-ons.

I think this 510 is unique because it has a very different body mod done and a 218HP N/A, fuel-injected motor. There are probably no other PL510s with a Coupe roofline, flares, and left-hand drive.

The future holds new struts and oil cooler air box and a modified fuel system, air intake, and air box. I have collected a pile of clean factory metal pieces to contribute to the car. After a few years, some more modifications, and some fine tuning the car will get one last session with body work and new paint.

I am a long time member of the "510 Club of BC," member number 122. The club is based out of Vancouver, British Columbia. It is a local club that organizes meetings and Datsun 510 events. I spend most of my time at my body shop, Big Time Motors, in Pitt Meadows, British Columbia, restoring classic cars and Datsuns. I've spent enough time in front of this computer writing about my Datsun, I'm pretty sure there are a pair of tires waiting to be cooked off.

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Photo 5—Side profile of Tyson's two-door/Coupe hybrid.



Photo 6—Specialty Engineering's KA24DE roasting the hides on both sides thanks to the R180LSD.

