

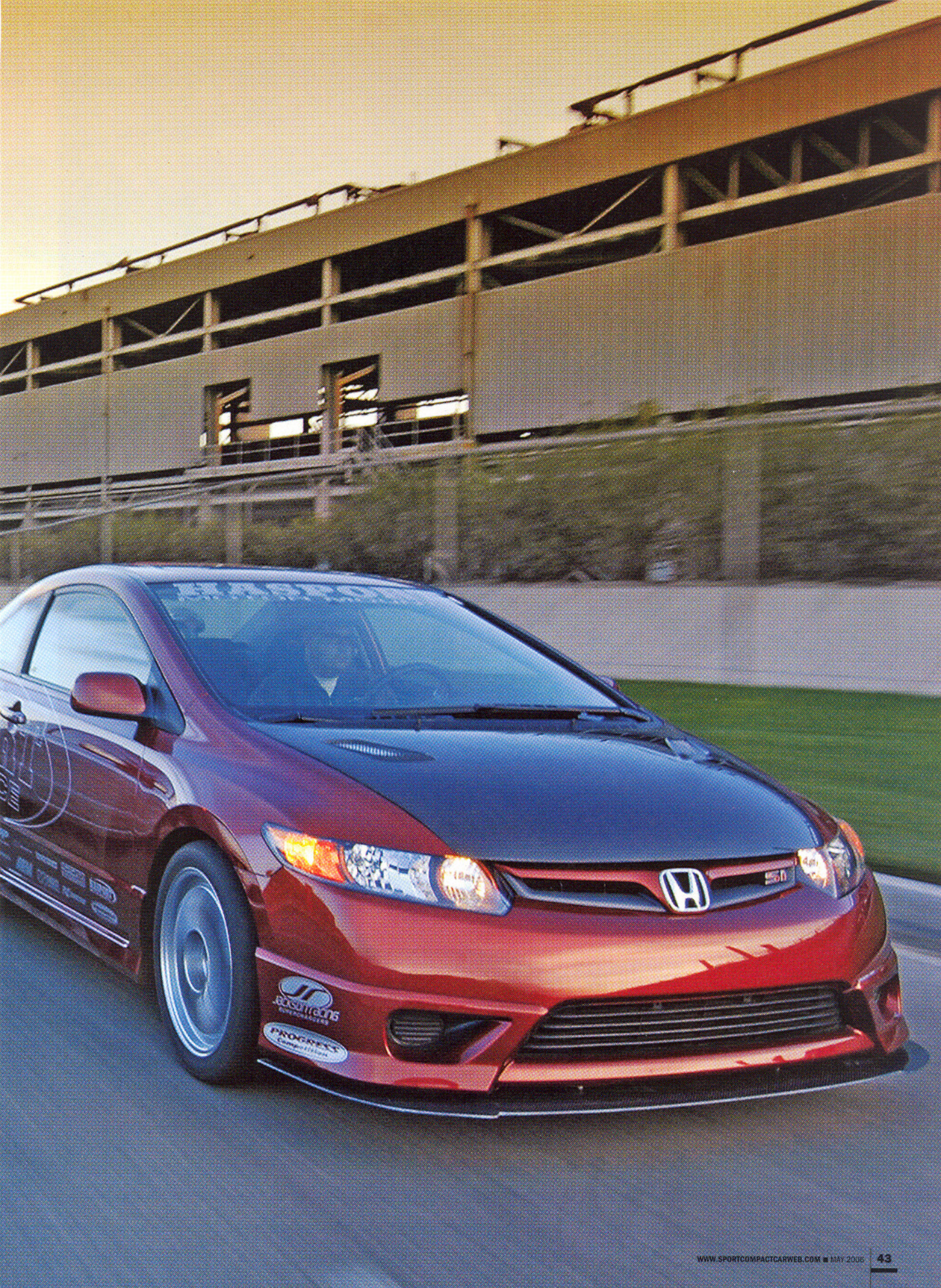
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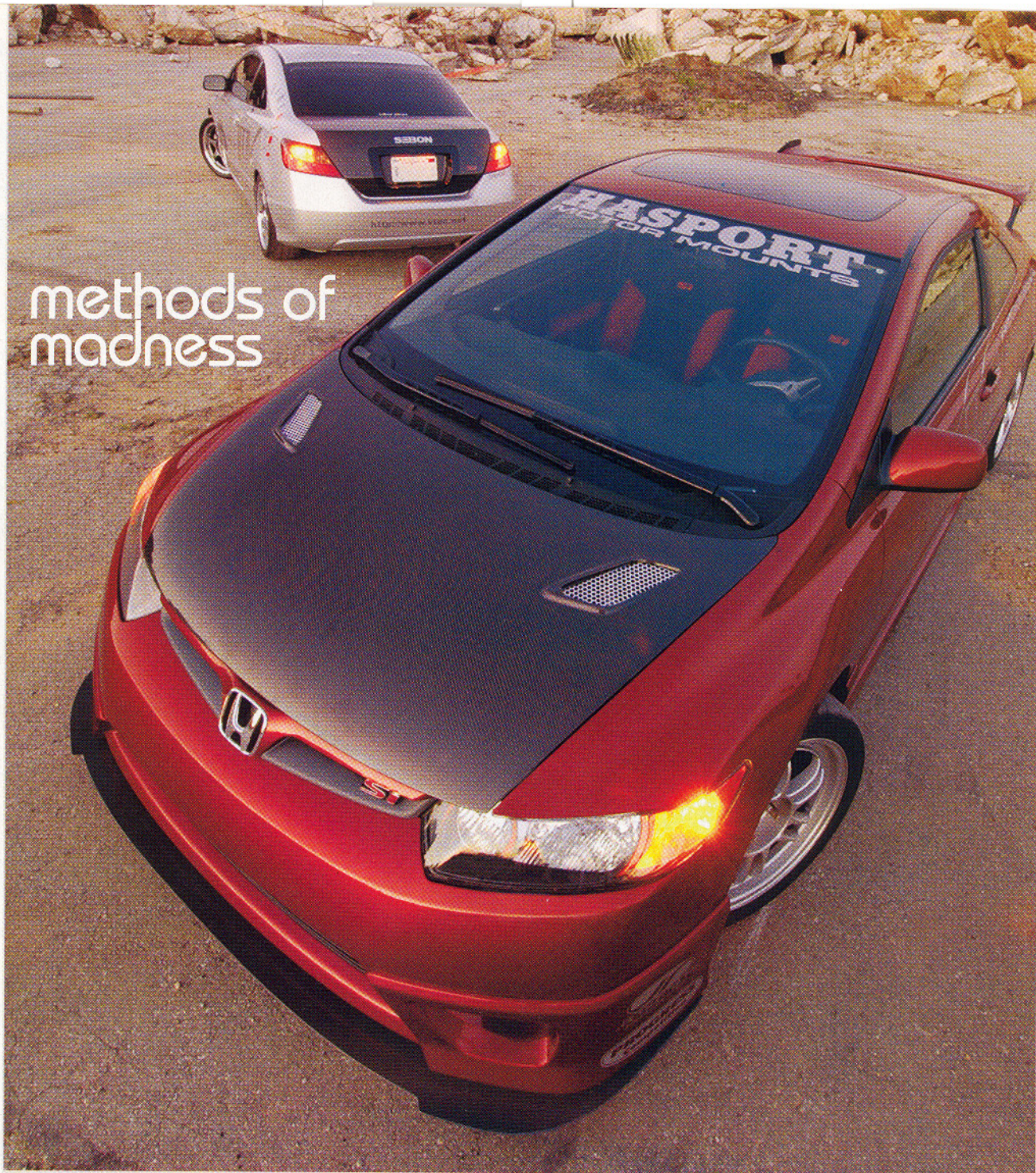
Two Takes on Tuning the Latest Version of Honda's Icon



BY JAMES TATE • PHOTOGRAPHY ERIC SIMPSON

The new Civic Si is proof positive that Honda hasn't completely forgotten about the American enthusiast market. In fact, for the first time in history, it's the Japanese who are awash in jealousy, wishing for a product that can only be had on the other side of the ocean.





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And it's about time.

The streamlined Civic Si comes fitted with Honda's screaming K20 and a 6-speed gearbox, mated with a downright plush interior. At just under \$20,000, the new Si cramps the RSX-S' style more than a little bit, and certainly puts the Civic name back into the vocabulary of small-car enthusiasts.

As good as the new Si feels though, to drive one is to see it as a

AS THE TWO CARS IDLE INTO PIT LANE, ADHESIVE R-COMPOUND RUBBER TEARS CHUNKS FROM THE ASPHALT, SHOWERING THE WHEEL WELLS



great jumping-off point for something better. The handling of the stock car is certainly confidence inspiring, but keep pushing around the corners and understeer will eventually rear its ugly head.

And while it's certainly no slouch, the competent chassis of the Si could easily handle a syringe full of torque. Around the US, there are already numerous Civics that fill the aftermarket doctor's orders.

There was an age when enthusiasts had to wait months before seeing extensively modified versions of brand-new cars. But those days are long gone. Honda is one of a few manufacturers that are beginning to see the sense in giving pre-production cars to select tuners, so that the buying public can see the aftermarket potential when the cars are introduced.

Hasport and Temple of



VTEC/Church Automotive are two of the tuners Honda deemed competent enough to be given pre-production cars, and their solutions to injecting the Civic Si with enough performance to make us cringe couldn't be more different.

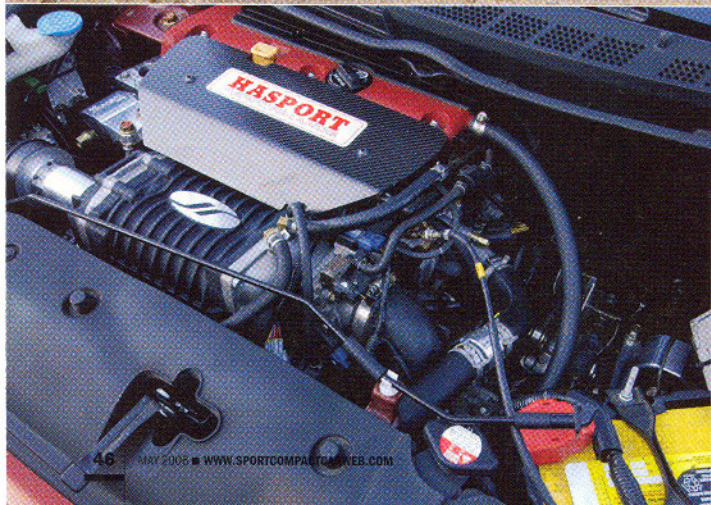
As the two cars idle into pit lane, adhesive R-compound rubber tears chunks from the asphalt, showering the wheel wells and creating a familiar sound only an addict could refer to as music to the ears. The sharp smell of race gas permeates the crisp morning air as throats are cleared on the two K-series engines. It's go time.

A full-force burnout through the

first three gears isn't something typically ascribed to a car with the Honda moniker planted on the hood. But then neither is an instant surge of torque that begins to squish you into the seat at about 2000rpm. Or, for that matter, neither is the high-pitched whine that suddenly erupts from under the hood when the loud pedal is depressed.

In Hasport's insane take on Honda's Si, even gummy Toyo RAs struggle to find grip in anything less than fourth gear. Before there is time to think "holy shit, I'm going to die," the Pi Technologies digital dashboard lights up like a

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Christmas tree, indicating that if the car isn't shifted soon, the whole boosted contraption will be catapulted through a time/space continuum. The RIGHT NOW torque delivery of the seasoned K24 is utterly addicting, and moreover, hugely usable on a daily basis.

This is what happens when a 2.4-liter TSX engine is shoehorned into the Civic engine bay, then supercharged with a roots-type blower, courtesy of Jackson Racing. More exactly, it's what happens when the above is coupled with the stock, short-ratio transmission, intended for the high-strung K20.

The Hasport car got going, fast. It generated so much torque that the fastest way down the 1320 was to forget about first gear altogether and launch in second. Doing so eliminated the need for an addi-

ing through the factory muffler.

A Honda purist will tell you that forced-induction is blasphemy, and that Honda engines are designed to swing tachometer needles into the stratosphere. Whether they roar in the back of Formula-1 cars or sit idly in your driveway, they apply less torque over a longer rev range to make their acceleration times. It's just what they do.

So there exists a substantial contingent that further emphasizes the original Honda formula when tuning their cars. More revs, more lift, longer duration, freer flow, and more noise. Much more noise.

Enter the Temple of VTEC Civic Si. Sporting IPS K2 cams and valvesprings and a DC Sports 62mm exhaust, this is a 4-cylinder whose exhaust pulses make the ground shake like a herd of stam-

THIS IS A 4-CYLINDER WHOSE EXHAUST PULSES MAKE THE GROUND SHAKE LIKE A HERD OF STAMPEDING ELEPHANTS.

tional shift, which net a few 10ths of a second by the end of the strip, for a 13.6 second run at 108mph.

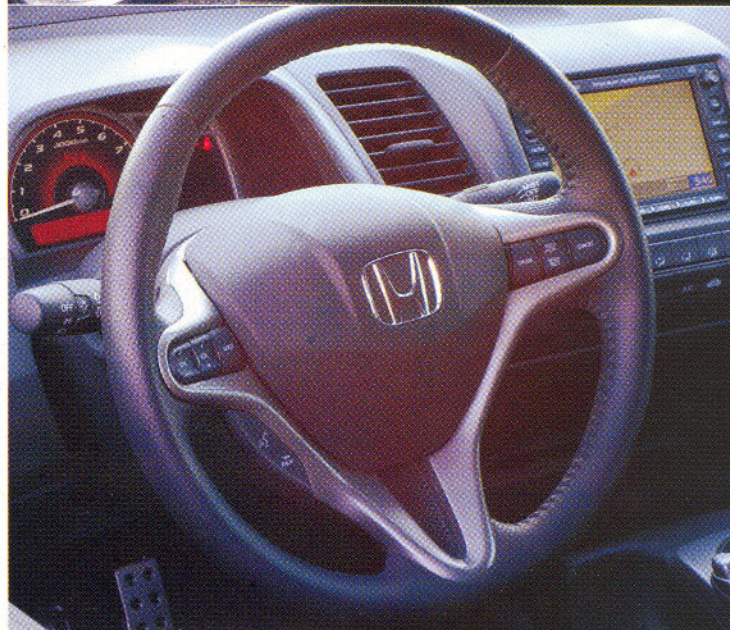
The lack of an analog tachometer meant that dialing the proper revs up was done by ear, followed by careful feathering of the throttle to keep wheelspin to a minimum. After banging through the lower gears in what seemed like one continuous up and down rowing motion, the sequential shift lights made dead accurate shifting a breeze.

The remarkable thing is that the car stays almost as quiet as stock through the whole charade, exhal-

ping elephants.

But it makes power in traditional Honda fashion, which means it's a little tough to launch without the prospect of falling on its face. Once enough revs were dialed in though, the naturally-aspirated car screamed down the drag strip, shifts cracked off at an indicated 8500rpm, which plunked the engine right into VTEC territory in each new gear. When the dust settled, the car eeked out a 14.4 second run at 101mph.

Having settled the quarter-mile battle in a flurry of supercharged tire smoke, we headed off to wind





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the two beefed-up Hondas through the orange cones that delineate our handling tests.

The skidpad is always a daunting task for a front-wheel drive car, no matter how well it's dialed in. A big part of extracting a fast time from the circle is adjustability under power, something that's inherently impossible in a car whose drive wheels are the same ones responsible for steering.

The two tuned Civics were no exception to the rule. An odd alignment on the Temple of VTEC car resulted in a quicker clockwise rotation than counter-clockwise rotation around the skidpad, the opposite of what you might expect in a left-

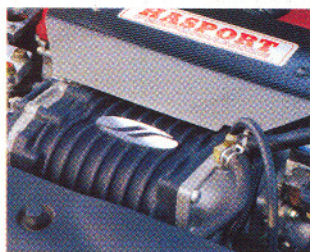
hand drive car.

With a good amount of footwork and careful steering input, the Temple of VTEC car could be circled within a hair as quickly as the Hasport Civic, thanks to its cheater-slick tires.

But in the end, the Hasport car just was more stable, like the steering wheel could be locked onto a line and the car would trace the same circle over and over again.

So far, the testing has been tough for front-wheel drive cars. In a drag race, weight is shifted rearward off the front wheels. Extracting a low e.t. isn't easy when the resulting wheel-spinning frenzy has to be managed.





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It wasn't until the second-half of the day that the duo began to put smiles on our faces, with both cars really shining on the slalom, exhibiting user-friendly adjustability and keen turn-in.

Getting a consistent initial entry speed out of the Hasport car proved

on the Temple of VTEC car made it easier to rotate through the cones than the Hasport car, which in the end netted the TOV car a 73.1mph average speed—a testament to the Avon Tech R's, considering that the Hasport car ran on Toyo RA-1's.

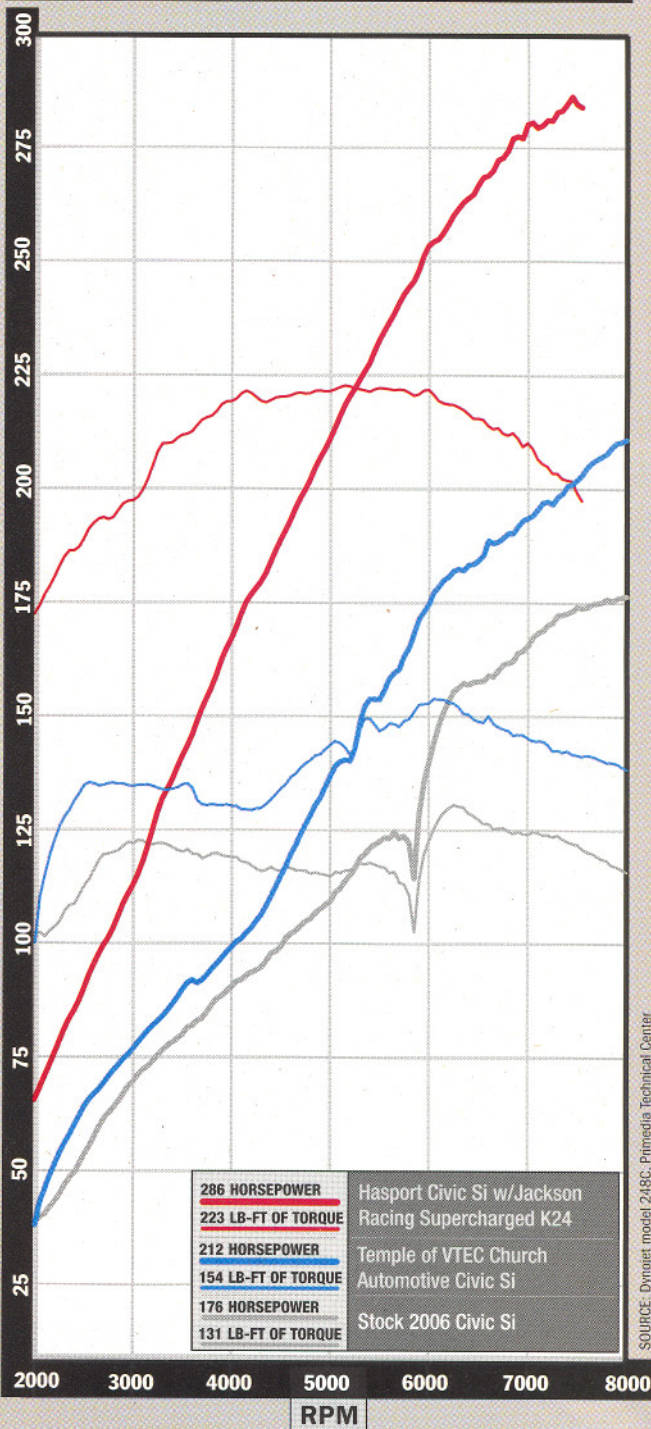
We suspect that with more time spent tuning, both cars would have danced through the cones a bit more gracefully, but being an entirely new chassis meant that some guesswork was involved in the setup. Perhaps with around 10psi more air pressure in the rear tires, an extra edge of performance could have been actualized during the measured handling tests.

Without question, both cars came to life on the autocross course, an environment in which small, modified cars should excel. Once a couple of laps were burned into the virgin race rubber, the taut suspension setups began to make perfect sense, working brilliantly

to be difficult, due to the lack of a speedometer, and an occasionally erratic tachometer. Thanks to the added oomph provided by the supercharger though, any lost speed was easily made up while shooting through the last turn and through the exit cones.

The larger 27mm anti-roll bar

Tuned 2006 Honda Civic Si vs. Stock



SOURCE: Dynojet model 248C, Primedia Technical Center

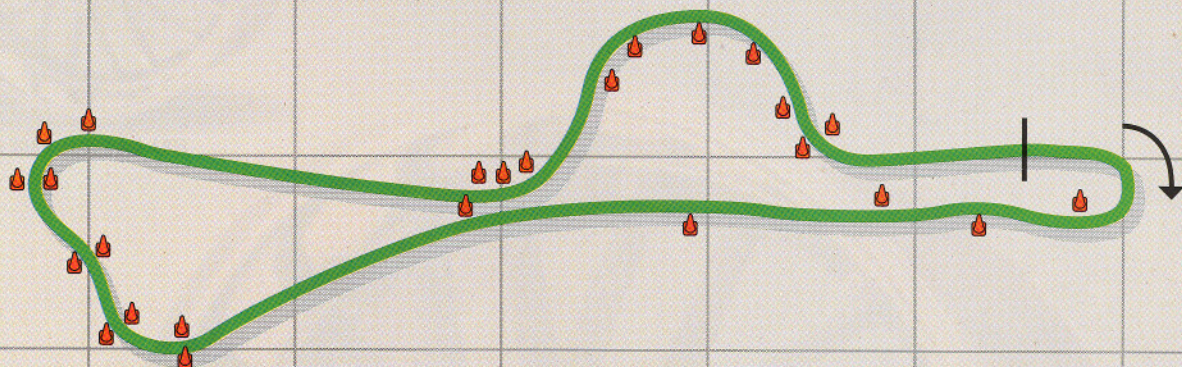
with sticky tires.

Both cars responded satisfyingly well to trail-braking, particularly on our long, constant radius skid-pad corner, where the technique allowed the temporary elimination of understeer. The TOV car was able to take the weight shift and run with it, maintaining a considerable

slip angle most of the way through the long corner, the stiff anti-roll bar lifting the inside rear wheel, a la old-school GTi.

And we thought that was great, until we figured out that the Hasport car could be broken into an even more ludicrous yaw angle, and then be bailed out at the last

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	1/4-MILE e.t. (seconds)	1/4-MILE TRAP SPEED (mph)	80-0 MPH BRAKING DISTANCE (feet)	SKID PAD LATERAL G (g)	700 FT SLALOM SLALOM (mph)	AUTOCROSS AVG. TIME (seconds)	AUTOCROSS BEST TIME (seconds)
HASPORT K24 JACKSON RACING '06 SI	13.6	108	203	0.98	71.6	39.59	40.12
TEMPLE OF VTEC CHURCH AUTOMOTIVE '06 SI	14.4	101	208	0.96	73.1	40.24	40.46

minute with instant-on super-charged torque. Stab the brakes, whip the tail around and fling through the ensuing hard left. Now we're cooking with gas.

A portion of the autocross incorporated a chunk of the same slalom used to test the cars earlier in the day. This time, with tires up to temperature, both cars were able to hammer through the cones at full throttle before diving down on the brakes for the tightest corner of our course. The next section incorporated a set of tight chicanes that put the Progress suspension to the test, which was handled with aplomb.

In the end, both cars are a tremendously fun time, but they do both compromise the everyday civility of the Civic. The TOV car will leave your ears ringing like a bomb blast, but offers a fully functional dashboard and navigation system,

as well as an analog tachometer. Oh, and a speedometer. Those are great to have in the real world.

The Hasport car is nice and quiet aside from the electric whine from the supercharger, but unfortunately sacrifices the use of the stock analog tachometer, speedometer and even the navigation system. Hasport reports that issues of compatibility will soon be remedied, so drivers will be able to tell how fast they're going.

The two Civic Si's started with identical formulas, and couldn't have ended up with more different outcomes. Each is a predator around the autocross cones. The whine from under the hood of the Hasport car will make the most seasoned car nerd explode into schoolgirl giggles, and the roar from the TOV car exhaust is reminiscent of an uncorked streetbike on full boil. ■

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HASPORT '06 CIVIC Si

ENGINE

Engine Code: K24A2

Type: 2354cc inline-four, aluminum block and head

External Mods: Jackson Racing RSX supercharger kit, DC Sports race header, '05 RSX intake cams, modified cam gear adjuster, AEM CAI, Hasport intake manifold adaptor plate

Engine Management Mods: Hondata K-Pro, RC Engineering 650cc/min injectors

DRIVETRAIN

Layout: Transverse front engine, front-wheel drive

Drivetrain Mods: Clutchmasters Stage 4 clutch

SUSPENSION

Front: Progress coilovers

Rear: Progress coilovers, Progress 22mm anti-roll bar, SPC adjustable upper control arms

BRAKES

Front: Fastbrakes 11.2-in. 4-piston calipers, Wilwood pads, Goodrich stainless-steel braided lines

EXTERNAL

Wheels: 17x8-in. Enkei RPF1

Tires: Toyo Proxes RA1, 235/40R-17

Body: Seibon CF hood, CF wing supports, HFP body kit, APR custom splitter

TEMPLE OF VTEC/CHURCH AUTOMOTIVE '06 CIVIC SI

ENGINE

Engine Code: K20Z3

Type: Inline-four, aluminum block and head

External Mods: IPS K2 cams, IPS valvesprings, IPS titanium retainers and keepers, AEM CAI, DC Sports race header and 62mm exhaust

Engine Management Mods: Prototype Hondata reflash

DRIVETRAIN

Layout: Transverse front engine, front-wheel drive

SUSPENSION

Front: Progress coilovers

Rear: Progress coilovers, ASR adjustable 27mm anti-roll bar

BRAKES

Front: Stock

Rear: Stock

EXTERNAL

Wheels: 17x8-in. SSR Competitor

Tires: Avon Tech R, 225/45R-17

Body: Seibon CF hood and trunk lid