

Merkur Club of America

The Ford Sierra, with its sturdy bodyshell, Independent Rear Suspension and aerodynamic shape, made it an ideal candidate for saloon car racing.



While the XR4i's engine could never be tuned to the point where it would be competitive, it was the XR4Ti which immediately made a name for itself and showed the world what the car was made of. The XR4Ti of the Andy Rouse and Egenberger teams won European Touring car championships in 1985 & 1986. All the more incredible was that in the world of high tech engines, this was being achieved with an engine originally designed in the 1960s for the Pinto, and an engine which was never designed with turbocharging, or the thought of producing over 300hp, in mind.

"Detroit thunder is being replaced by turbo whine"

Turbo magazine January 1988

The successes in Europe were being repeated with the Trans-Am and IMSA series on the other side of the Atlantic. Ford enlisted the help of the legendary Jack Roush, who with the help of Bob Riley developed the Trans-Am Merkur XR4Ti in an incredible seven months. In 1984, the Roush team campaigned the as yet unproven XR4 alongside Capris. Pete Halsmer was selected as the lead XR4 driver, and Scott Preutt, who in the 1984 season was driving Capris for the Roush team, joined him for the 1985 season. All the hard work paid off with Pete Halsmer's XR4 achieving its first win at Road America in July 1984. This was the first

win of many for the Roush XR4 team who won the 1985-1988 Manufacturer's Trans-Am and IMSA GTO championships, beating out Corvettes, Camaros and Porsches. In a field of Detroit iron, the stiffest competition came from another German built turbocharged four cylinder - the Porsche 944.

An interesting footnote to Merkur racing history is Rick Byrnes' challenge to win the World Land Speed Record for production four cylinder cars. Rick competed in the attempt at Bonneville's famous salt flats for six years before winning the record in 1998, with an average speed of 204.952 MPH. In an era of high technology and 'ain't no replacement for displacement' mentality, this was an incredible feat for a car that was introduced thirteen years before and an engine which had its roots in the 1970s.

"May the boost be with you"
Ryan Donovan

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