

'96 Corvette Grand Sport

Back in 1963, the Grand Sport idea was simple-radically lighten and alter a Corvette to take on and beat the Shelby Cobra. Chevy planned to produce 125 of the beasts powered by all-aluminum 377ci small-blocks, but they only made five, which never worked quite right. Still, the idea was so glorious that



The big white stripe on blue paint evokes memories of the first Grand Sports. Note the rear fender flares installed to cover the P315/35ZR17 Goodyear Eagle GS-C tires swiped from the late ZR-1 for use on the Grand Sport coupe.

the original Grand Sports are generally considered the most desirable Corvettes ever built.

Now, 33 years later, the idea is far different. The '96 Grand Sport isn't a race car but an evocation of that long-ago racing legend. Only 1000 Grand Sports will be built as either coupes or convertibles, and all will wear Admiral Blue Metallic paint and red hash marks on the left front fender. They will ride on black, five-spoke aluminum wheels. Coupes will get the late ZR-1's wide P315/35ZR17 Goodyear Eagle GS-C tires but will hide them under subdued fender flares instead of a widened rear end. Convertibles will ride on conventional P285/40ZR17 reartires.

The real star of the Grand Sport is the new LT4 version of the familiar LT1 small-block V8. Thanks to a 10.8:1 compression ratio, a more aggressive cam, hollow-stem valves and a new free-flow fuel-injection system, the LT4 produces an athletic 330 horsepower (up 30 from the LT1). A red intake manifold,

red spark plug wires and red Grand Sport lettering on the throttle-body cover distinguish the engine visually. In addition, the redline rises to 6300 rpm, and the tach reads all the way to 8000 rpm.

As nice as the Grand Sport is, the best news is that the LT4 is available on all '96 Corvettes as long as they're equipped with the six-speed manual transmission. Automatics continue with the 300hp LT1.

In addition to the Grand Sport, the final year of production for the fourth-generation Corvette will be marked with special Collector Edition coupes and convertibles. All Collector Editions get special Sebring Silver paint, five-spoke wheels, detailed brake calipers and emblems. Order the automatic and you get the LT1, but order the six-speed manual and you get the same 330hp LT4 that's in the Grand Sport.



By bumping up the compression ratio, installing a new cam and revising the intake system, the LT4 gets another 30 horsepower and the name LT4 in the '96 Corvette. Beyond its distinctive red trim, the LT4 assembly features a specially prepared crank, a roller timing chain, nodular-iron main bearings and an upgraded head gasket. Displacement, though, remains 5.7 liters, and the valvetrain operation is still through good old pushrods.



That front spoiler wouldn't last one trip through the Hardee's drive-up lane, but the ride height and stance of the S10 AWD are real-world usable. Based on a 4WD pickup, the front suspension has a wider stance than 2WD versions. A set of 16-inch '92 Camaro wheels were used on this truck, and a modification of the design will be offered on the regular '96 production S10 with the ZQ8 handling package.

S10 All-Wheel-Drive

Deep within the bowels of GM Small Truck Engineering, in the Advanced Product Development Group, a small group of engineers decided to play with an S10. The result is an all-wheel-drive demon packing an all-aluminum V6. If it looks like a Syclone replacement, smells like a Syclone replacement and goes like a Syclone replacement, we say put it into production.

Starting with an aluminum 90-degree Vortec V6 block from the GM Performance Parts bin, the small-truck guys stuffed it full of 11.0:1 pistons and topped it with aluminum heads and a Halley Projection 4 fuel-injection system. It hasn't been on the dyno yet, but 315 horsepower seems a reasonable estimate of output despite the fact that it displaces a puny 4.3 liters. But exhaling through a true dual exhaust and a DynoMax dual-in/dual-out muffler, it's nowhere near emissions-legal.

The idea is tantalizing, though, and we wish GM would investigate the possibilities.

The engine sends its power back to the stock New Venture five-speed manual transmission, then back to the same Borg-Warner transfer case used in the all-wheel-drive big-block truck also featured here. From there it goes to the stock rear end, which wears the disc brakes from a Z28. Up front, the Corvette front discs were adapted to the stock S10 4WD hubs. The front suspension