

ROAD & TRACK

DISSECTED

HIGH SPRUNG

THE SPRING THAT STARTED NASCAR'S HORSEPOWER WAR.

Twenty years ago, valve springs were the Achilles' heel of NASCAR V-8 engines, often failing if revs spun past 8000.

In 1996, Performance Springs Inc., a small Michigan firm, started manufacturing higher-quality valve springs, like the ones pictured here. Freed from worries about springs cracking and breaking, stock-car-engine builders started a horsepower and rpm war. In 2004, the massive engines were spinning to over 10,500 rpm and a thundering 900 hp. By the time NASCAR stepped in with a rule that limited rpm to about 9500, the number of engine builders had shrunk to the handful that had the resources to keep up. And it all started with a simple steel-wire coil.

—LARRY WEBSTER

