

THE GOLF GTI:



By Jay Amestoy

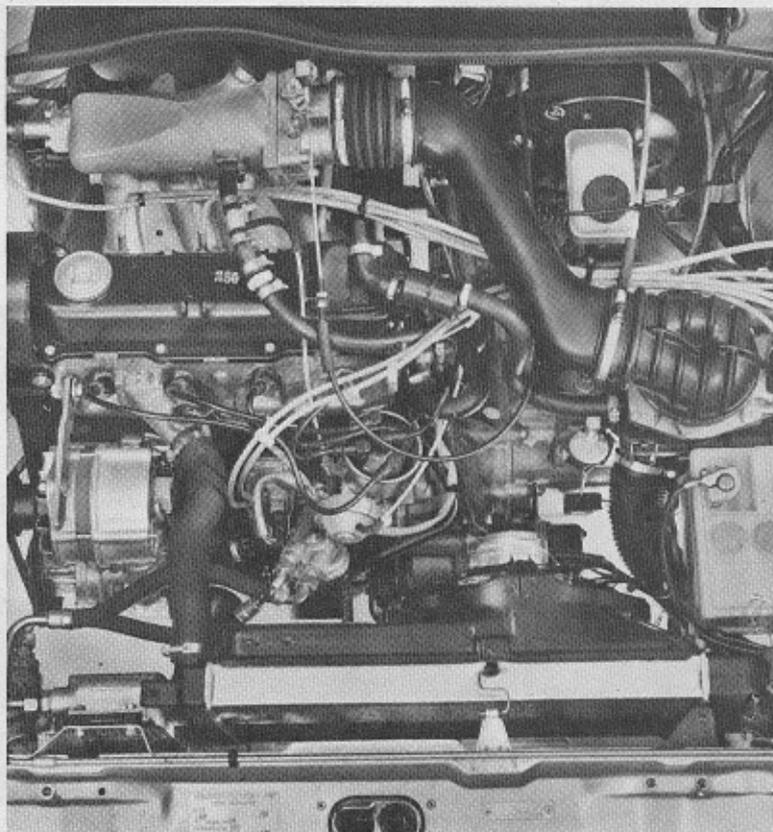
VW's Fastest Production Sedan

Let me start by saying you can't buy the car shown on these pages. If you're a Rabbit enthusiast, you may not want to read any further. What I have to say about this particular car might only cause frustration. But then again, if you enjoy vicarious pleasure you may appreciate it.

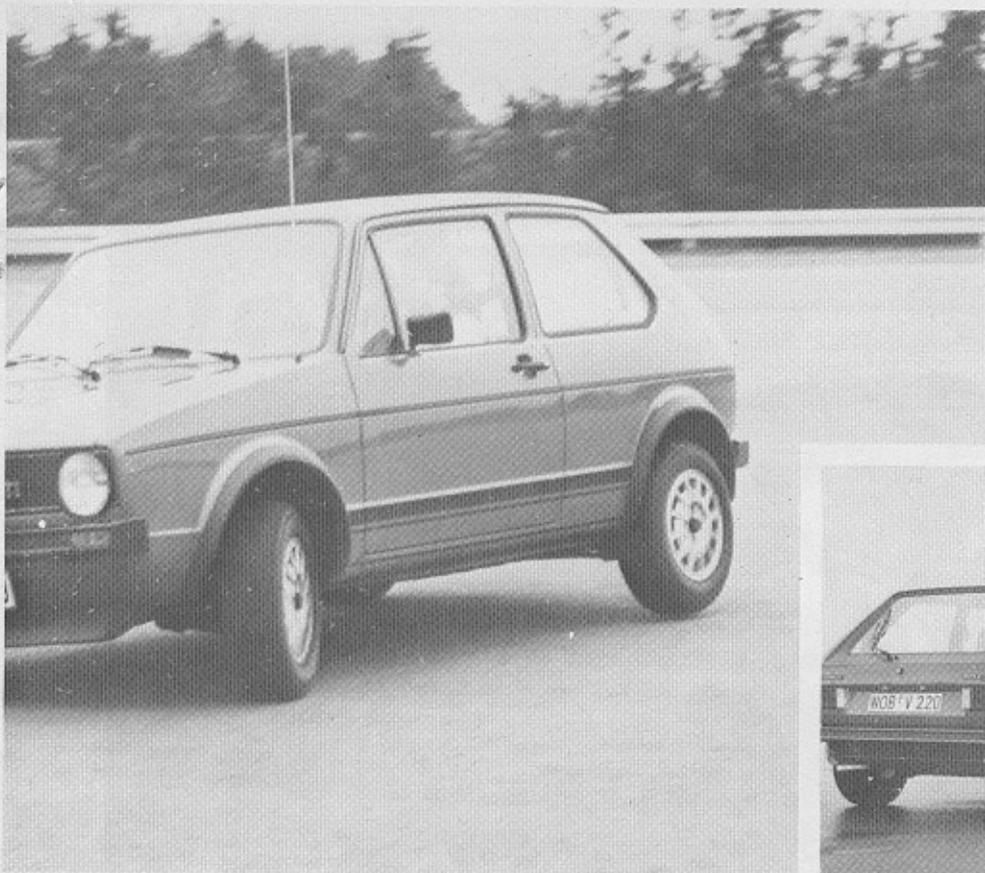
The Rabbit pictured here is called the Golf GTI. It is the most advanced sports sedan ever offered by Volkswagen. It is also the fastest. The GTI is a Golf (Rabbit) with all of the stops pulled out. It represents a serious attempt by Volkswagen to put their name at the forefront of local and club racing and rallying. With 5000 units already built, the GTI has been homologated as a Group 1 touring car.

After driving a GTI around Volkswagenwerk AG's proving grounds at Ehra-Lessien, 15 miles north of Wolfsburg, I can attest to the car's racing attributes. Without question, it handles better than any other front-wheel-drive sedan I have ever driven. Included in the GTI's list of standard equipment are front and rear anti-roll bars, heavy-duty shocks and shortened, stiffer springs. The car sits almost an inch lower overall and is fitted with 5½-inch-wide steel rims and 175/70HR-13 Pirelli radials. Surprisingly, the GTI's ride has not suffered. It's taut but not noticeably harsher than a stock Golf. Cornering ability, however, has been dramatically improved. It takes curves as if it were on rails. When pressed hard through a tight corner, it'll begin to understeer and lift an inside rear wheel, but I found this difficult to provoke.

In addition to the suspension mods, the GTI has another surprise for would-be challengers: a 110-hp (DIN) fuel-injected engine. This is basically the same K-Jetronic-equipped 1588cc powerplant we get in the States, but it's devoid of all of the smog plumbing. It also utilizes special 9.5:1 Mahle pistons, special bearings and an external oil cooler mounted alongside the radiator. The GTI will accelerate from rest to 60 mph in just under nine seconds and



GTI powerplant is equipped with 9.5:1 pistons, Bosch K-Jetronic CIS fuel injection and external oil cooler. It lacks federal emission controls.



Black trim, black side stripes, plastic wheelwell extensions, 5½-inch-wide steel rims and 175-13 radials are all part of GTI package.

There's also a Scirocco GTI. It's slightly faster than Golf because of its better aerodynamics, but it's more expensive and not nearly as popular.



stretch on out to 110+ mph before leveling off. The motor is completely tractable and smooth whether pulling from 2000 in fourth or running continuously at the 6100-rpm redline.

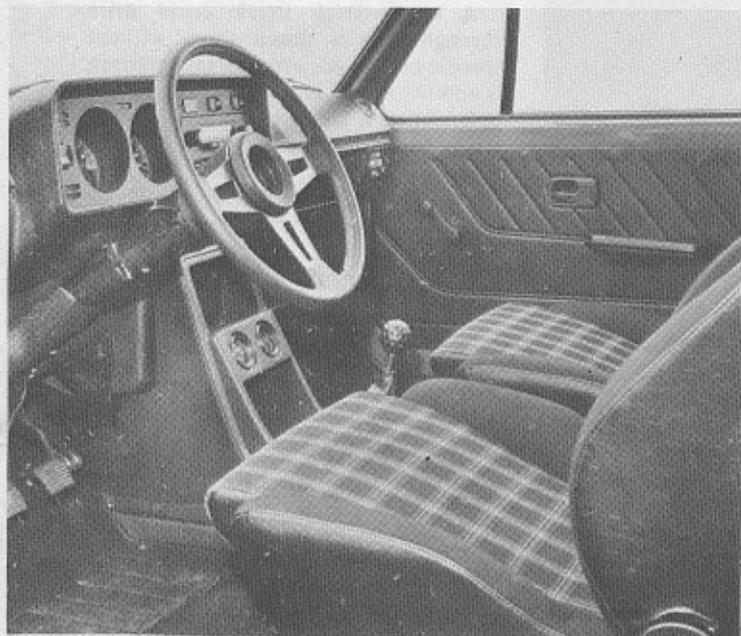
Stopping power is provided by a pair of servo-assisted ventilated disc brakes up front and drums at the rear. I couldn't get them hot enough to fade.

The driver is well taken care of in the GTI with Recaro-type sport seats and speedo, tach, water and oil temperature gauges set into a black dashboard and center console. There's also a padded three-spoke steering wheel, full carpeting, black headliner and sun visors and, of course, a black golf ball gearshift knob.

Since the German government is not especially fond of high-performance cars, Volkswagen purposely kept the

exterior of the GTI very subtle. It is available in three colors: Mars red, diamond silver metallic and, on special order, black. All of the trim, including the bumpers, is painted black, a functional chin spoiler has been added up front, and there's a rear wiper/washer system out back. Black side stripes, red-framed radiator grille (with black-out VW emblem) and wider plastic fender flares are also featured. As VW says in their sales literature, "Those who are in the know can readily identify the car on the road."

We had hoped to have some part numbers for you, but we hadn't received them before we went to press. If you'll tune in next issue, we'll tell you how you may be able to obtain, with great difficulty, some of the GTI's performance mods for your own Rabbit.



The author beside the GTI he tested in Wolfsburg.

Sports seats, console with oil temperature gauge and clock, padded wheel and tach are all standard on Golf GTI.