

MONSTER ATTACKS

Nobuhiro Tajima Sets a New Record at Pikes Peak

STORY BY PETER BROCK >> PHOTOS BY GAYLE BROCK

It took Nobuhiro Tajima, the man Pikes Peak fans endearingly call "Monster," 20 long years of dedication and frustration on Colorado's famed granite monolith to realize his life's dream of breaking the tantalizing record set by New Zealander Rod Millen back in 1994. As good as his run up the mountain was, though, Pikes Peak's fickle weather again resisted the Japanese climber's main goal of breaking the Peaks' fabled "Ten-Minute Barrier." It was just a matter of two seconds on the final yards at the top of the 14,110-foot summit that foiled Tajima's ultimate dream of pushing his 1,000-plus-horsepowered Suzuki XL7 to the top in under 10 minutes. "It had rained on top the two nights before the climb," said Tajima after his run, "and the course was very slippery and dangerous. Now, after looking at the run data, I know I could have gone faster had the road been as good as it was in practice. I lost about 0.5 seconds per kilometer from Devil's Playground to the top."

Roughly figuring the top four miles, or about 6.5 kilometers, Tajima's estimate works out to about 3.5 seconds under his new record of 10:01.408. Tajima vowed to return next year to try to beat the 10-minute barrier and says this year's record-breaking run has given him several ideas on how to improve his time.

THE RECORD BOOKS

The previous record of 10:04, set with Rod Millen's specially built, 4WD, turbocharged Toyota "Celica," had held for 13 years in spite of continued onslaughts by second-generation hill-climb locals Paul Dallenbach and David Donner. These two drove open-wheeled racers and wanted the record every bit as much as Tajima. Even Millen himself returned several times—in a theoretically faster car of his own design—to try and break his own record, but the mountain always refused to give up the last-few precious seconds.

