




BY DAN BARNES • PHOTOS BY BRIAN BLADES, MARC URBANO AND THE AUTHOR

SUBARU LEGACY 2.5 GT LIMITED

Simple changes that work

The all-new 2005 Legacy 2.5 GT is among the more impressive sports sedans out there today, although it has stayed somewhat under the radar. It offers turbo-charged performance and leather-upholstered luxury for under \$30,000. With most of its European competitors costing close to \$10,000 more, the 250-hp Legacy GT runs with the best of them, with all-wheel drive traction. We

believe the Legacy has as much performance potential as the WRX if you can find a way to unleash it. We barely scratched the surface of the Legacy's ultimate potential, but were able to find some impressive gains with the simplest of modifications. We focused on improving handling with wheels, tires, suspension and brakes, then tinted the windows and enhanced the interior with pieces from Subaru

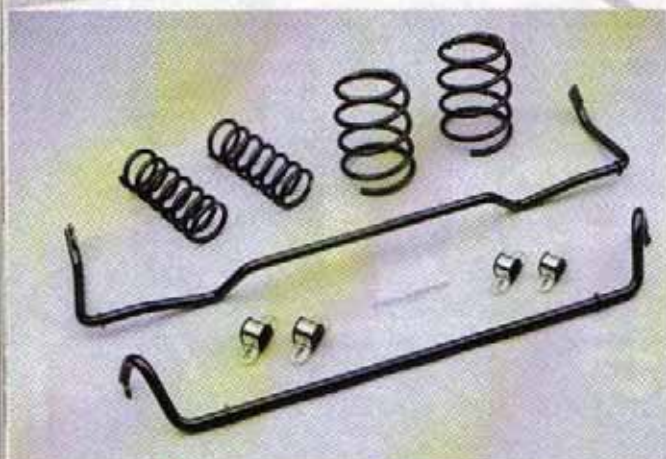
ALTERNATIVE	 0-60: 5.5 sec	 1/4 MILE: 14.1 sec
	 SLALOM: 69.1 mph	 SKIDPAD: 0.93g
	 60-0: 112 ft	 80-0: 285 ft

Performance Tuning

BBS's forged street wheels are typically slightly heavier than the lightest wheels on the market, but they're lighter and rounder than most wheels and absolutely bomb-



■ BBS' one-piece forged RE wheel combines beauty, strength and light weight. Dunlop's SP Super Sport Race is affordable R-compound rubber with a tread pattern modeled after tires used in the German Touring Car Championship (DTM).



■ The Progress Group's flexible California manufacturing facility often allows it to be the first to have production parts ready for new applications, including this one. Progress' springs and anti-roll bars gave the car perfect stance and enough roll stiffness to be able to make good use of its tires.



■ The Legacy's rear suspension is all new, a multilink independent arrangement with complex geometry.



■ The rear is still supported by a spring/shock strut assembly, which is held by three nuts in the trunk and a large bolt at the bottom. It's quick and simple to change.

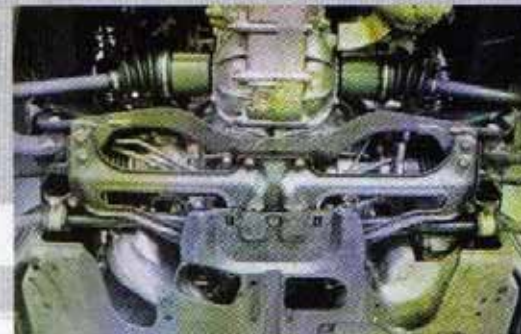


■ The Legacy uses MacPherson struts in front, just like a WRX. In fact, Progress uses its WRX springs and anti-roll bar for the front of the Legacy, and they fit perfectly. Use a spring compressor whenever changing springs. Shoreline Motoring's wall-mount compressor is as safe as you can be.



■ Both Progress anti-roll bars are adjustable. This is the rear bar at its soft setting. Both front and rear were set to full stiff for testing.

■ Changing the front anti-roll bar is a little more involved than the rear, but none of the braces that must be removed supports anything but itself, so the job is still easy.



||||||| SPEED GARAGE

proof structurally. The RE is BBS's newest forged style, originally designed for racing Porsches. In this 18 x 8-in. Subaru application, it has a 50-mm offset, but still maintains enough caliper extension clearance for the biggest brakes you can find. Many aftermarket wheels for Subarus use offsets as low as 42 mm to obtain caliper clearance, but that can lead to torque steer and fender rubbing issues. Subaru chose this RE for the Impreza WRX STi S203, so it's JDM groovy, too.

We once saw Dunlop's SP Super Sport Race tire set fast time at a Porsche track-day event against more powerful cars and thought for the purposes of this project it would be the perfect excuse to try on a set. A call was made to our guy at The Tire Rack and the BBS REs showed up two days later shod with Dunlops.

The Progress Group never fails to set a car's handling balance just the way we like it. Performance dampers aren't yet available for the rear of the Legacy, so we only in-



stalled springs and anti-roll bars from Progress.

For a brake upgrade, we had Subaru send out a set of Impreza WRX STi front brakes, because we'd been told the parts were interchangeable. That was true, but we later realized we needed more and more parts to make the conversion work. As the test numbers show, this setup works well and looks even better. If you're at a bone yard looking at a discarded WRX STi and can make a deal for the brakes, definitely hook it up.

Shoreline Motoring is a high-

end wheel and tire store near *SPEED Magazine's* offices with experienced suspension technicians and an outstanding customer feedback rating by The Tire Rack's preferred installer program. We called on Shoreline for the suspension and brake installations, as well as window tinting, knowing it would all be done properly. And we weren't disappointed.

SPT (Subaru Performance Tuning) is Subaru of America's in-house aftermarket arm, similar to Toyota's TRD U.S.A. SPT parts can be purchased through any Subaru

■ With a few simple changes, the Legacy posted better skidpad and slalom numbers than an Impreza WRX STi.

dealer, but SPT Authorized Dealers are set up to provide a little better service, including Internet business. SPT offers performance parts for other models, but nothing for the Legacy at the time of writing. We still dressed it up with a MOMO shift knob to match the factory steering wheel, STi shift pattern emblem, STi pedal pad set and STi side sill plate set.

In spite of the basic nature of this car's upgrades, it works really well. We didn't touch anything that affects acceleration, but it ran about two tenths quicker to 60 mph and in the quarter than the last stock Legacy 2.5 GT Limited tested by *Road & Track*. Braking distance dropped from 135 and 238 ft. for 60 and 80 mph, respectively, to a mere 112 and 205 ft. A lot of that is due to grippier tires, but it now takes about five consecutive stops from 80 mph for any fade to be noticed. The WRX STi, with less weight and perfectly engineered front-to-rear brake bias, needs 111 and 193 ft. of tarmac to stop from 60 and 80.

Our whirlwind program achieved phenomenal increases in handling performance. The Legacy's skidpad increased from 0.79g to 0.93g and slalom speed shot up from 64.9 mph to 69.1 mph. How does "better than a WRX STi" sound? The last time *Road &*

Track tested one, it did 0.88g on the skidpad and 68.4 mph in the slalom. Even more impressive, this Legacy has significantly better steering feel than the STi and exhibits textbook handling on smooth surfaces. At the limit on neutral throttle, it oversteers slightly. Lifting off steps the tail out and getting back on the gas straightens things out with ideal all-wheel-drive goodness. All the responses feel linear and easily controllable. Those who have driven it compare it to a BMW, saying "I'd own this car."

If we had more time and more parts available, we'd have taken this project further. For example, the car would handle bumps a lot better if it had performance dampers. A different turbo and some attention to flow paths could gain another hundred horsepower, taking it from a 330i killer to an M3 abuser.

Perhaps another day. Modern Image (Huntington Beach, California) has transformed it into a show car with vinyl graphics, and *Road & Track Road Gear* has already reworked the in-car entertainment system. If you want to see the car in the flesh, then visit Subaru's booth at the 2005 Hot Import Nights show circuit. To find an event near you, visit www.hotimportnights.com. If you like what you see, sign up to win the car at www.roadandtrack.com/subaru. **S**

SOURCES

WHEELS

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