



MR. CLEAN

TEAM BANANA'S TRIPLE-DUTY RANGER

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SOME OF US ARE CONTENT TO WASH OUR TRUCKS EVERY NOW AND THEN. THE WORST OFFENDERS ARE THOSE WHOSE WASHINGS COINCIDE WITH WET WEATHER. FORTUNATELY FOR HIS 2005 FORD RANGER, EDDIE VELARDE GUESSTIMATES HE SPENDS TWO DAYS CLEANING FOR EVERY DAY IN THE DIRT. THIS RANGER IS CLEAN ENOUGH TO EAT OFF OF, BUT REST ASSURED EDDIE'S NOT AFRAID TO GET IT DIRTY.

Eddie's Ranger is more than just clean. It's a triple-duty machine. Triple duty? Yes, and here's the breakdown: it gets driven to work and other menial daily driver tasks. Next, it gets flogged at high speeds across the Mojave. Finally, thanks to flexy long-travel suspension and fully functional four-wheel drive, this Ranger is quite capable in creepy-crawly low-range situations. Daily driver, high-speed prunner, and low-range trail crawler all in one: triple duty.

What about the banana part? "I chose yellow because it stands out for better or for worse," Eddie informs. "Everybody has a white truck; yellow is more unique." He continues: "By chance some friends and I ended up with yellow cars, so people joked about us looking like a team of yellow cars. 'Team Banana' was a perfect name. Someone made decals, and I've been part of Team Banana ever since."

Follow along as we showcase the details on this truck. After all, it's the details that make the Team Banana Ranger so a-peeling. **OR**



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▲ This truck came into Eddie's hands stone stock, and has been built in stages as inspiration, time, and cash began to flow. For the front bumper, Eddie turned to Tom McKenzie and the crew at S.I. Motorsports. It doesn't get much more meticulous than what comes out of the S.I. shop. Check out the way the bumper's lower mounts tie into the lower control arms' pivot bolts: clean, simple, and strong.



▲ A Dixon Bros. long-travel kit leads the way. This kit ties into stock A-arm pivot points and provides 14 inches of fully functional 4x4 wheel travel. Fox 2.5-inch coilovers with an 8-inch stroke and four-inch-stroke Fox bump stops provide the springing and damping control. Dixon Bros. shock hoops complete the picture.



▲ The rear bedcase-and-bumper combo is a joint effort by Dixon Bros. Racing and S.I. Motorsports. The main structure is by Dixon, and S. I. added custom touches in the form of the hitch receiver and the tire carrier.



▲ A pair of Fox bypass shocks controls 16 inches of rear wheel travel.



◀ Here's a wheel and tire combo we've seen before: KMC Enduro Beadlocks wrapped with BFGoodrich KM2 Mud-Terrain tires. This is a strong combination that affords traction over a variety of surfaces: perfect for a triple-duty truck. Fifteen-inch wheels clear the stock Ranger brakes and afford the tallest, most forgiving tire sidewall possible.



▲ Custom security splines keep the spare in place until it's needed.



▲ Did we mention attention to detail? Take a look at the custom S.I.-built battery tray and the equally slick fuse box bracket. This stuff takes extra time during a build, but it makes the resulting truck infinitely more reliable as well as easier to work on.



This truck looks perfect from any angle.

▶ The bedcase bolts to the frame instead of being welded on. It's more work to build a truck this way, but bolt-on construction affords easier wrenching in the future. Bolt-on construction also allows a slight amount of flex between the frame and the bolted brackets. This in turn makes the chassis live a longer, crack-free life.



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▲ The stock rearend was ditched for a custom Currie 9-inch stuffed with 4.88 gears and a spool for trouble-free (albeit not that pavement friendly) traction. The skid plate is another meticulous S.I. Motorsports creation.



▲▶ Extra tire clearance was built into the front end by cutting and patching the air conditioning case as well as the air filter housing. The execution is so clean it looks factory.



▲ No floating floor jack handles on this truck! Custom brackets keep things secure and easily accessible when needed.



▲ The interior is mostly stock, but a custom center console houses a Lowrance GPS unit that's easy to read and reach from either seat.



High-speed dunes...



...and creepy-crawly four-lo 4x4 trails are all in a day's drive for Team Banana.

SPECS

VEHICLE: 2005 Ford Ranger 4x4

OWNER/HOMETOWN: Eddie Velarde/ Sylmar, California

ENGINE: Ford SOHC 4.0 V-6

INDUCTION: Stock, air intake box trimmed and patched for more tire clearance

TRANSMISSION: stock five-speed automatic

FRONT SUSPENSION: Dixon Bros. Racing long travel 4x4 system with custom A-arms and Fox coilovers and bump stops. Fourteen inches of travel

REAR SUSPENSION: Currie Ford 9-inch connected to Deaver F-23 leaf packs, Fox 2.5-inch diameter, 14-inch stroke bypass shocks. Sixteen inches of travel

RING AND PINION: 4.88

REAR DIFFERENTIAL: spool

TIRES: 35x12.5R15 BFGoodrich KM2

WHEELS: 15x8-inch KMC Enduro Beadlocks

BEST PART: Being able to drive to and from the desert comfortably and still be usable as a daily driver.

WORST PART: It's never really "finished." An ongoing project.