

Shelby Cobras

The famous Cobras were started when Carroll Shelby made a deal with [AC Cars](#) in 1961 to build cars that could hold the narrow, front-mount-distributor [Ford](#) 260. The new engine fit right in the smooth attractive bodies of the AC Ace roadster. Ford provided the engines, and the Cobra was born.

AC sent modified Aces to Shelby in Los Angeles starting in [1962](#) for drivetrain installation and finishing. The first 75 Cobra Mark I models [leaf-spring, std. steering] had 260 engines. The remaining 51 had the 289 Windsor.

Shelby built about 528 Mark II models [leaf spring, rack-and-pinion steering] in 1962. In 1963 Shelby installed a big 390 Ford FE but [Ken Miles](#) raced it and said it was virtually undriveable. To handle the big engine, the Mark III [coil-spring, big-block] got bigger chassis tubes and all-coil-spring suspension, wider fenders, and larger radiator opening. Mark III production began in 1965, with the 425 bhp side-oiler 427. Some Mark IIIs got the milder 428 for street driving. Shelby built about 300 Mark IIIs (including competition cars) in 1965 and 1966.

The Mark III missed homologation for the 1965 racing season, so the Shelby team couldn't race it. But Mark III privateers were still winning 10 years later. Shelby revised 31 unsold competition cars to be street-legal and named them S/C for semi-competition. [Shelby](#) stopped importing cars in 1967 but he still builds the Shelby Cobras at the Shelby Automobiles, Inc. factory in Las Vegas. Several northwest racers had Cobras. The earliest was raced by John Razelle out of B.C., but it was a small-engined model and was blown away, as was everyone else, by the Shelby Cobras that arrived for the 1963 USRRC race. After that Lew Florence, Monte Shelton, Stan Bennett, Bill Stevens, and others raced Cobras with success. They were, and are, a huge crowd favorite whenever they appear at a race.