





UNDER THE HOOD (LEFT): Senior Rob Tayler listens intently as Zach Butler explains how the throttle body gets put back together. Butler has helped Tayler with a variety of projects. "It's never about working on the car, it's just hanging out and having fun." Butler said. "Rob is the ideal car friend to have. We have a good time and make the car go

FRANK AND PITBULL (TOP RIGHT): A small cardboard cutout of Pitbull lies against the front left tire of the Lexus. Tayler carries the cutout as a conversation starter. He hopes that it will catch others' attention at car meets and become a topic of discussion. It will allow Talyer to draw people toward Frank, his Lexus SC400, so he can show off his work and make connections.

HARD AT WORK (BOTTOM LEFT). Senior Rob Tayler shines a flashlight on the engine as he cleans the old gasket material. Cleaning is essential before putting the engine back together.

FIXING

Senior Rob Tayler restores red 1995 Lexus SC400 after purchasing off of Facebook Marketplace

Photos and story by Grace Montgomery

12 - THE BUCS' BLADE

e dimly lit garage fills with music spilling from a small JBL speaker. Clicking tools and clanging parts enhance the rhythm as senior Rob Tayler works on his red Lexus SC400.

A flexible flashlight shines bright on the Toyota 1UZ-FE V8 engine as Tayler loosens the bolts. He works briskly as he races his friend, Zach Butler, to see who can get the valve cover off their side of the

Their overall goal was to replace the valve cover gaskets to stop an oil leak. This is just the most recent project as Tayler works to restore his 1995 Lexus, which he has affectionately named "Frank."

Tayler first met Butler while cleaning Frank at a self-serve car wash.

"We own the same vehicle and he was at the selfserve car wash and I happened to drive by," Butler said. "I turned around and I was like. I want to make a friend today. So, I made a friend."

Since then, they have become close and enjoy collaborating on projects.

"It's never about working on the car, it's just hanging out and having fun," Butler said. "Rob is the ideal car friend to have. He's a great person to be around. There's never any animosity, there's no negatives. We have a good time and make the car go vroom."

Tayler is very invested in the endeavor.

"I'm very passionate about the car and the project," Tayler said. "I care a lot about seeing it go from a barn car to a show car. It's very exciting for me and I iust always want to be better."

Tayler has been interested in cars since he was young. As a kid, he would take apart toy cars and put them back together.

"He's always been a car guy, ever since he was really small." Raymond Taylor, Tayler's dad. said. "It's in his genes. He is just like his grandad and he is just like me. He has been like this, always."

Tayler took his longtime passion and made it a reality by purchasing his first project car. He found Frank on Facebook Marketplace and travelled to Columbus, Ohio in early spring to pick it up.

"Getting the car was a big deal," Tayler said. "When I bought it the owner said 'listen man you made 100 people mad.' I bought it five hours after it was put on

after I did."

like a muscle car

but it rides like

a couch," Tayler

said. "The doors

are capable of

holding the entire

cars weight."

FRANK'S FAST FACTS

Lexus

MODEL

SC400

YEAR

1995

BODY STYLE

two door

ENGINE

4.0L 1UZ-FE V8

When Tayler bought the car, it was in rough shape. It had become a home for rodents as it sat in a garage collecting dust. Junk was scattered throughout the cabin. There was a broken JBL speaker, a crushed

La Croix can and a cassette tape labeled "Country Honk."

Frank also had many cosmetic issues. There were a variety of scuffs, scratches and dents, as well as headlights that did not work, warped tint and missing rubber on the windshield wipers.

Despite its flaws, Tayler drove Frank home in what he describes as a "monsoon." He had difficulty seeing through the sheets of rain, but the Lexus was a valuable car and he knew it would be worth it in the end.

Since then, Tayler has completed a variety of projects from fixing the fuel gauge to repairing the corner-

With each project comes a great deal of research. sale and then one hundred people tried to buy it right Tayler has never worked on cars before, so he is learn- to work or school."

ing as he goes. He relies on Lexus car forums and the Lexus SC 400 repair manuals to find information specific to his car.

"It's a really rare car," Tayler said. "There's not many parts, there's not a whole lot of information. Sometimes you just have to take information from people documenting their own projects. My car is also old, so a lot of other people have worked on it before

He also receives help from Butler, who owns a Lexus SC400 as well. Butler has been repairing cars for vears and works as a mechanic.

"Rob knows how the engine works and what it's supposed to do," Butler said. "It's the experience that he lacks, that he's getting now. That's why we are doing this sort of thing. He's pretty meticulous, that's for sure. But, he actually tries, which is a lot more than

Tayler never begins working on a new project until he is confident that he has everything set up and ready. He cleans the garage, gathers parts and supprocess. plies and ensures he has time.

"When I start working, I make sure I have a whole day set aside because it is the only car I have," Tayler said. "I have to get my project done before I have to go

Each project adds something new to Frank. Some projects improve efficiency while others add to the overall aesthetic.

"You don't always see progress," Tayler said. "Sometimes you'll do something for the car and no one will know, not even you. But, seeing the little things add up makes me so happy. It's rewarding when you finish a project and see the progress."

Although significant progress has been made, Tayler is not yet content with the outcome.

"The project car will never be done," Tayler said. "I'll never be satisfied because there is always something new. The car is where I want it to be right now but there's always something I can add."

Once the car is completely restored, Tayler hopes to modify it. He wants to add a Vertex body kit and air suspension as well as update the wheels.

Tayler has gained a lot from pursuing this new hobby. He has not only learned a lot about the Lexus itself, but also the resilience accompanied with the

"I now know that you can't just give up when things get difficult," Tayler said. "Just because something is hard, you can't get mad at it. With car projects, nothing ever goes right, but you can't give up. When there's a will there's a way."

PIT STOPS

APRIL

- O Bought Lexus SC400
- Removed mouse droppings and nests from engine
- Removed warped window tint
- O Detailed engine bay and interior

- Stripped interior for carpet stain extraction
- Installed low profile skid plate
- Repaired fog lights
- Installed headlight bulbs

JUNE

- Installed sound system from
- O Cleaned mold from rain water drain tubes
- Removed broken glass from trunk
- Painted windshield wipers

JULY

- Installed speakers
- Cleaned underneath interior panels
- Replaced spark plugs
- Polished headlight lenses and wrapped with protective cover-

AUGUST

Adjusted throttle cables

SEPTEMBER

- Replaced distributor caps and
- O Installed new CD Changer

OCTOBER

- Fixed fuel gauge
- Side marker bulbs and license plate bulbs

NOVEMBER

- Replaced valve cover gaskets O Cleaned throttle body
- Fixed vacuum lines

DECEMBER

- Installed led interior lights
- Rebuilt instrument panel