

# MCI's F3500 Races Ahead

by Larry Plachno



Jimmy Adams poses with the MCI F3500, the matching trailer and his Porsche. He started racing in 1995 and has made a name for himself in the Speedvision GT circuit and the Pikes Peak International Hill Climb. Jimmy likes the F3500 because of its excellent riding quality and because its shorter length makes it more maneuverable and allows a longer trailer to be pulled. MCI PHOTO.

To a great extent, the debut of MCI's new F3500 model was also the reintroduction of the 35-foot coach to the bus industry. So far, reaction to the F3500 has been both positive and beyond expectations. Sales of both seated F3500 coaches and conversion shells have been impressive. In addition, new 35-foot coaches outnumbered new 40-foot coaches at the recent Family Motor Coach Association convention in Oklahoma City.

One of the most noteworthy developments with the F3500 has been its adoption by Jimmy Adams and his Southern Comfort Racing Team. What prompted a racing team to pick the new F3500 as its coach? What did they see as the advantages and positive attributes of the F3500? We were curious, so we found the interesting answers to those questions.

Now 28 years old, Jimmy Adams was not always a racer. He was originally trained as an engineer. When not busy elsewhere, he has a career in engineering and sales with Amadas Industries of Suffolk, Virginia, which manufactures agricultural and recycling equipment. "Racing is kind of a professional hobby," said Adams. He added that his father has been very supportive of his interest in racing.

Adams began racing in 1995 and first gained prominence on the Legends Car Circuit where he took top state honors in 1995 and 1996. He originally drove a Dodge Viper in the SCCA National Competition and the Speedvision GT circuit. Adams has had several major achievements in these last two years including several wins and four new track records. He says he likes road-

course racing because of the elevation changes and skills challenge. Adams likens the Speedvision GT series to a "street fight on wheels."

Due in large part to his success, Adams recently took delivery of one of only five 2001 Porsche GT3s Super Cup cars delivered to the United States. This prompted a search for transportation for the racing team. Unlike many other potential coach buyers, the Adams family already had a great deal of coach shell and conversion knowledge because Jimmy's father, Jim Adams II, has been a partner in Caldwell Coach, the conversion company in Moneta, Virginia.

There were some very obvious reasons why Jimmy Adams and his Southern Comfort Racing Team elected to go with the

F3500. One is that Adams was opposed to truck-type conversions with a rough ride. The MCI-built F3500 offers passenger-pleasing Torsilastic® suspension. Length was the second factor. "The F gives you great maneuverability and allows you to tow a longer trailer," said Adams. Plans had been to tow the Porsche in its own trailer, and the shorter length and turning radius of the F3500 could be a blessing around race tracks.

As Adams began taking an interest in MCI's F3500, MCI began taking an interest in Adams and his Southern Comfort Racing Team. As a result, MCI agreed to become a sponsor of Adams and his racing team. The MCI name would be added to the F3500, the 30-foot trailer to be towed by the F3500, and the Porsche GT3.

The F3500 was converted by Caldwell Coach with what might be called an executive or corporate interior. Primary uses for the coach included transporting the racing team to the events, pulling the trailer with the Porsche GT3, and sometimes serving as an entertainment center or officials' lounge at the races. The coach was not intended to be a motor home although it was set up so that it could serve as sleeping quarters if necessary.

In the front living area, the coach has opposing black leather couches plus a black leather dinette which can convert to sleeping facilities. There is a small galley and serving area and a center aisle with a separate shower. In the rear is a U-shaped lounge in black leather with a center table which can serve as a conference area or converted into sleeping quarters. Throughout the coach are some high-tech gadgetry and entertain-



The F3500 was displayed at bus and conversion events in early 2001. This photo shows the F3500 and matching trailer on display at the Family Motor Coach Association convention in Oklahoma City. While traveling, the Porsche is carried and protected by the trailer. NBT PHOTO.

ment amenities including two flat screen televisions.

The conversion was completed in time for the coach to be displayed on the floor of the convention center at the UMA Motorcoach Expo in Atlantic City February 4-6. Its first use in racing came March 2 at the Speedvision World Challenge in Fort Worth, Texas. "People were interested in the entire rig," said Roland Peek, director of conversion

sales for MCI. "It's the perfect size for racing teams, and the price point is very attractive."

A second industry appearance took place April 2-5 when both the F3500 and the 30-foot trailer with the Porsche GT3 was displayed at the Family Motor Coach Association convention in Oklahoma City. Since then, the coach, trailer and Porsche have been on the racing circuit. Adams finished seventh at the Speedvision GT race in Sebring, Florida. In addition to the Speed-

The front area of the coach has a black leather couch and matching dinette. Further back is a small galley and serving area. Caldwell Coach in Moneta, Virginia, did the conversion. CALDWELL COACH.



Instead of a sleeping area, the rear of the coach is more of a conference or meeting room. The primary feature is a U-shaped lounge done in black leather. In the center is a table with cup holders. CALDWELL COACH.



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vision races, Adams is scheduled to take on the Pikes Peak International Hill Climb, which he won in 1997 and 1999. Other scheduled races included May 20 at Mosport International Raceway in Bowmanville, Ontario, and May 28 at Lime Rock Park in Lakeville, Connecticut.

The mutual support has been working to the benefit of everyone involved. In addition to providing transportation for Adams and his racing team, the F3500 serves as a showcase for MCI's coachbuilding and Caldwell's conversion skills. According to Roland Peek, interest in the coach has been high among the racing set. □

The F3500 with the matching trailer are impressive when going down the road. Both are painted black and carry the MCI logo. However, the Porsche is painted a bright red, white and blue. MCI PHOTO.

