Even if you don’t follow the sport of drag racing, there’s a good chance you saw video of Ron Capps’ NAPA-sponsored funny car erupt like a volcano. The 2014 NHRA drag racing season opened with a boom when Capps experienced a catastrophic engine failure at Pomona Raceway back in February. The incident was so violent and stunning to watch that the video exploded in the media and online, garnering hundreds of thousands of views. What was even more spectacular was that Capps walked away, shaken but uninjured, after his 5000-horsepower bomb blew up in his face. The event was an astounding testament to modern race car safety and a reminder of how heroic these guys are to me.

When I was about eight years old, I remember going to the school book fair and getting a softcover picture book called *Burnout*. It was packed with tire-shredding, flame-spitting, earthshaking images of funny cars and dragsters. I was fascinated. While other kids worshipped Batman and Spider-Man, the drivers in this book became my superheroes. They wore colorful fire suits and menacing helmets, and drove cars with names like The Avenger, Red Bandit, Banshee, and Challenger. They climbed under fiberglass bodies and slipped into narrow roll cages next to hulking engines that occasionally blew to bits in spectacular fashion. The book was...
helped get me into my fire suit and helmet, Jack Beckman, was in the pits himself and driving the twin seater dragster. My excitement overwhelmed me. I was hopped up, ready to strap myself into the metal pan (DO NOT hold on to the dummy steering wheel in front of me and throttle and I immediately let go of the dummy steering wheel in front of me and clap and giggle and yell. I wanted to do it again and again. It was impossible for my brain to wrap around the fact that my 154 mph, screeeny-smeary run was approximately half as fast as a true top fuel car runs. How do these guys do it? How do they do it knowing that their engine bolted inches from their ass is tuned to ride the line between explosive power and actual explosion? I don’t think I’ll ever forget the feeling of staring down that empty track and blasting off, much as I never got to read the book that introduced me to this sport so many years ago. Want to catapult your own rear end into your lifelong racing dreams? Frank Hawley’s Drag Racing School has courses starting at $399, and you can take the wheel yourself.

NICK CALDERONE is a host of the nationally syndicated news and entertainment show RightThisMinute. A lifelong car and motorcycle fan, Nick may not be an expert, but he is certainly an enthusiast. The coolest thing he’s ever owned was a 1988 Nissan 300ZX, and he currently rides a 1994 Honda Goldwing. Nick can be reached at facebook.com/nscalderone or on Twitter @nscalderone. 

FRANK HAWLEY DRAG RACING SCHOOL
Based in Gainesville, Florida, the Frank Hawley Drag Racing School offers Dragster Adventures (no previous experience required), drag racing competition licensing programs and group events (corporate, media, ride and drive, team building, bachelor parties and more). The Dragster Adventure course is specifically designed for those drivers who want to drive a dragster and compete in side-by-side racing, without committing the time and resources required to become a licensed professional driver in one of Hawley’s licensing programs. The Dragster Adventure provides drivers with full-size competition-styled cars that can travel 0-60 mph in just 3 seconds and reach 130 mph in the quarter-mile — and then blast off to side side racing! You can purchase a Dragster Adventure gift certificate for your favorite adrenaline junkie for the surprise of their lifetime. Dragster Adventure will be headed west again this year, with sessions scheduled in California during June and October.

WILD HORSE PASS MOTORSPORTS PARK
Familiar for years as Firebird International Raceway, Wild Horse Pass Motorsports Park offers thrilling spectator events, club racing, corporate events and experimental marketing at a facility engineered for motorsports and other exhilarating activities. The 450-acre park has options for racing, corporate promotions and less alles. Included are three road course circuits, acres of pavement for autocrosses and closed-pad use, a 120-acre motorsports lake for drag boat racing and other uses, a quarter-mile drag strip, an off-road truck racing course and more. The facility is also home to the world famous Bob Bondurant School of High Performance Driving.

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