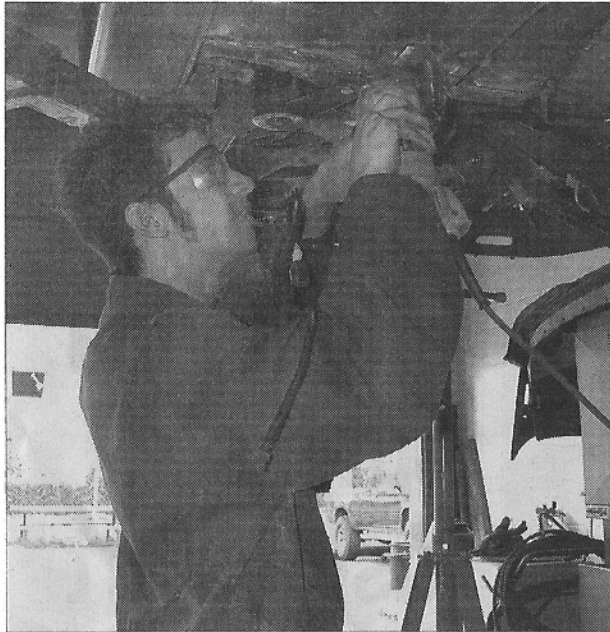


Young gentlemen, start your engines



Colin Schmidt works out the kinks during shop class. He and classmate Chris Vander Meer will represent their school at the Auto Skills Competition today. — PHOTOS BY PAUL FONTAINE/TIMES

Mouat students put fix-it skills to the test today

PAUL FONTAINE

PFontaine@abbotsfordtimes.com

Two W.J. Mouat students will be under the hood in Burnaby today to test their automotive knowledge against gear-heads from other B.C. schools.

"I'm a car guy," says Chris Vander Meer, who will be competing in the 17th annual Auto Skills Competition with classmate Colin Schmidt.

The two Mouat seniors and nine other competing two-person teams will be asked to fix cars that have had malfunctions installed into them.

The first team to have their car up and running, with all the bugs fixed, wins.

Speed is not the main factor in the competition – it's getting everything right, says Vander Meer.

"It's the team that finishes the most



Chris Vander Meer gets some shop class practise in before the big competition.

complete, the fastest," he says. "Teams can get their cars started in 10 minutes and think they're done but they end up in fifth."

Schmidt says there are no nerves – it's fixing cars, something they both love to do anyway.

For the competition, both car enthusiasts got tutoring from a technician from MSA Ford, in Abbotsford. They actually got to work on the car they would be fixing in the competition, which Vander Meer says took the edge off.

"I was nervous but then we got to

practice so I'm not nervous anymore," he says. "It's better to know what you're working on then to go in blind."

In order to represent their school in the competition, both students scored at the top in their school in the preliminary test.

Even with bursaries available for the winners, Vander Meer and Schmidt aren't looking ahead to careers in the automotive industry.

"I kind of see it as more of a hobby," says Vander Meer, adding for him, it's a useful skill. "If my car broke down on the side of the road I'd be able to fix it – if I had the parts."

In terms of their automotive class work, Schmidt says their class work means cheap checkups for Mouat teachers and students.

"They just ask to come in and get the oil changed or the brakes checked."

Along with Mouat's team, Abbotsford is also sending a team from Abbotsford Christian [Dan Gietema and Tyler Ridder] to compete for the automotive crown.