



Report Card:

2004 Subaru WRX STi (Blue)



DISCLAIMER: Use of Adobe Photoshop.

All photographs are **UNALTERED** except for the addition of a frame and watermark, and any necessary contrast adjustments.

Registration plates have been masked in accordance with our client confidentiality policy.



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1.0 Enrolment:

This Clean & Protect detail was performed as part of a quarterly maintenance plan for a customer who had recently returned from what must have been an 'Epic' road trip! He had accumulated an impressive amount of mud and general grime, and was wanting to safely clean the paint while still retaining his vehicle's "swirl free" finish.

This Subaru WRX Sti was sold "brand new" in New Zealand in 2004 and was snapped up by its current owner at a mere 6-months old. He has fastidiously maintained the vehicle throughout his ownership, and as you will see - despite the surface muck, the paint is in fantastic shape.



A 1,000km journey across some of New Zealand's most enjoyable roads can leave a rally-bred road weapon looking decidedly dirty.



And of course, where the rubber meets the road, the mud accumulates the most:



2.0 Remedial Tutelage:

Improper wash technique is the primary cause of swirl marks and random deeper scratches on paintwork. If someone were to take a sponge and a 'bucket of suds' and wipe clean a vehicle in this condition, they would inflict damage that would take hours of machine polishing to correct. Everything performed in this section is done with the sole objective of minimizing that damage.

Wheels & Arches

Given the state of the vehicle, the client elected to have the wheels removed for cleaning. There is an additional cost incurred for this service, but can add significantly to the end result.



With the wheels off, we had the opportunity to clear out the wheel wells with Meguiars Super Degreaser (diluted at 4:1) and a stiff bristled brush.



It also allows us to ensure that the brake calipers are completely clean.



The tyres were also scrubbed with Super Degreaser, and the rims cleaned with Meguiars NXT Shampoo and a microfibre work cloth.



They were then treated to a top-up coat of Poorboy's Wheel Sealant which serves to protect the bare alloy of the inside rim and helps to prevent etching, pitting and oxidization.



It was also applied to the painted surfaces on the wheel face.



And refitted, looking like new again.



Trim and Grilles

Next up, we addressed the buildup of dirt and old 'wax' in the panel gaps, vents, door and boot shuts and around the various badges and fuel cap. Tools employed were Meguiars All Purpose Cleanser, and a Slide-Lock detailing brush.





Foam Bath

The vehicle was next treated to a bath of Meguiars Hyperwash Shampoo applied via an Autobrite UK Foam Lance.



This generates a thick 'blanket' of soapy foam which covers the entire vehicle.



The foam was left to dwell on the vehicle for 5min which gives it an opportunity to dissolve the grime and let it gently slide from the vehicle's surface.



The car was then rinsed clean at a medium pressure.



Hand Wash

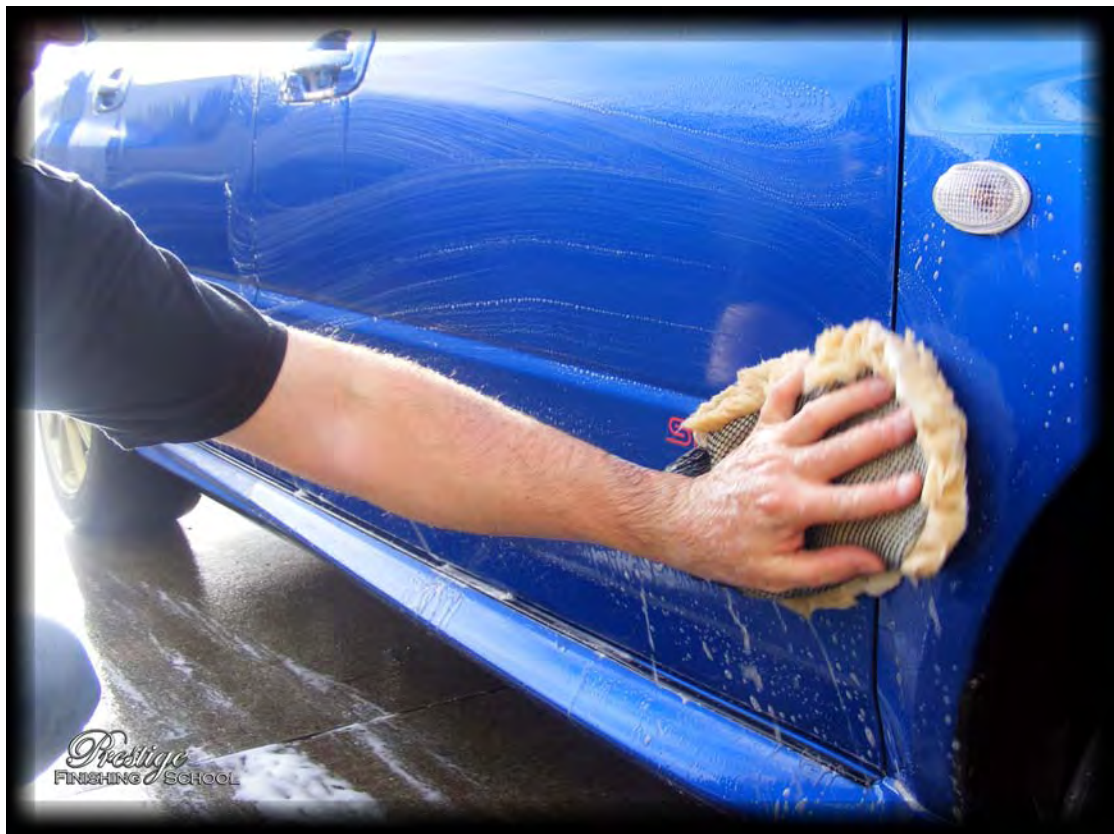
With as much dirt as possible removed from the vehicle without direct contact, it was time to complete the wash process with a hand wash via a Lambswool Mitt and Meguiars Shampoo Plus.



A lambswool (or microfibre) mitt should always be used for ‘contact’ washing of a vehicle’s painted surfaces. Particles of grit and dirt on the paint are the **primary** cause of swirls on modern vehicles with clear ‘coat paint’. Regular sponges cause the grit to be trapped against the surface of the paint and dragged across it. (Even worse still are the brushes at self-service or automatic carwashes.) The plush mitt however will draw the dirt away from the paint surface, deep into the fibers of the wool, thus preventing it from inflicting further damage.

Also notice the separate buckets for ‘wash’ and ‘rinse’ action. This is the safest and most effective way to clean a vehicle’s paint. The Mitt is soaked in the 60° C Shampoo Plus solution which has a “*Low-Suds / High-Lubricity*” formula and then worked over the vehicle. After each panel, the Mitt is cleaned off in the ‘rinse’ bucket, dislodging any dirt picked up off the car, before being re-soaked in the shampoo.





Again, look at the state of the rinse bucket after completing the wash...



The two-bucket-method really does work! Next, the car is rinsed off again at high pressure, and moved inside for claying and drying.



Clay Treatment

The final step in ensuring a perfectly clean paint surface is the removal of bonded contaminants with a detailing clay bar. This can include tar spots, tree sap or industrial fallout, all of which contribute to making the paint surface rough to the touch and dull to look at. In this instance, Meguiars Mild Detailing Clay was used with Meguiars Last Touch (diluted 1:1) as lubrication.



The clay was soaked for 10 minutes in hot water to soften it slightly ahead of use.





A reasonably large amount of contamination was removed from just this section of the bonnet.



The vehicle was then given a final rinse off with the pressure washer and then patted dry with a Sonus Der Wonder Microfibre Drying Towel.



With the vehicle's exterior now in a perfectly clean and dry state, you really do begin to see the benefit of regular, 'safe' washing technique, with very little evidence of wash induced marring to be found.



3.0 Initial Assessment:

At this point, we deviate somewhat from our standard Clean & Protect detail regime. The customer had identified a reasonably deep scratch running in an almost straight line down the middle of the bonnet, and also some severe 'scuff' marks on the side skirt where careless feet had done significant damage. There was also a nasty scratch on the top of the rear spoiler. He asked us to correct these specific defects in lieu of detailing his vehicle's interior, and we were happy to oblige. Under the unforgiving twin 500W Halogen lights, the defects were plain to see:



Though quite difficult to photograph, in this picture you can clearly see the deeper scratch, just above the reflection of the lights, as well as some minor swirl marks.





And again, notoriously difficult to convince the camera to focus on the defects, but you can plainly see the damage caused by footwear being scraped on the sill. This shot of the spoiler was snapped out in the sun prior to the wash.



This kind of damage can be reasonably quickly resolved.



4.0 Course of Correction

We tackled the bonnet with a Meguiars G220 Dual Action Orbital Polisher and Meguiars 6.5” Polishing pad. Menzerna RD3.02 was the polish used to address the scratch. Menzerna RD3.02 is designed to restore dull, oxidised, neglected paint and remove major paint defects such as severe swirl marks and deep scratches. This polishing compound has revolutionised the paint correction process, as it is capable of removing such defects without leaving any surface hazing, meaning that fewer subsequent polishing steps with progressively finer polishes are required to refine the finish.





As you can see, the results are impressive!



The same product was employed on the driver's side skirt, this time applied on a smaller 4inch Lake Country CCS cutting pad.



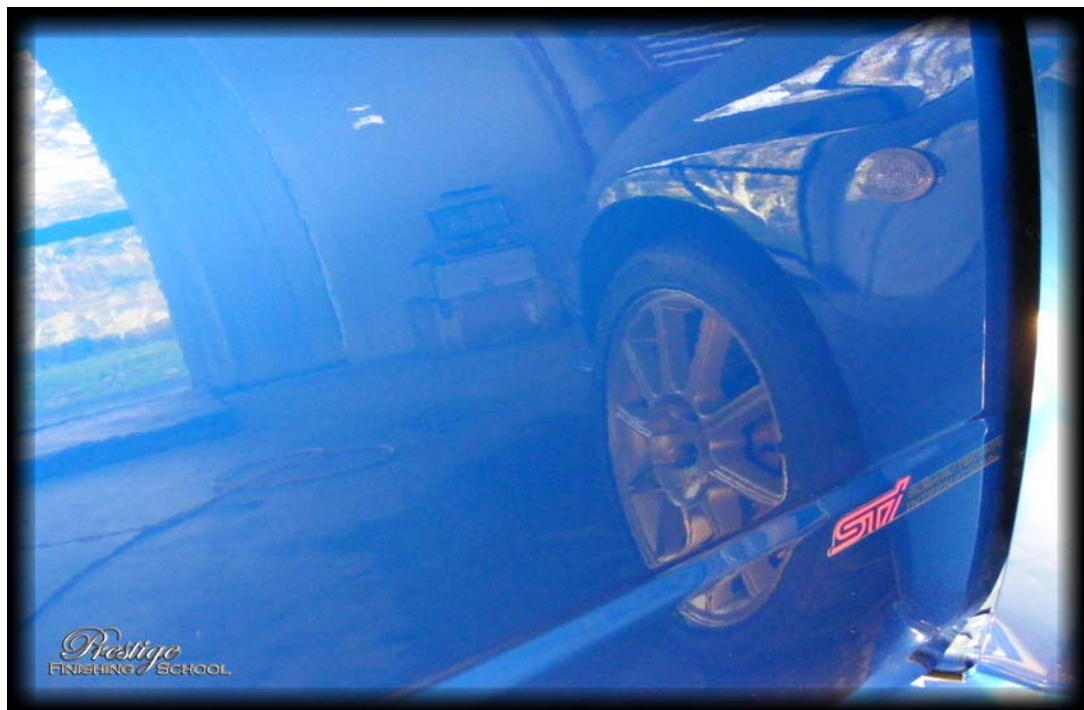
100% correction of the panel achieved. The spoiler was also hit with the 4" pad, we grabbed a photo of the finished panel back out in the sun for a direct comparison.



6.0 Refining & Finishing

Significant cutting or compounding can be a necessary step in paint correction, and these processes can result in painted surfaces looking slightly 'hazy' or 'dull' with micro-marring from the aggressive polishes being evident on close inspection.

To completely restore the clarity and mirror-like finish to the paint, 3M's long-serving Ultrafina SE was applied on a Meguiars 6.5inch Finishing Pad to the vehicle.



The clarity and depth of the reflections off the vehicle's surface are a testament to the importance of an exceptional finishing polish



Prestige
FINISHING SCHOOL



Finally, the vehicle was protected with a coat of Meguiars NXT Tech Wax 2.0



This serves to 'seal in' the effort spent refining the vehicle's surfaces, and protect the paint from UV radiation as well as water or airborne contaminants.

To complete the detail, the tyres were dressed with Blackfire Long Lasting Tyre Gel, and the arches treated to Meguiars All Season Dressing.



7.0 Final Showing

All that remains now is to roll the vehicle out into the sunlight and indulge ourselves in a few choice pictures.





It was gratifying to see this particular car restored to 'showroom condition' after its journey. Despite taking nearly a full 8 hours to turn around, the effort required to achieve a look this good was significantly less than usual. This is directly attributable to the careful maintenance of the paint by its owner.

Though undoubtedly there will be plenty more road trips to come, we are proud to present another top class graduate from the Prestige Finishing School!

