

SPEEDWEEK

LAKE GAIRDNER, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

FEBRUARY 26 - MARCH 7, 2014

by Norm Hardinge / Big Knob Racing

PHOTOS: Norm Hardinge, Steven Streeter

This year the road in from Iron Knob was the roughest I have seen...

After the seemingly endless corrugations, I felt the need to check that my teeth had not shaken loose. Once I had done that, I retightened the dash on the F Truck before it fell apart. But meeting up with old friends, some of which I only see at Speedweek, and the sight of the massive expanse of salt on Lake Gairdner, made the uglier than normal trip all worthwhile.

As we drove off the red dirt onto the lake, I noticed the salt sticking to the F truck's wheels and inner guards. This is never a good sign, it indicates a wet track which is not good for big speeds.

You know, it takes dedicated hardworking people to run a large race meet in the Australian outback. Dry Lake Racers Australia (DLRA) has done it for the past 24 years, with ever increasing members and ever increasing complexities. This year's event was well run thanks to guys like Chief Starter Peter Leikvold and his brother David acting as Assistant Starter. Along with Mathew Saunders and Cliff Brook, the long course ran smoother than ever.

The pits were well laid out with Tech Inspection in the centre. The rules we run are the same as the Southern California Timing Association that run's Bonneville Speedweek. Our rules were only brought into line with the SCTA rules over the last couple of years and our Chief Tech Inspector, Bob Ellis made himself available to any racer or sheep over the last few years, and put in a lot of time and effort to make sure every

racer and sheep knew what was expected. He was true to his word, he and his team checked out the race cars and if they didn't comply with DLRA rules, they didn't run.

The track on the long course was soft with water not far under the surface between the second and third mile. Wheel ruts appeared and after a couple of days and cars that were normally stable, like our Big Knob roadster, began spinning at high speed, like our Big Knob roadster. After the fifth car spun out it was decided to move the track by mirroring the course. This would give us another two days racing. All teams helped to move the track but some of the faster cars stopped racing and packed up. The salt just was not good enough for the speeds they wanted to do.

One of the guys thrown in at the deep end this year was Paul Lynch who took over as Chief Timer with short notice. Yankee helper Scott Andrews (SCTA's newly elected president) helped out on the commentary, a job he used to do in the States. For a minute, I thought I was at Bonneville. These guys did a great job.

Despite the bad track conditions several records fell and our crew had a great time. Big Knob Racing would like to thank all volunteers and committee members for their efforts, far too many people to name. ★



JOHN DENT

John Dent saw Al Fountain's Belly tank for sale and had to have it. Soon after the purchase John, being a one eyed Ford man, had Bob Ellis install a 490ci + big block Ford. John can't thank Bob enough for the awesome job.

On the road from Iron Knob to the lake, the belly tank bounced around so much it took out its suspension. John borrowed his mate, Norm Bradshaw's Ford Territory to drive to Adelaide for parts for the race car. All good until John hit a bull dust hole on the way back in, damaging the Territory mechanically – would you guess it? Yes, the suspension. Luckily, no parts were needed to repair the Territory as this story could have gone on ad infinitum, sounding like the old lady that swallowed the spider.

The guys managed to repair both cars with no more trips for spare parts and continued racing. The belly tank went through Tech Inspection with few worries and was soon licensed on the short course.

This Belly tank already holds the AGL class record at 234mph with Al Fountain driving when it was powered by a Chrysler, but Johnny Dent wants to show the world that a Ford can do it better!

Graduating to the long course John had listened to the talk about the track and decided not to put his foot down hard until the last timed mile, hopefully well past the rough track. So at the start of the fifth, he planted his foot – planted his foot only to feel the input shaft of the gearbox break.

That put an end to this year's attempt. John said it's just the extra power of the Ford that broke the shaft. He loves the car and can't wait for Speedweek next year.



TREVOR SLAUGHTER

Trevor Slaughter is a Queensland man with a dream. A big dream. His aim is to take this home built streamliner and break the world land speed record for a wheel driven car. Sounds easy if you say it quick. The current record stands at 458mph! If he does it, it will make him the first Australian world land speed record holder.

Drag racing veteran Trevor concreted his love of speed when he meet Donald Campbell in his home town in SA when he was only ten.

Sharing his dream is his son and Team Manager, Ben Slaughter, his Crew Chief, Richard Fletcher and a large group of friends and volunteers that make Slaughter Motorsport. Even though the car has been in development for 27 years and seven years in the build, Trevor and his crew are on a steep learning curve. Every chance to race is a chance to learn so even though conditions were not perfect out on the salt this year, Slaughter Motorsport were there.

On the way into the lake, the streamliner copped a pounding on the rough road and suffered some wheel bearing damage. Lots of spares and an eager crew got the damage sorted and had the streamliner ready to race early in the week.

The vehicle is currently powered by a turbocharged straight six 2JZ-GTE running Methanol, backed up by a Liberty transmission. The output in the current configuration is 2,500 hp. Future plans are to boost that to 4,850 hp using a T55 Turbine from a Chinook Helicopter. Watch out for that!

Trevor's personal best and the record he holds for fastest 3 litre wheel driven vehicle in Australia is 253.70 mph. With a less than good track in 2014, he managed 237.62 mph best out of four runs, became airborne for approximately 10 metres and damaged the front end upon return to the salt surface.

This year's Speedweek was a great chance to add to the Slaughter Motorsport knowledge base. What they are attempting to do is not easy in anyway and I wish them every success. ★



■ The streamliner is 11 metres long and only 800 mm to the top of the body.

ROD HADFIELD AND LIONEL WEST

Salt lake racing veterans, Rod Hadfield and Lionel West co-drive the Bronze Aussie Commodore. They hold the Australian Speedweek AA/FALT class record at 259.984mph. Their aim is to beat John Lynch's 301mph top speed at Lake Gairdner and do it in a Commodore!

One day it will happen, but not in 2014. After Rod running 226mph and Lionel running 231mph a mechanical failure and crap track stopped them in their tracks. A rear uni let go and took out the tail shaft yoke, diff yoke and rear suspension all of which the Bronze Aussie race team repaired.

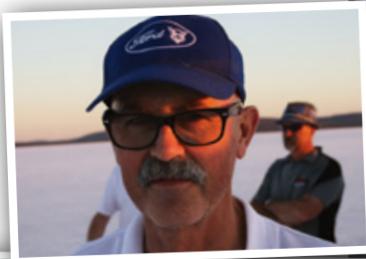
Unfortunately the team couldn't fix the track. On their next run, Lionel performed a 225mph spin. The Bronze Aussie race team decided to pack the car away and continue chasing the record in 2015.



DAVID FLECAS

David Plecas' neighbour moved out and left an old postie bike leaning against the fence. When questioned by David, he said I don't want it you can have it. Now what else would you do with a postie bike? David chopped the frame, fitted twin progressive turbos and an intercooler, then cranked up the boost to 30lb to produce Australia's fastest postie bike. That's 111.476mph. David will return next year because he says "there is a lot more in it."





MIKE DAVIDSON

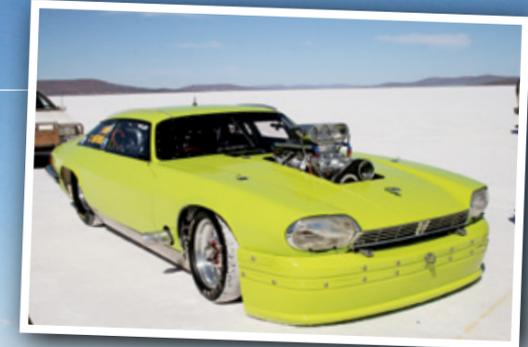
DLRA member number 1 and first president of the DLRA, Mike Davidson is one of the guys who help start salt lake racing in Australia. Mike knows a lot about Flathead Fords and has developed a business selling performance parts around the world.

Mike's streamliner is a work of art and without it turning a wheel, I was convinced that two flatheads are better than one! The streamliner still has a few issues with steering and suspension, so only a low speed shake down pass was made in 2014. With Mike at the wheel, the shake down pass will help him and his crew sort things out for next year.



GARY SATARA

Gary Satara, a very committed and heavily involved DLRA member whose work is critical to the smooth running of the DLRA and is appreciated by other members, was plagued with problems this year. Fuel gremlins combined with bad track conditions saw the big cat run at only 177mph. Gary said the car just didn't want to pull hard and he thought it was more than just a bad track. On arrival home, Gary stripped the motor and found lobes missing off the cam shaft and metal filings in the sump. Ouch!



DARYL CHALMERS

Daryl Chalmers has campaigned his 1996 EF Falcon at Lake Gairdner since 2005. Originally the Ford ran a 363ci stroked Windsor with a best speed of 213 mph. Darryl decided to rebuild the car and run in a different class, this time with a smaller motor.



So Daryl and his mate Paul (aka Nudgey) stripped out the Ford and sent the body off to the sandblasters. The car was returned complete with several rust holes only eight weeks before Speedweek.



Daryl and Nudgey spent every spare minute over the eight weeks repairing, painting and reassembling the number 96 Falcon. Just in time, the job was finished, and Daryl, Sandra and two kids, Hailey and Jessica, drove from Melbourne to Lake Gairdner, South Australia.

On arrival, the Falcon cleared Tech Inspection with minimal effort and was headed for the short course for a licensing run. Equipped now with a 650 hp 302 Windsor that Daryl screwed together himself, it soon overgrew the short course and headed for the long course to go for the class record.

Daryl said in the wet salt the car got a bit sideways. Being all too familiar with the feeling of being in a spin, he backed off twice. But with what seemed a hair raising but still dismal run, he still took the record! With a 211.5mph run he had bumped the record up by 30mph!! Imagine what he could have done on a good track? Next year he plans to increase the 302's compression from 10:1 to 13:1 and see what the car can really do.



...after telling me for years he was coming to the salt to kick my arse, he finally showed up...



NICK REES

Nick Rees, an avid nostalgia drag racer, has retired and now has time to play. After telling me for years he was coming to the salt to kick my arse, he finally showed up. He brought along his very cool big block Ford powered, 11 second '32 Ford roadster. After resolving a few issues at tech inspection he took the car out on the short course to discover not once, but twice that the little roadster loves to go into a flat spin at 113mph. Hah! A bit hard to kick arse while spinning around and around and around.

Nick said he and his crew had a great time and he has learnt a lot about salt lake racing. Nick has wasted no time. He has already started to build a new chassis with his new knowledge. I think it's great to see more hot rods on the salt. Welcome Nick.

BIG KNOB RACING

This year, I crewed with Roy Brand and Stephen Streeter while Neil Davis and Matt Lagoon drove the roadster. Both guys ended up with their 175mph licences. Neil managed to take out a record and put the roadster into a flat spin at 212mph.

We had a great time and have started next year's preparation. The car is already in Echuca at Mat Lagoons workshop getting an engine freshen up. Hopefully next year the salt improves and records will fall.



MAX ELLERY

Max Ellery's VL Commodore currently holds the E/Pro record at 179.920mph. This year after the 253 ci Holden engine was given a freshen up, Max was hoping to go even faster but the track conditions didn't allow it. On a shakedown run at 140mph the car was slipping and sliding. It wasn't long after that the track was closed and moved. Max and his crew helped move the course but decided that with the given conditions, even with the new track, the car wasn't going to achieve the race team's goals. If you want to get into salt lake racing, this car with the full race package is for sale.



For a full list of results visit www.dlra.org.au