

Speedweek 2016 for the Big Knob Racing roadster started months ago. Mat Lagoon at Engine Action Echuca gave the 429 ci Big Block Ford a freshen up and a run on his dyno. Neil Davies and I revamped the parachute and to keep the little car straight at high speed, we added weight and heavier coil overs into the rear suspension.

We left Melbourne a day later than previous years due to Speedweek clashing with the Ballarat Swap Meet. On Saturday night I parked one truck, then Sunday night got in another and headed to Speedweek at Lake Gairdner, South Australia.

Mat and I caught up with the other team members; Neil Davies, Steven Streeter and Andrew Hutchinson, on the outskirts of Adelaide, then headed to Port Augusta for our last night in civilisation where we celebrated in traditional fashion with pizza and bourbon.

Monday morning, we topped up our fuel and supplies and headed out to Iron Knob. Just past Iron Knob we turned right onto the road to Lake Gairdner. The road is 131 kms of dirt, dust, rocks and corrugations. We dodged kangaroos, emus and a couple of wild goats. You can drive a normal car in here but when it rains, it turns into a 4x4 track. You must drive to the conditions, if you drive like a dickhead, you're likely to break something and be stuck for days, if not weeks.

On the way in this time, the F Truck drifted unexpectedly sideways halfway through a bend then made strange sounds from the rear right tyre. We pulled over to find the tyre shredded and wrapped around the diff housing. The tyre had torn out guard brackets and almost torn through a brake line. Mat, always full of helpful suggestions, announced that a tube was required! We changed the wheel, patched up the damage and continued onward to the lake.

Our mission this year was to push up the B Gas Roadster record of 209mph held by American David Haas, obtained while driving

the Big Knob Roadster some years back.

We set up the pits and were ready for Tech Inspection but we were told no Tech Inspections until the following day.... bummer. Next morning the roadster passed Tech without any issues we took the car straight to the line and ran a strong 202mph - not bad for a shakedown run.

This meeting was the best organised and ran ever! Peter and David Leikvold did a great job at the start line. They had both tracks running like clockwork. The timers, safety crews and race director all worked as a team with very few hold ups. Thank you and well done from

Big Knob Racing. The track was in great condition and the weather was good for the whole week.

While good for humans, the weather did play hell with tuning. The Air/ Fuel meters told us we were running rich (too much fuel) while the spark plugs showed we were running lean (not enough fuel). Numerous car and bike teams were complaining of running 8 to 10 mph slower than last year.

Mat Lagoon said it was safer to believe the spark plugs and put in bigger and yet again bigger jets in the carbies. We went out again and ran 210 mph taking the B/Gas record, but



when I reached the return road the rescue crew told me I had delaminated a rear tyre. They proceeded to attach a yellow sticker to the windscreen. Yellow stickers are for faults or warnings. After the third yellow sticker you receive a red sticker and go home.

The tyre I had managed to destroy was a Mickey Thompson Bonneville Landspeed tyre with a speed rating of around 350mph (not cheap). To keep racing, I would have to find a replacement. Luckily, DLRA President Norm Bradshaw said he had a spare tyre but we would have to change it. Trevor Beck, who runs the DLRA racers camp, had a bead breaker while Norm Bradshaw had a couple of tyre levers - we were set.

Bob Ellis is the Chief Tech Inspector. He had to check out the new tyre and sign it off before we could run again. Bob found the other rear tyre was also starting to delaminate in the centre.

The fault had been covered by a layer of salt.

So, now we needed another Mickey Thompson Bonneville spare - hard to find, or another set of rear tyres. I still had two Goodyear Eagle Salt Tyres but the problem is they are a smaller diameter which means we will have to rev harder.

With the Mickey Thompson Bonneville tyres, to hit 210mph the Big Block Ford had to rev at 7000rpm over one mile. To achieve the same speed with the smaller tyres, we needed the Big Block to rev at 7800rpm. Mat assured me the motor would handle 9000 to 9200, so we fitted the smaller tyres while I tried to get my head around a Big Block Ford revving to 9 grand!

Neil, Mat, Steven, Andrew and myself prepped the roadster for a high speed run. We towed up to the line. In what seemed no time at all, we were ready to push off. I left the push car

in the roadster at roughly 60mph and changed into each gear at 8000 revs. When in the timed areas I held the motor at 8000 revs. After running two miles, the low fuel pressure light flickered (the light indicates fuel pressure below 4psi) and the oil pressure dropped slightly. I pulled the chute and shut down the motor.

Too late, I had melted a piston, but the run was timed and the Big Knob Roadster had bumped up the record to 212.620mph! That ended Speedweek for us. We are now in the market for a bigger fuel pump and a set of pistons.

Look out for full coverage of Speedweek in an upcoming issue of Cruzin!

See you at the salt,

Norm Hardinge

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