

RUSS Pavey and KEN Lowe Race Report



Summary of our Slamfest PORTLAND Race

We want to start by saying a very big thanks to all of our sponsors who help us so much and we are very proud to take their message to the FINISH line.



Race Report from Portland Victoria – South Coast Raceway

Crew: Peter Richards, Brett Roberts and Geoff Stone

When we last signed on we had just returned from our runner up position at Heathcote just two weeks ago where we raced Zap in the final, and we had just ordered the new ignition controller to replace our faulty one. The new controller was dropped off by FedEx at Ken's. It would have been good to stick it on the car and test it but the car is on the way to Portland for the next race. So Ken set it up on the work bench and connected it up with a battery to try to get it to "talk" to the computer so it could be programmed. The new software that came with it was loaded version 4.08 but alas it would not talk to the computer. A phone call to MSD confirmed the unit would work with just the red and black wires connected to a battery all sitting on the work bench but once the tech at MSD learned about the v4.08 software it was determined that software was actually meant for a different piece of hardware so the old v3.19 software was reloaded. But the ignition controller would still not talk to the computer. Later it was discovered that the new software had sent the communications to a port that the computer did not even have, so a manual reconfigure was necessary and finally Ken got the ignition controller talking to the computer and the ignition curve was loaded. Ken loaded the ignition curve is what he thinks will work at the track but final decisions won't be made until we look at the race track. Some adjustments may be necessary we wouldn't expect anything less.

Thursday night 2 Feb.

Peter Richards drives to "Robbo" Roberts' and Ken drives to Russell's place to spend the night to get ready for the crack of dawn dash to the airport. Actually predawn....

Friday 3 February

Early flight to Melbourne for all of us and while on the plane Ken mused to Russell that we had not

raced at Portland previous to this and that Portland makes the 82nd different race track Ken had raced at in his forty five years of racing. It is this range experience along with multiple Top Alcohol Championships in the USA with NHRA and UDRA that makes regional tracks so good for our new team. All the big teams have heaps of data on good track tune ups, something our team lacks (for right now). The regional track races work well for us as no one in Top Doorslammer has a lot of experience on these tracks. Slamfest is good for us as we can quickly adapt to the new race conditions. Although it must be said we are really looking forward to getting a good 1320 track under our tires and chasing a good track tune up, but that will come.

After we land in Melbourne we grab the rental car for the four hour drive to Portland. At lunch time we stop in Morrayfield for some pies at a pie shop and arrive at the race track at just after 2pm. This is the first time we have been to Portland and the South Coast Raceway. We are all impressed; the place is well manicured, kind of like racing at a flat golf course. Well organized and well run place. Clean bright restrooms too. Situated right on the South Coast (hence the name) of Victoria, if one was to tip toe you can see Bass Strait. Many of you may know how treacherous this body of water can be with rapid and aggressive changes in weather, but today is warm with a nice gentle breeze blowing. We suspect the weather here can change very quickly and are hoping it will hold just like this.

We get the car out of the Vic and Ben Bray's trailer and set up the pit space and work area and start the maintenance. Again we must sincerely thank Vic and Ben for letting use the space in their trailer because without it doing the Slamfest series would be a much bigger challenge for us. Pete Richards, our clutch guy, puts a fresh clutch in the car and zeros the pack out changing some of the adjustments that Ken gives him. Ken puts new burst panels in and Russ bolts the new ignition controller and after looking at the race track Ken loads the modified program he thinks will get the car down the track. One of the crew for this weekend, Geoff Stone, who lives locally, took the headers home from Heathcote to weld them up where they got scraped up at that race. It was a bit wild at Heathcote across the finish line in the final race against Zap. They came back all fresh and tidy and Geoff bolted them on. Brett "Robbo" Roberts puts the pushrods in the engine and gets the engine ready to start. Buy the time we got our work done it was late and we headed for the motel. We still have to sort out why some of the data logger channels are not communicating. Hopefully a phone call in the morning will sort that out.

Saturday 4 February

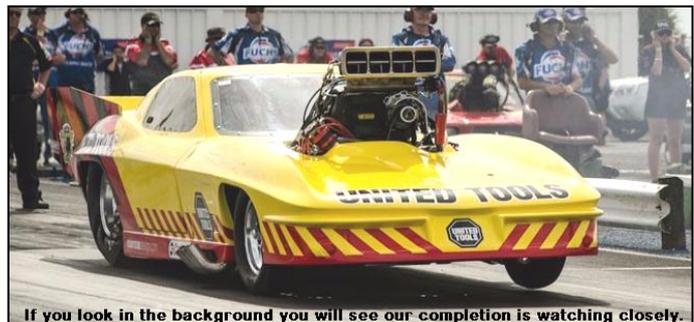
"What would happen if you went to a drag race and a party broke out?"

More on that later...

Race Day !! The weather is beautiful, just like yesterday was. It is a good day to do anything and a great day for drag racing. The South Coast Raceway has put on a great show for their clients. At the top of the billing was the Slamfest Program but also there was a full sportsman race car contingent of Supercharged Outlaws, Modified and Super Sedan as well as antique cars, a old radial engine mounted on a trailer that they started up (pretty cool too), nostalgia race cars, a stunt bike show, an inflated play ground for the kids, jumping castle and slide and they were saving the best surprise for last... more on that later. We get up earlier than might be normally required as Ken wants to speak to Randy McMahon at RPM data loggers in Oklahoma about the configuration on the data logger to attempt to resolve some faulty data channels. Although we did not get the channels working at least we determined the problem is faulty cables which will be replaced before the next race in Tasmania. Additionally, this give us time to insure the car is at its optimum for the race today.

An inspection of the track gave us some concern although it was smooth and sticky and might appear to be optimum at first glance, Ken performed his twist test. If any of you remember the old dance called the Twist. It is where you rotate the ball of your foot in a twisting action. Normally this is done to music but in this case there was none and the result made us feel like the track was not as good as we had hoped it would be. Ken and Russ discussed the tune up and Ken loaded the modified program in the ignition controller and made the additional fuel system changes as well. We felt our current clutch adjustment was a good place to start on the first pass. This is not an obligatory pass or a qualifying pass and a few of the other Top Door cars decide to opt out and not take the opportunity to test. There is one place in our tune up where the car is likely to shake the tires when the car starts to overpower the track so we treat this tender area with great respect, but go too soft there and you throw away a lot of performance so you can't go too soft there.

In the test session at 11:00am we are the second quickest car down the track with most of the heavy hitters making the session. Our tender area was a little exposed and we did have a little shake at the top of low gear but for us the most important thing was the rest of the tune up package was right on. A little tweak and we are right there.



Now it is 1:00pm the place is packed with spectators Ken takes a photo of the people on the mound which is impressive as the stands are filled to capacity. We have been told there were just over 4000 spectators there on the day. It has the feel of a big country fair.



Now is the time for the single shot qualifying session. This is it!!
What you do here and now sets the tone for the rest of the race; it places the racer in the

elimination ladder. You don't get a second chance and misery was about to descend upon us. All too often motorsports and Championship Drag Racing in particular, is portrayed as being about one person, the driver and although the driver's performance is very important it must be said that Championship Drag Racing is about the whole team. One thing Ken hammers in to all the team members are that we win together and we lose together. Like a transmission where all the gears are important so are all the team members. Every job is critical to the success of the team. I guess by now you can surmise something happened that shouldn't have. Many of you may know that many of the control systems on the race cars are powered by a bottle of pressurized CO2, and ours is no different in that regard. This bottle is turned off after each run and turned on before each run. Our team member who failed to turn the bottle on had been distracted, something that we are all sure will never happen again but...

It meant that after the car launched and Russ went for the gear change there was no second gear to be found. The result was a very poor elapsed time for our one and only qualifying session. But it seems like many of the other racers misjudged the track and shook badly the end result was that we were in fifth qualifying position. Not a great position to qualify in but sure better than many of the others. The one good thing that came out of this was that at least the car went right through the tender spot at the top of low gear which tells us that our tune up is spot on.

The Top Door car are wild and unpredictable with over 3000 horsepower on tap getting the car to the stripe without blowing the tires off the car is often a huge challenge. If it wasn't such a huge challenge, well I guess everyone would be doing it. This stuff is not for the faint of heart.

We are in the first round of eliminations and we race Frank Mamone in his drop dead gorgeous black on black on black 67 Chevy II stuffed full of blown hemi. Frank often uses his car to race in the 10.5 tire size class where the cars must be self starting with on board batteries and on board starter.

His crew tells us they want to start first so we wait for them to spin up. After we hear them start cranking we hit the go button ourselves and our cars fires instantly but they are having trouble starting. One of the challenges of the on board starter is cranking speed and the MSD 44 magneto needs a certain engine rpm to imitate spark and it seemed like they just weren't getting it. We sat and waited and waited and waited with our car setting there running making more and more heat. They thrashed around for a bit and grabbed a remote starter and stuck it on the front of the blower drive to spin it up fast enough for the mag to fire.

Finally after waiting quite a while with our engine running, Ken motioned Russ to come forward into the water to start the burn out and as Russ started his burn out Frank's engine started. Russ was backing up from his burn out (tire warming and cleaning procedure) as Frank was starting his so the time pressure was on Frank a bit. Russ rolled in to pre-stage and waited for Frank to come in with him, he did, and as soon as all the top bulbs were lit the Pro Tree flashed all the yellows and both cars were away but Frank had lit the "Go Home" bulb at the bottom of the tree.

With all the distractions Russ short shifted low gear which hurt our performance a bit but it was still good enough for fifth quickest in the round and obviously with Frank's red light we won the round as well. That is the good news..

The format of the Slamfest series is that the four quickest winners of the first round of eliminations go on to the rest of the eliminations. In every round of racing today, we won against our competitor in the other lane, we never lost a round but we were out of the eliminations and by only 5 thousands of a second. It was disappointing, but that is the format for the Slamfest series and we accept that. Last week it was us and Zap in the final, this week it was Ben Bray and Peter Kapiris in the final with Peter winning. Wow! This sure shakes up the points for the series.

The good news is that it gave us a heap of time to prepare the car for Tasmania in two weeks but the real good news is that the slick yellowmobile was the center of attention with both the media with both Russ and Ken doing separate interviews for the television people while the rest of the crew was putting many dozens of spectators in the car for photo sessions and when Russ was not doing media interviews he was signing autographs, so many we almost ran out of black markers.



Now once the race is over and presentations are done the final surprise is the live band. The race is over at 7pm but the party goes on with nearly all the spectators staying until nearly midnight. The laser light show and smoke machine with the live music kept everyone entertained for hours. These people know how to put on a show for their clients.

After we tie the car down in the trailer and pack all of our gear away it is nearly midnight and we make our way to the motel.

While packing up we hear that Tasmania has already presold nearly 4000 tickets and it is still two weeks away. That should be a good race. It is plainly obvious that the Slamfest series is a huge success. For many years the regional tracks have been starved of any Group One Professional racing and the touring professionals of the Top Door category are proving that taking the show to the people in regional areas is an entertainment format that works, and works well.

Sunday 5 February

We had planned on winning the race yesterday so we booked a late flight home to give us time to service the car for the race in Tasmania in two weeks but now our car is done and loaded in the trailer and we cannot bump up our tickets so our flight leaves at 8:40pm. If we drive straight to the airport it is a four hour drive so what do we do with the rest of the day? Sit in the airport? I think we can figure out a better way to spend the day.

We decide to act like some tourists and we take the Great Ocean Road back to Melbourne and have lunch at Apollo Beach. Yesterday, race day was dry, warm and very pleasant. Today is not that day. It was a cold rainy drive along the Great Ocean Road and we took the opportunity to stop at many of the observation points to take a few photos even if we looked funny dressed as a typical Queenslander. A bit like a fish out of water....brisk is the word that best describes the weather today, well at least to a Queenslander it is brisk !!



We spent the day making our way back to the airport in Melbourne and boarded our flight to Queensland. We arrived home at just after 11pm.

Many thanks must go to Ben and Victor Bray and their hardworking crew for hauling our stuff around. Also our sponsors for helping us with their support, and the race tracks for letting us put on the Slamfest Show and certainly thanks to all the competitors in Slamfest because without the competitors coming together there would be no show, no Slamfest. The fans absolutely love it. The list of competitors that we borrowed tools from range from Maurice Fabetti tap and die set, Vic and Bens drills and drill bits, Marcus Chambers let us plug into his air compressor. You may be enemies between the water box and the finish line but otherwise everyone is more than helpful. Thanks to all, especially the very hard working Ray Treasure who keeps us all on schedule.

On to Tasmania.

Come and visit with us on 18 Feb 2012 at

Tickets are only \$30.00 each or \$75.00 for a family pack of 2 adults and two older kids young kids are

FREE

Test Run is 11:00am

Qualifying Run 1:00pm (all cars go race)

Round 1 is 3:00pm

Semi Finals is 5:00pm (quick four winners from previous round)

Finals are 7:00pm

And the show runs ON TIME so don't be late

Get your tickets here <http://www.slamfest.com.au/> or go to the web site to access the facebook updates as they happen!!!

Our web page <http://www.slamfest.com.au/russp.html>

Directions to the track in Tasmania <http://www.tdra.info/Spectating.htm>

Our TODO list.

Order some new bearings so we can put them in before we race in Tas.

Get the clutch disks ground up and change the clutch out.

Run the valve springs and shim or replace as required.

Get the cables done for the data logger channels that are giving us trouble.

Book the flights for the crew.

Organize the lodging there.

Organize the rental car big enough to fit four blokes.

Pick up the extra tools we need.

Pack for Tas... now do we pack summer gear or winter gear, after all it is Tas and we are from Queensland.... better take long pants and a jacket...