

RUSS Pavey and KEN Lowe Race Report



Summary of our Slamfest Mildura 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 Mildura Victoria

Crew: Peter Richards, Brett Roberts and Geoff Stone

We arrive in Mildura on Friday afternoon and we had planned on some economy lodgings to sleep in the back of Ben and Vic's trailer where our car had arrived at the track in. We changed our minds after the dust storm moved in and blanked the whole area in a thin red dusty film.

Being a holiday weekend (Easter) it seemed just about every place was booked out and after over an hour of searching we found a little cabin in a camping facility filled with holiday makers and their families.

After getting settled and showered we headed out to visit with a local friend of Russ's and we spend a few hours at his place. He is a farmer and grows grapes and is constructing a race car and had purchased an engine from Russ. Progress on his race car had been slow for the last few months so we apply some encouragement to get him working on it again.

After a couple of hours there doing a heap of bench racing as we left he very graciously gave us a HUGE box of his delicious grapes. Nature's candy they were, very sweet.

We drove into town and found a restaurant that we could all agree on and we decided on Indian cuisine for the night. The grapes were nice to cool the flames of the spicy food.

The Mildura Slamfest is held the same weekend that is a motorsports weekend in Mildura where the town center is closed down and over a hundred motor race vehicles are on display from drag racing, boat racing, sprint cars, motorcycles.

This brings back the mental images of the very successful Triple challenge in Sydney many years ago where several different types of motor racing was all held the same day in the same place. The difference is that that was held at one venue where this one is not and as such our market audience was diluted and it showed in the attendance on the mound. All the rest of the Slamfest races had a huge spectator turn out, but it only took a casual observation to see that today our spectator numbers were just not there.

This was not the only challenge today. Usually the Slamfest is operated under the Slamfest schedule but this did not happen at Mildura. We ran Slamfest on schedule but the race track struggled with timing issues and ran late into the night well after the Slamfest was completed where normally the final race is the last pair of Slamfest cars with a grand finish... didn't happen here. Ray Treasure works hard to keep us all on schedule but this was obviously out of his control. As the Slamfest series continues lessons are learned on many fronts and from conversations we have had ... these mistakes won't be repeated.

We are only observers in the leadership of Slamfest and our observations are that Slamfest is growing and learning. We participate in Slamfest and as such we provide content to the show. Sometimes our content is better than other times, every race we go to we want to qualify number one and win the race, resetting both ends of the track record is always a bonus. This is a very high standard we set for ourselves and or standards frequently exceeds our operating budget and like all of us we have to live within our financial situation. If Top Doorslammer was easy everyone would be doing it.

We race in a tough category and in a perfect world we would go to the starting line with the best most optimized package available but that only exists in a perfect world and apparently we don't live there.

Racing has taken a toll on our limited budget and a spare parts supply.

Regional tracks require a different combination of tune up and configuration of the race car. The more marginal the race track the bigger the challenge and the more compromises a tuner has to make to the package one would use on a smooth high traction race track.

In that perfect world we know what we want to put in for our "package" to get the United Tools Corvette to the stripe as quick as possible. But those parts aren't on our shelf and even the second choices are all used up, so we put in the car what we have, which is really too aggressive for a Willowbank Winternationals package, but it is what we have now we have to figure out how to stick it to this track. We just have to tune around it. The alternative is to stay home and complain how we didn't have the right parts to compete. We know we will not have an optimum package and we hope we don't

embarrass ourselves too much. We want to race so we are going to be here to fly the flag for United Tools, Castrol and LOWE Fuel Systems.

We don't expect a lot of race track on the ground when we visit the regional tracks since they just don't have the budget, equipment or the level of performance that Sydney, Brisbane or Perth will see. That's OK because as long as both lanes are the same we can make it a race. When we first get to a track the first thing we do is have a look at the starting line and the braking area. Sometimes it is what we expect, and we don't expect much and sometimes we are pleasantly surprised. We had not raced at Mildura previously, with this track making it the 85th track Ken has raced at, we didn't expect much at Mildura but we were pleasantly surprised as the track was better than we anticipated, which mitigated our compromised package.

After looking at the track we waited until the final track prep was done to put our first qualifying round tune up in the car knowing that the race track would improve with each set of Top Door cars going down the track. In the first session we ran a 4.26 which was the quickest of the session and although we were happy to be where we were considering our marginal combination we wanted a teen out of it and thought the track would hold it in the next session.

In the next qualifying session we made a minor adjustment to the package and Russ was concentrating on the start line RPM and left late which is OK but Benny decided he needed to use our lane too and took out the finish line reflectors negating our ET. This was the qualifying round that counted and the Slamfest organizers decided we had no ET so we were put at the back of the pack and had to race the quickest qualifier in the final session – Peter Kaperias.

Knowing we had to throw everything at it we stepped on the package just a little and I mean a little bit and wound up smoking the tires at the top of low gear which led to a nice bit of shake and ended our weekend. Our 20 runs put us in the top of the middle of the pack and considering our compromised package we felt OK with our performance. We really need some extra parts to allow us to respond to less than optimum race tracks.

This was our first, first round loss in the Slamfest series for this year. One has to be a bit philosophic about it, after all being philosophical is the refuge of a first round loser, and sooner or later we are all there.

Since we didn't have a lot to do we prepped the car for going back in the trailer.

As mentioned previously, the day before we had been given a box of grapes that were about half gone by now and they were delicious but it was a BIG box and there were heaps left over. That night after everything was packed up and all the pressures were off there was a bit of stress relief needed and it all started with one grape being thrown (the names have been withheld to protect the guilty) it turned into a grape free for all with several teams all involved in the Great Grape War of 2012. It was cold so Ken being the mature one retreated into the warmth and safety of the rental car, locked the doors and turned the heater on and observed one of the funniest things he has seen at a race track in a long time. Too bad the video camera was out of reach in the boot of the car.

All big wars end and this one did as well, eventually the ammunition ran out and the grape stained participants stopped laughing, wiped themselves off and we all headed for our respective showers and beds for the night. Did I mention drag racing is fun or at least from the view inside the rental car.

The next morning we organize ourselves back into the rental car, make our way to the airport and catch our flight back to Melbourne and then on to Brisbane along the way we discuss our strategy for the teams future as always with the amount of available funds in consideration. We know what we need, and now we have to figure out how to pay for it.

Next stop is Sydney, then for us it is the Winternationals then back on the Slamfest tour doing the northern rotation at Gladstone, Townsville, Darwin and Alice.