RUSS Pavey and KEN Lowe Race Report

Summary of our ANDRA Winternationals Race at Willowbank

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 Willowbank Raceway Queensland

Crew: Peter Richards, Brett Roberts

Tuesday

Russ, Pete and Robbo have put in a new set of rods, two new pistons and have all the clutch parts ground up with a fresh clutch in the car. The car has been completely apart for some chassis changes and a freshen up on the diff. Damn these things are a heap of work. Ken flies in mid day from his work away. Robbo has the flu so Russ sends him home so he won't infect the rest of us.

Wednesday

Still putting the car together we are down to the 10.000 five minute jobs. Ken takes the computer down to the workshop to test out the data logger and insure the MSD8973 will talk to the computer. Everything is checking out well and the data logger is reading all of our 28 channels as we test them all.

We have three digital channels that we use to monitor events. Ken has put pressure actuated stop light pressure switches on the LENCO air shift lines and when the car is shifted the switch closes and it indicates an event on the data logger with a 12v signal, so we know when the gear change was made, and which one the driver made first. We tested this circuit by putting a bit of metal across the terminals. When we did this while Ken was watching the screen, all the data channels all went to the max settings and we got a bit of arc and smoke. Everyone knows that electrical wires run on smoke and if you let the

smoke out the wire doesn't work anymore so it must be the smoke that makes electrical things work. A late night phone call to Oklahoma we hear that "Oh if you put 12 volts to that wire it will short out the ground circuit." We wish that little nugget of information was in the installation instructions. For about 3 nano seconds we consider running the car without the data logger. The fact that is, that with these kind of cars, it is just a waste of time as if you don't have data you have NO IDEA where you are. We may be sitting this race out. Major depression all round.

Thursday

Upon inspection of the data logger Russ found the burnt earth wire and used a bit of solder to reconnect it. It seemed to work OK. Finish the car, reinstall the data logger. Robbo is still not well, Pete and Russ are working afternoons on the car after working mornings at work. Ken is running around trying to get 250 things done in the couple of days until he has to fly out again after the Winternationals.

Friday

The Winternationals starts and all the sportsman cars are qualifying. Ken and Pete takes the Drag Race School car down and sits it up for display to promote the Drag Race School and to show people how they can try Drag Racing without having to purchase a car. Pete bolts off to the Gold Coast to help Russ with the car.

Russ and Pete arrive with the car on a tilt tray at almost 10pm just before the front gates close at Willowbank for the night. We unload set up for tomorrow.

Saturday

We get to the track just in time to get the car ready to go to the start line for first round of PRO qualifying. A quick check of the data logger Ken finds that most of the data systems are operational, some are not and some are giving silly information, so we use what we have. Sounds typical for us, doesn't it?

We have changed our combination in the car to follow our development plan. We don't have all the stuff on the car just yet, as we need to solidify our base line before we add the additional hardware, that and some of the stuff we thought we had… well it wasn't what we ordered. When we ordered the new clutch some time ago we ordered some additional bits that would allow us to expand our development package but upon opening the plastic bag we found they had sent us the wrong parts. Up until now we have had a standard non lock up clutch in the car, even though we thought we had the lock up stuff on hand and was part of our long range plan, our development program was not ready for the lock up option until this point in time. Well we are ready for it now, for the first time our data is telling us we are going to need a lock up clutch. This is because we need less counterweight on the first part of the run but if we only take counterweight off the clutch it won't work in high gear as we already have 60 RPM difference between ERPM and DRPM at the finish line. For the first time we need the lock up to optimize our current development. It must also be pointed out that Ken still has a single main jet fuel system on the car too.

First qualifying session

Now we have a bit of data on the old combination and now we have to consider the new development strategy. Track is pretty good, so how much can we throw at it? We make the adjustments and take it to the starting line. First run is clean safe and straight. ET is not exactly what we was hoping for as it only gave us a 6.15 @ 236mph but encouragingly it showed us that we can throw a bunch more at it. Not too bad for a first shot.

Second qualifying session

This stuff looks easy from the grandstands but you must know it is always a challenge for the driver to do everything right from start to stripe and usually Russ gets it right. Russ did everything right on the first pass and everything wrong on the second pass. Good, now we have that out of the way. The pass was quicker though even with everything that went wrong on the run. It gave us a 6.11 @ only 221 mph. You take whatever information you can get from any pass but you do have to stay on the throttle all the way to the finish line. On that run he was off the throttle at 5.71 seconds and had a pedal in the middle of low gear and we don't even want to talk about the start line dance so the 6.11 doesn't look too bad.

Sunday

Last day of qualifying. As we sit right now we are out of the field of 8 cars. Our new combination is using more of the power we can make so Ken steps it up a bit more. Our first round of qualifying today happens at 3:26pm. Track is in good shape and Russ does everything absolutely right inside the car and we get a 6.032 @ only 240.98, a small improvement in our PB,ET but our mph is down 6 miles per hour from last year Winternationals where we ran 246.6 for the second quickest mph for the event as Peter Kaperias ran 246.7 mph. That is only .10 mph faster. We are starting to doubt the replacement camshaft we have in the car. We had to swap it out when we broke a lifter in Sydney last. This puts us in the field… for a few moments until Victor steps up to a 6.00 and knocks us off our perch. One more qualifying pass and we know we do have a little bit more in the combination, as we had decided to approach the combination gradually and not step over it.

Our final shot at the field happens at 7:02pm and we have hopped it up to give us our first 5 which is what it will take to get us in the field. We were supposed to qualify two hours ago and by now the track has cooled considerably. Ken can dial the combination back to get down the track but that is not what it will take to get in the field. At this point as a tuner you have to put the tune up in the car and hope the track holds. Again Rusty does his job well, the car launches perfectly giving us our best 60 foot of the weekend but alas as soon as the car gets to the top of low gear and the boost is high and the engine is making the power … sadly the track is just not there for us and the car blows the tires off. As soon as Rusty has to pedal it, is all over, not going to happen this weekend. Everyone except Zap had trouble getting down the track on that session. We are sure Zap is got a deal with the devil as we have seen him get down some really questionable surfaces. In fact we are sure we know what he is doing, not the details but the concept… we just have to work out the details and that is exactly what we are doing a little bit at a time… or as quick as our miniscule budget will allow.

We are disappointed, naturally as we came here to win this thing, but in fact we got to use a great track on which to chase our combination and our development program is coming along well. Not too bad for

a home made car, and an unpaid team with a tent and a box of tools. It may be worthwhile to know that Russ sold the trailer to pay for some new parts. Well that is kind of true, the trailer was sold because it did not fit the big plan, but the money was used to buy some new parts. Now we have to decide on a container or a bigger trailer. Thankfully for the Slamfest series the very kind people, Vic and Ben Bray have VERY helpful is letting us use the open spot in their trailer. I heard one comment over the weekend that Vic should be running ANDRA. Ken thought… why not?

Monday

Most of you already know – RAIN. When the race is finally called at 3pm and rescheduled for the next day, some of the teams who are qualified realize that due to other commitments they cannot attend. Since we are first alternate that puts us back in, well it would have except tomorrow half our team, Ken and Robbo are both on airplanes to work at 6am and Pete and Russell cannot run the car by themselves. We are a bit disappointed but take heart in the fact that our development program is progressing so well. If we just had a little financial help it would solve so many problems. Well if a bullfrog had wings he wouldn't bump his ass on the rocks would he?

Tuesday

After the rain the race was run on Tuesday and when qualified cars had to leave, that put us in but we too had to withdraw and that put Benny in. We are so happy that he got as he and Vic have helped us so much. Today Ken is on the plane off to the next job and Robbo is on a plane as well, making sales calls up north.

The next race for us is the 28 July Slamfest race in Townsville. We have some things we are going to change on the car before that race but we know this is not a rotate the earth start line there so we are going to work on our regional track combination. Ken hasn't raced in Townsville yet so this race will be Kens 88th different race track he has raced at.
We hear Hidden Valley Raceway in Darwin is pretty good so might be able to try some stuff there, we haven't been there before either.

Ken spoke to Crower today and learned the additional bits we needed for the lock up clutch are on the way now.

Things to do…

Get the camshaft out and get it checked out on a cam doctor. We are all wondering where our 6 mph went from last years Winternationals. Last year in the same air we ran 246.6 mph with only Kaperias running a 246.7 or only .1 mph faster than we did and Kaperias had top speed of the event. This weekend we ran 240.1, it was down at the 1/8th as well. Our overall package is better so we ran a quicker ET than last year but we reckon we are 350-400 hp down on last year. The problem we suspect is the camshaft. We did change the cam a few weeks ago after Sydney, where we broke a lifter on the first run. The change was necessary due to the damaged original camshaft but we could not get an exact replacement. Although we have heard of some teams having success with the cam we have now, Ken doesn't think any of them have run the mph we have. Ken uses mph as a barometer for the amount of power the combination makes because at the stripe, power is all you have. The old cam and new cam

both going on the Cam Doctor. It should pointed out that we also changed to the 1” lifter which will effect cam timing as well. We will have to wait for the Cam Doctor results before we decide what to do.

It should also be pointed out that the fuel system is still a single main jet system because Ken has resisted putting the stepped system (already built and ready for the car) on the car until we can figure out how to use all the power we are making on the starting line. His philosophy is that if you can’t use all you have why make more. He feels the slow and steady method produces better and more reliable and predictable results. It is just as important to figure out what doesn’t work as what does work so you don’t try the wrong things and go off on a tuning tangent.
Also since we are a non existent budget team we can’t afford to hurt anything but as we inch up on the “package” we are willing to melt a piston if necessary because as Ken says, pistons are only one notch above a spark plug on the performance food chain. Remember this though just nuking a piston doesn’t make it go fast, a good combination makes it go fast. A burnt piston only tells you that you are at the edge of one part of your tune up.

Data logger back to the manufacturer for a tune up.
Give it a hone and a fresh set of rings.

Slamfest Dates for the Traveling Magic Show

Townsville 28 July
Gladstone 11 Aug
Darwin TBA
Alice TBA

Damn that is a good looking car. No wonder it is so popular with the crowd.

Ugly skies and the stands are still packed.

Wednesday 27 June – Ken has flown home yesterday and is back in town and Russ and Ken are going over the Cam Doctor data. Crower lock levers have arrived. Get the lock up levers installed to put the bell housing on so the lock up cylinder can be mounted on the bellhousing correctly. Pete was by Ken's shop yesterday finishing the headers for the Supercharged Outlaws car.

Once we get the lock up installed in the car at some point during the run it will have to be actuated or turned on. We can do this several ways, a timer from the beginning of the run, from an even during the run such as a gear change, or an event and a timer if you want to delay the actuation from the beginning of the event or just a separate button for the driver to push to lock up the clutch. Which would be best do you think?

We would like to invite all of you to participate in our tune up development by sending us an email to kenlowe1957@hotmail.com with what you think an optimum actuation method.

Thanks for participating. Stay tuned for more Racer Diary Updates.