

RUSS Pavey and KEN Lowe Race Report



Summary of our last few races, Heathcote, Portland and Perth

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 Heathcote Victoria - Slamfest

Crew: Peter Richards, Brett Roberts

I have to start by giving a heap of thanks to Vic and Ben Bray for hauling our stuff around the country. We don't own a trailer; in fact we sold the little trailer as we had to buy some engine parts with the money. If it were not for Vic and Ben the United Tools Top Door Corvette would sit in the garage.

This is our first race of the new season. We have a few new bits on the car. We have changed camshafts to try to get back to where we were before we broke the lifter in Sydney last year. Pete made a new set of headers for the car. Ken has made the parts for the clutch lock up.

Race Report from Heathcote Victoria - Slamfest

Mid-year 2012 we broke a lifter at Sydney which damaged our camshaft. Then we ran a few Slamfest Races prior to the Winter Nationals where our qualifying attempt was a 6.03 which put us in number 9 position, just on the outside looking in. Even though at the time it was a PB-ET, Ken was troubled with the performance as the MPH was down from the previous year. Ken sees MPH as a barometer of horsepower but often other considerations must be calculated but in the end that is the guide we operate by. We don't often get to run on a great track where we had turn up the performance so this was disappointing. Still we think we have lost some horsepower, just not sure where. As usually you always go back to the last thing you changed, in this case the camshaft. Prior to Heathcote we had the camshaft on a Cam Doctor looking for a problem but none was to be found. We had changed to the 1" lifter after Sydney and thinking the larger roller might be giving us a different profile we got a special cam made just for the 1" lifter. We check compression, inspect the blower, we look for the gremlin in all the logical places. Sure we find little things, but in the end we are sure we are looking for something

bigger but it is time to go racing so we load up and head to Heathcote.

We make our laps to qualify and do OK but still Ken is not happy with the cars performance, so much so that a few people comment to Russ, what is wrong with Ken? Not really antisocial, but kinda grumpy. He looks like a kid that just dropped his lollypop in the dirt.

In the first round of eliminations we had our competitor covered by about half a second making it really disappointing when Russ red lit. In fact, Russ does much better when he is under pressure, there he can saw the tree down, but if there is margin in place between us and our competitor he can let his mind wander a bit and think about things other than driving like asking himself if something got tightened. This was one of those cases. Our first race of the season, and now that he has used up all is mistakes now so we can move on to the next race.

After struggling at Heathcote we disassemble the car leaving no preverbal stone unturned, and finally the ah-ha moment. We find a bad plug wire. One of Kens "rules" are that you put a new set of plug wires on every season and we had discussed that, but when funds are short you make compromises and this was one compromise that should have not been made. Hindsight is a wonderful thing isn't it? Would have been wonderful if we put a new set of plug wires on but we just replace the bad one. Stop, I can hear you now telling me now that this was crazy, and yes it was, but you aren't looking at our financial balance sheet or should I say our financial imbalance sheet. If you get a chance go to the MSD web site and have a look at the MSD44 on a test bench and you can appreciate how hard the spark plug wires work. The 44 throws lightning bolts!!!

Race Report from Portland Victoria - Slamfest

This was the first race with the lock up mechanism that Ken made. The actuation timer was not done so we used a separate trigger event to start the lock up, it wasn't what we wanted but it was what we had for the day. We installed a separate, driver actuated, button so the driver could lock up the clutch in the event of a short shift, hopefully it won't be necessary. Start line here is pretty good but the track runs out of grip about the 250-300 foot mark so we tried to compensate for that with our 8973. Not exactly what we wanted but this was what we had to work with today.

First run was in the right lane (the better one). You can see the run on the Slamfest Facebook page accessible from www.Slamfest.com.au. We ripped off a 4.146 for the track record. We thought that was pretty impressive considering all the other racers that were here on the day. We held the record for just over three hours before Zap took it away from us. That's OK because that only means we are running with the big dogs.

We got put in the left lane to qualify and the start like is pretty good but sadly the left lane is heaps worse out at the 350-300 foot mark. Our performance in that lane was not impressive and just about everyone who qualified in the right lane got in the field and had lane choice in eliminations. On the Slamfest Facebook web site, in this same lane, you can see Sean Mifsud absolutely blow the tires off the beautiful Camaro of John Cannulis' and sadly the car made a hard turn and tried to eat the wall.

We got in the field and did not have lane choice; we got put in the left lane and sadly did not win. You might think we would be disappointed or upset because of the lane situation and we always want to win but we know what Slamfest is. It is a chance for us to take Top Door racing out to venues that seldom if ever see this type of show. We get good crowds and the crowds are very appreciative of our efforts. The pay structure is quite good so even if you don't perform all that well so the pay sure goes a long way,

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maybe not as far as we would like it, but it is sure better than anything else around. Our first run with the lock up feature on our clutch gave very promising results. Now to fit a timer to the system so we can engage it when we really want to ... and then adjust it to optimize it.

The car gets loaded back in Vic's trailer and we fly home and the car is on the way to Perth.

Race Report from Perth Western Australia – ANDRA Western Nationals

We have a heap of work to do to the car, both maintenance and implementation of our development plans.

Pete was in Perth a week prior to the race, working in his paying job. Ken and Russell flew over on Thursday with a suitcase full of parts to get an early start on the maintenance and to add some of the hardware we created to enhance the new lock up clutch mechanism and to introduce for the first time a single step fuel management device. At least get it on the car so that when desired it can be turned on. Over two years ago Ken constructed a very nice complete fuel management system for the car but our development plans were not ready for it. Everyone knows if you don't have the base system right, the only thing tricks will do, is get you lost.

Robbo and Russ's wife Carolyn both flew over on Friday. By Friday evening when Robbo arrived with the freshly ground flywheel in his luggage along with some other parts, and Pete had arrived from his paying job here in Perth and we got the fresh clutch in the car. Pressure plate had not been ground as we only have one and it did the three laps at Portland previously but disks, floaters and flywheel were all fresh. We really need a fresh pressure plate though. By the time this was done it was 11pm (in Perth) and we were still on Q time which for us was 1:00am. We still had some work to do on the car but we needed our beauty sleep, some of us needed it more than others.

Since we have nothing but one race car, a box of tools and a pop up tent Lindsey and Wendy Catallaino and their son Shaun and Ivan King and his son Michael were extremely generous and we used their race car trailer to work out of and sleep in as well as they assisted us greatly. The shower facilities here at Perth are quite good and this greatly reduced our cost of attending this race. Ivan brought his cooker and made his famous fish and chips. We ate like kings no pun intended. Ivan has a standing open invitation to all of our races.

Our first qualifying run we were trying a little more RPM on the start line and it pulled Russ through the beams starting the clocks before he opened the throttle with a very poor 6.69ET. After some adjustments on the second run we ran a sunning 6.37 (sarcasm). Ken looked at the combination and nothing made sense. There was no apparent reason why the car had lost 500 horsepower. The logic was it had to be an ignition problem. We were pitted next to Vic and Ben and Ben stopped by to see what was going on with us and we told him that we had an ignition problem and naturally we have NO spare parts. Ben turned and went back to his trailer, picked up a double arm load of plugs, coils, mags and came back and said do you need any of this stuff, if there is something else you need come over and get it. The problem was a bad plug lead, (another one), I don't know why after all they are only five years old (sarcasm again). Not sure if some of the "improvements" we have made were the problem we "ran home to mama" meaning we put our standard tune up in the car for the qualifying session.

We dash out and just barely time to make the final qualifying session and as soon as Russ starts the burnout you can hear it, you know it is OK now... now Ken just hopes things aren't too aggressive and we

can find the stripe without blowing the tires off the car. Lights flash yellow, Russ steps on the throttle and we get a 6.01 on the score board (and with a good 0.991 60 foot number) this puts us in at 5th. Before the session is over we end up in 6th Fabetti is low at 5.92 but no one else is in the 5's so far. The air at the track today is weird, everyone is talking about it, there is a heap of moisture in the air for Perth and it takes a bit of sorting out to optimize your tune up. Grains per pound are way over 100. +



Our clutch working HARD. Sparks coming out the bellhousing vent hole in the bottom.

Our sixth place qualifier put us up against Vic in round one tomorrow. We get to race the very people who loaned us the parts to qualify with. Ya have to love drag racers, they are the most generous people on the planet and we have to put Vic and Ben at the top of that list.

Ken and Russ discuss the tune up for eliminations. There are some things we "know" will make us go quicker (we have all been there) so do we throw them in the soup or do we run what is in the car now. We decide to not tinker with the tune up and take it to the starting line as we know this will find the finish line with no problem. Now it just has to be fast enough to find the finish line before Vic does.

Race day the air was a bit worse than qualifying day but we stick to our plan. Russ reckons he was going to tree the old man but the "old man" had few tricks up his sleeve and the race was pretty clean on the start line although Vic did have a slightly better reaction than Russ did, but not by much. We ran a 6.06 and Vic ran a 6.03, it was a squeaker at the stripe, but the squeak went to Vic. Congratulations to him, we played it safe and found the stripe under power while a few others didn't but we needed a bit more. None the less we are happy with our level of performance. There has been some success and Ken doesn't look like he just dropped his lollypop in the dirt any more.

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Russ and Ken decide to use the track again to test some things. Sadly we know our clutch is toast by now. It has five runs on it. Some competitors change out for a fresh pack for each round, we don't have the parts to do that. We know the clutch is going away as we have worn well over 0.050 off and have not refaced it since the fresh pack went in on Friday night. You can see it in the 60 foot numbers. The 6.06 against Vic was 1.02 in the 60 foot. It is bad enough that when you check the air gap on both sides of the clutch... it is different by a bit. That tells you that you have some lumps on the pressure plate and possibly the flywheel. Ken wanted to get a test pass in to test some changes in the fuel system so we asked if we could have a test run.

The test run for us gave us another great 6.014 with only a 1.06 60 foot as the clutch pressure plate must have big lumps and craters on it by now. The test run, especially with the slower 60' showed us that the tune up change Ken made was a nice improvement. Ken has built a clutch grinder so we can grind up the clutch once we get back and before the next race but can't do that at the race track. A few bucks would get us some more clutch parts so we could have ground up parts ready to go in the bellhousing between rounds. Ken says he would be happy if we had the parts to qualify on one clutch and then put in a fresh one for first round. Ken says he has dreams of having his clutch grinder in the trailer, when we get a trailer.

At the end of it we were pretty happy with our results, ya, we didn't win our round but considering our resources we think we are doing OK. We have one car, one box of tools and a popup tent. Our performance level is on par with the rest of the qualified field at this race and our consistency is very good as well as we have strung together three 6.0 passes in a row now. That has to be something doesn't it? Now if we only had a budget that did not have all negative numbers in it.

We pack up the car and our tools and put everything in Vic's trailer; it is 4am when we lay our heads down to get up at 6am to catch a plane back to Brisbane. Sadly no sleep on the plane either as the seats were hard and uncomfortable. We are zombies getting off the plane.

We had no plans to go to Sydney as we have no money and we were going to just do the Winter Nationals as the next race. Ken is putting pressure on Russ and Russ is putting pressure on Russ to find the money to go to Sydney. Don't get me wrong, Slamfest is great and we love doing it and getting the car to the stripe on marginal tracks is a fun challenge but we don't get to race on good tracks enough to chase our good track tune up. We need to go to Sydney.

