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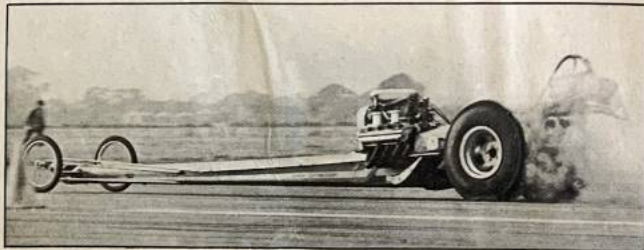


Clive also had a Donovan on order for his car, which didn't go in until mid season, by which time the incredible 'launch' of the car was already legendary. At Silverstone he ran a 6.6, whilst Priddle, having trouble getting his new car 'dialled-in', drove both his cars on different occasions, even running the old engine in the new car at one time.

The races themselves are recent enough



Above: Iron nerves but just a hint of strain from the build-up days before the event—but the effort pays off; Dennis takes the winning time and the champagne. Below: Dennis puts Mr Six through its paces at Elvington during attempts on Land Speed Records



MAY 1974

not to need going into in great detail here, but because of an allegiance that Dennis made with Santa Pod Raceway to run only at that track, the two didn't meet for some time. Clive, as a partner in Clive Lanson Enterprises, had already promoted a meeting at Blackbushe the year before, and for the first three of the six NDRC events he promoted in 1973, he raced against Roland Pratt in his old car, which, although good, was not the match that people really wanted to see. This unfortunate situation went on for some time, with Clive missing a couple of meets at the Pod owing to insufficient prize money, before he entered the first round of the prestigious Internationals series, and surprisingly lost to Dennis, who managed a terrific hole-shot, at 6.63 to 6.8. At the third round Clive won, when Dennis broke his rear-end in qualifying and Tony Nancy lost his clutch in the final. Running his new Donovan for the first time, Clive made an easy 6.93, but whilst Dennis had been driving his old car again, Norm Wilcox had come over and sorted out his new car to the tune of a 6.55, so things were shaping up again for some interesting races. The big race had still to come; all the events to date had led up to the one big day, when we would find out if Dennis' win had been a fluke—to be fair, there had been some confusion about an 'instant green' start that Clive had not been informed about at the first International—or was he still the boss?

At the Nationals at Santa Pod, we found out; Dennis got down to 6.7 in his new car, Clive worked down steadily to 6.8 at 220, improved on this on the way to the final with a 223 run at 6.69, then waited for Dennis to win his round with a 6.78 at 181. The tension was quite incredible by then; this one race had more prestige hanging on it than any other in the history of the sport in this country, and as the two cars pulled into the stage area for their burn-outs, you could cut the air with a knife. With sudden-death speed, it was Clive away first, then Dennis with a nose out front, then Clive again, with his terrific top end taking him through with a 6.72/221 to a quicker but losing 6.68/210. Clive said afterwards that even when he saw the other car just ahead at mid-distance he knew he would

take it, because his car was so much stronger at the top end.

After this they met several times, with Dennis appearing at Blackbushe following a split with Santa Pod, and with the NDRC's rather dodgy timing equipment, Clive won with what should have been a red-light run if they had been working properly. At Long Marston, with Roland Pratt, they won one round each on an indifferent surface, Skilton winning by virtue of lowest e.t. of the day. Returning to Blackbushe, Priddle avenged himself with an even more fraudulent start—one that cost Skilton the Castrol/RAC Championship, as he had won the first five rounds. Clive finished the year with a best of 224mph at the Castrol finals at Santa Pod, with Dennis devoting more time to his new Funny Car.

Looking back on some of the political in-fighting that went on, many of the details of which will remain shrouded in mystery, it does look as if things are improving at long last, with Dennis openly regretting having tied himself down to one strip, and aiming to run wherever he can this year, as he did in the last months of '73.

Clive remains as the most publicity-conscious character in drag racing, and has done the entire sport a lot of good. As a promoter, he is out to make money, which is fair enough, but all his events have been well run from a promotional point of view, whilst the spectator facilities have also been excellent. Few racers have had any reason to complain at bad treatment or insufficient money, and it is evident that he is putting much back into the sport. It was only doubt about his intentions that first started the quarrel between the two factions, so again, there can be little reason for this to continue now.

Finally, what do they think of each other? Asked the same question, Dennis grinned and thought for a moment: 'As a person, he's a very nice guy—he's certainly done the sport a lot of good. As a driver he's lousy! Seriously, I just want to see that in print! Like the rest, he has his good days, and he has his bad days.'

Clive's response was slower. 'That's an awkward one. What did he say about me? I think we respect each other alright—but he's certainly a different type of person to me. A lot of people say that he's an introvert, but I don't think he is underneath—when he's by himself he is more of an extrovert!'

Although I got the impression that neither was saying what he really thought, it would appear that they rate each other more highly than has sometimes been suggested. With Dennis concentrating on one car, and Clive updating his, this season should continue to be just as exciting as the past ones, but backing a likely winner would be very unwise at this stage.

JOHN DICKSON'S



DRAG RACING

As you read this the season will now be under way with both practice and first meetings history; too late, however, for reports to make this page.

Writing a drag racing column when there's no drag racing going on is a bit of a problem. Even the American scene is a little quiet now—as I write that is—although Clive Skilton has again been over to the Winter Nationals at Pomona, for his third attempt at qualifying in one of the NHRA major events. The 'once a year' facility has never been famous for traction, and in an attempt to improve this, the track had been resurfaced prior to the event. With the various aluminium blocked motors dominating the Ontario Super Nationals in the shape of Donovans, Chevrolets, one new Keith Black alloy motor and of course Don Garlits' 'killer engine', the Milodon 426 (or Seven Litre to give it its official name), it looked as if the reign of the iron 426 was over, just as the 392 faded out a few years ago as a serious front runner. Donovan replied to the Milodon by debuting his long-awaited heads for his 392 based engine, with ports like the Channel Tunnel increasing the air-flow of the engine by some 30%. But the real aim was to beat Garlits, with whatever engine it took to do the job.

Skilton was driving John

Durkee's 'Pegasus', which contrary to reports in another well-known publication, has a stroked 426, not a Donovan. Clive drove this at the SuperNats it may be remembered, and has been offered a ride just about whenever he wants.

At Phoenix, a week before the event, he qualified 12th, but red-lit in the first round. Unfortunately, Clive had quite an 'incident' at Pomona when the 'chute failed to open on his first qualifying attempt. He apparently 'smashed' the car at about 80mph; though he only sustained cuts and bruises, the unlucky Durkee's car suffered considerably.

Back home, in the absence of any meetings, the NDRC and the BDR & HRA both held their dinner/dances, each of which were enjoyable affairs, well organised and run.

The NDRC's was first, with awards going to Brian Bucknall in the shape of the VW from Clive Lanson Enterprises for winning the NDRC championship, and Robin Tallis for taking the Castrol championship with his Junior Street Mini. The Manufacturers' Cup went to Basil Wales of the BLMC Special Tuning Dept for their narrow victory over Ford and Chrysler in the production classes—an unexpected victory, and one that is sure to spark an all-out effort from the rival make drivers this year.

Pete Atkins' 'Formula One' outfit awarded a trophy to Derek Benbow and John Fullerton for the best turned-out car and team with their immaculate injected 421 Pontiac rail, John Whitmore justly took the Mechanic of the Year award for his work on his 1300cc rail, whilst Kevin Pilling picked up the Smokiest Burn-out award!

The following weekend, Dave Lee Travis and his disco provided the entertainment at the BDR & HRA evening, and as an avid drag fan he livened up the evening considerably. Brian Taylor, who recently started up drag racing's first promotional outfit with Mike Startup, also had a good line in jokes as he introduced the various

prizewinners.

Castrol Championships went to Dave Stone and Ray Hoare in Top Comp and Top Dragster, with Kevin Pilling and Pete Andrews (who was not actually present) taking the two STP titles in Pro Stock and Top Street. Roz Prior was predictably voted the Most Exciting Newcomer to the sport, whilst Tony Dickson went through a painful five minutes in accepting his Red Light Trophy—a helmet with flashing red light on top, as if you hadn't guessed.

Among the rumours circulating at these events was one to the effect that Jim Read, whose 390 Ford rail surprised a few people last year with its performance if not its looks, had bought the 'Mr Six' chassis from Dennis Priddle, less engine and clutch, and had a gas dragster engine on the way from the States to run in Top Dragster. This will make an interesting addition to the host of injected fuel rails that are contesting this class this year—outright class records for the two types are nearly identical in the States, in spite of the gassers no longer having their own class to run in.

Dennis himself will be concentrating on the Revell rail, and unless additional backing comes along, it is unlikely that the Avenger Funny will be seen at all this year.

The economic situation has obviously led to a lot of tightening of the purse-strings of companies who were either increasing or starting their involvement in the sport, so in the Top Fuel ranks it is likely to be a continuation of the Skilton-Priddle battle, with the rest lacking the finance to really get on terms with them. One other leading team has ambitious plans for a new rear engine late model Hemi car, but again, this revolves around a sponsor coming along. One change in the Skilton camp is Phil Cornish, who has taken over Don Beadle's job as chief wrench, and has already impressed everyone with his work.

News on the Funny Car front is that Roland Pratt and Mike

Derry have bought Ed Shaver's Reliant-based Funny that appeared in early 1973 but never actually ran. After lengthening the chassis and body they will install the engine from their ill-fated Transcontinental Funny. Pat Cuss has done the body work again, and has also built a car himself at long last. This is a rather short dragster with an injected 354 Hemi, the frame itself having been part of a stillborn project that originally had a blown 283 Chev; one more for Top Dragster!

The STP Funny Car will now be known as 'Hounddog 7', Santa Pod Raceway, the owners, having failed to come to an agreement with STP over the terms of their contract. Considering that the other cars on the circuits that have STP backing are more than happy with the arrangements, this is rather strange, but hopefully someone else will now benefit from their help, and give as much in return.

Mark Stratton is building a new rear engine Funny Car with plans based on the Dunn and Reath car in the States. Dunn's car has never quite made it against the conventional Funnies, despite winning at Ontario in '72, but has proved a consistent mid-six car. At present the team are alternating between the Funny body and a streamliner for Top Fuel racing! Mark's new car has a fresh motor with all the right parts in it, and will carry the same body as last year. The old chassis has gone to Walt Ithel, who will be known by long-time drag fans for his incredible twin engine 'Rocket' style dragster some five years ago. Word is that this time, he could be on to a winner.

Further news about Dave Lee Travis is that he will be driving the Stones' Chevrolet/Escort Street Altered in the Pro Stock class at major meetings this year. Dave will be taking driving lessons in the car prior to the start of the season, which will be the last that such cars are run in the Pro Stock class; in '75 they will have a 'Silhouette' Formula similar to the so-called Super Saloons on the circuits.

FAST CAR

DRAG RACING

Regulation changes in detail

Final figures on the drag racing rules for 1974 and beyond were announced a few days ago at the BDR&HRA annual general meeting. After the result of lengthy deliberation in conjunction with the NDRC, all present agreed that at last the sport had got a structure that will be fair to everyone, and one that can be more readily understood by both new racers and public alike.

Starting with Pro-fuel, which was one of the few classes that didn't need any change, in effect all entries in this class will have to have a factored engine capacity of 10 litres and over. On an average 7-litre block, this includes a 40 per cent addition for the supercharger, and another 25 per cent on that for the use of fuel in any percentage. This 25 per cent factor applies on all competition classes where fuel is used, and is a long overdue move.

Top Dragster will comprise the fastest eight qualifiers with a capacity to weight ratio of up to 4.49 lb per cubic inch; Senior

Dennis Priddle's STP Avenger Funny Car will be brightening up the 1974 drag season.



will be the next eight from 4.5 to 5.49 lb/ci; Middle 5.5 to 6.99 lb/ci; and Junior from 7 lb/ci and up. An average of 150 lb for the driver will be added to all cars, as it has been rightly pointed out that one or two of the Junior class karts weigh less than their drivers, while all the smaller four cylinder cars are down in the ultra light range with the driver a major part of the all-up weight!

Top Competition will be for the fastest eight with a ratio of up to 2.9 lb/ci, and this will include the blown funny cars for the time being. Senior Comp will run from 3 to 4.49, and this will probably include any injected funny cars that materialise; Middle will be from 4.5 to 6.99; and Junior from 7 up, the same as Dragster.

Pro Stock remains the same for '74 with the fastest eight qualifiers meeting the classes' own rather involved weight capacity formula as last year, but will be strictly for produc-

tion-based cars in '75.

The highly modified saloons and Street altered will now be run as Super Street, with a weight factor of 7.8 to 8.99 lb/ci; Top will be 9.0 to 10.99; Senior, 11.0 to 16.99; Middle, 17.0 to 21.99; and Junior from 22.0 up. Cars listed by the RAC as sports cars and homologated production cars produced in minimum numbers of 5,000 will classify as Production while all others will be Street Altered. These will carry a 5 per cent handicap on engine size to allow for their inherent rules advantage regarding engine set-back, etc, while Front Wheel Drive cars will have a 5 per cent factor in their favour to allow for their inferior traction at the start.

Last of the major reorganisations concerns production cars of all sizes. These will be rated on manufacturer's advertised Gross HP (DIN), and start with class A at 8-9.99 lb/hp, and going down through 14 breaks to M at 55 lb and up/hp.

It may be that discrepancies will arise in these figures in the light of experience, and for future seasons they can be adjusted where necessary. By splitting the weight breakdown finer, more cars can be catered for if needed to make an even more equitable system on the lines of the American rules, which even differentiate between automatic and manual transmission cars.

Sixteen cars will qualify to race in the elimination from all classes, and they will use a handicap start based on the class record

classes, with the RAC/Castrol championship meetings included.

The BDR&HRA club championship will run all year with 10 points and 7 for winner and runner-up, and unlike previous years, there will be no bonus points for attending each meeting. Apart from a separate motorcycle championship, Dragster, Competition Altered and Pro Stock will be separate from all the Street and Production classes, with correspondingly higher prize money.

So that's the bones of the new set-up, and both clubs can take due credit for working out what could be a landmark in the development of not only British, but European Drag racing.

● Santa Pod will be running a new single beam starting system this year in line with American rules. Instead of staging the car between two beams four inches apart—the system that caused so many red-lights last year, with the clocks starting as the wheel breaks the front (stripside) beam, the new system has the wheel in the beam to stage the car, starting the clocks as it rolls out. This gives a longer staging tolerance, and although it will probably decrease times by as much as 3 tenths of a second, it should eliminate 90 per cent of the redlights caused simply by tyre and body movement.

for each car. These will be established at the first meeting this year. To stop "sand-bagging," where a driver deliberately qualifies slow to improve his draw in the racing, a 0.1s break-out rule will apply on all runs apart from the final. To give a simple example then, a 15s car will start 5s after a 20s car, so that in theory they should both arrive at the finish together. Should either go faster than his qualifying time by more than 0.1s, he will automatically lose the race unless it is the final run of the day, when such a run would then count as the class record. This break-out rule is the only weakness of the system, but to keep it fair, there is little or no alternative, and as a way of attracting newcomers to the sport with the prospect of winning, no matter what car they have, it should work well.

Both the NDRC and the BDR&HRA will run their meetings to the same system in all

Preview to the new Drag Racing season

Sunday the 24th of March sees the start of the richest-ever Drag racing championship in this country with the first round of the RAC/Castrol championship at Santa Pod. All eight rounds have attracted a lot of interest in the sport. This season more teams are concentrating on developing their existing cars rather than start new ones, and at long last the sport seems to be crystallising into well-defined classes—a move that will be encouraged by the new capacity-to-weight structure announced by both clubs recently.

Most interest is centred on the Top Dragster class, which for some time has shown promise with some good times, but has generally lacked in numbers of entries. Last year things improved with several competitive cars running within a few tenths of a second, and anything up to five new cars are scheduled to appear this year. These will either be injected fuel burning or supercharged petrol-burning, and within the reach of a wider range of entrants financially than the big AA fuel dragsters of Skilton and Priddle.

Ray Hcare turned in the best performance of all last year with his rear-engined 302 Chev, with a time of 8.98 s, and after losing oil pressure at the last but one meeting, he finished the season to prepare a new motor to compete with the predominantly big-block powered opposition. Ray has three years' experience with the class of car that should stand him in good stead, but the lack of cubic inches will obviously be a handicap to overcome.

Attracting more publicity than just about anyone else in the sport, Roz Prior burst upon the scene with the ex-Bruce Brown 454 Chev car last year, and went very well with what proved to be a tired engine to get down to low 9 s times. A rebuild with a roller cam and other improvements together with a slider clutch has been helped by both Castrol and Accles and Pollock sponsorship, and there can be little doubt that she will be right in the thick of the action.

One of the new cars will be the rear-engined 427 of Spence, Burrows and Morris, who ran the successful "Oblivion" Avenger/Chev altered last year. Among their equipment is the same roller cam that Prior is using and a Crowderglide clutch. Injection is also from Crowder, as opposed to the Hilborn set-up that Prior uses, and backing comes from D.B. Motors of Leicester.

Two "small-block" runners last year were Martin Rowat and Keith Dancy/Mike Treutlein, the latter with the famous "Chicken Coupe" Topolino-bodied device that first saw life in America untold years ago. The chassis was recently up for sale, and as (like Rowat) little has been heard about the team, presumably both are coming out with rebuilt or new cars.

Tony Anderson's blown and fuel-burning 2.5-litre Daimler will probably be one car to just stay within the top weight bracket, and will also find it hard to stay competitive, though an 8 s run from the car is quite possible with further development. Having built virtually all the parts needed to run the engine with fuel—main girdle, manifold and injection etc.—Tony is obviously capable of getting the best from the set-up, and if the rumoured switch to the bigger 4.5 engine is true, he will obviously be on a stronger footing.

Another change from the usual Chevy or Chrysler is the Benbow and Fullerton 421 Pontiac rail, which showed great promise last year, but which must start at a disadvantage to the more powerful powerplants, despite the immaculate preparation of the car.

Jim Read's recent purchase of the "Mr Six" chassis from Priddle is another interesting

variable, as he will be running a blown petrol engine imported from the US, while Pat Cuss with his Hilborn injected 354 Hemi and Brian Ringsall with the ex-Skilton front-engined "Revolution Two" with injected 392 engine will also be Chrysler powered.

At present most money would be on the Stones "Hemi-Hunter," originally conceived as an AA car, but now sporting the injected 440 from "Tee Rat." Backed up by a two-speed transmission once Gerry Andrews gets used to driving the car, it should be a potential 7 s entry. On paper that is 11 cars, with probably more as yet unannounced.

In Top Competition, the funny cars outrank the altered, as the trend gathers momentum. Dave Stone will have the supercharged engine from the dragster in a longer chassis version of last year's car, and although the engine has yet to turn in anger, he can be relied upon to get the most from the car. Old rival Phil Elson with his blown 392 "T" still has to tap the seemingly vast reserves of power that the engine has, whilst Fred Whittles's similarly unstretched Bantam replica, now in the hands of Martin Hall, can be expected to turn easy eights, with sevens in sight.

Freeman Rodgers' successful 427 Ford altered has now got the blown Ford motor from "Commuter" installed, which means he will have to run in Top, but with the amount of trouble this engine has given over the past couple of years, he will have his hands full keeping it together, but could do well with perseverance.

Of the funny cars, Liam Churchill has generally tidied up his Capri, and lowered it considerably from its rather lofty build of last year. Mark Stratton's new car, with rear-engined chassis based on the American Dunn and Reath car has one of Skilton's iron block motors for power under the same Vauxhall body, and expects great things of it. The old chassis has gone to Walt Ithel, who plans to drop a blown Chev under a Capri body later in the year. American Ed Shaver will drive Stratton's car again, and has sold his own stillborn Reliant funny to Mike Derry and Roland Pratt who, after lengthening, will fit their own 392 motor.

Now helped by STP, Dennis Priddle will be running his Avenger funny after all, and with the engine from "Mr Six," two-speed transmission and his own experience, must be the most fancied runner from the home front. The two Santa Pod-owned American funny cars, with 7.1 s to their credit, will obviously have the legs of the field on paper with their big 480 cu in late model Chrysler engines, but with a bad reliability record, could lose many races this way. Allan Herridge has shown himself more than capable of handling just about anything he sits in, and will continue with the "Stardust" car, whilst the much improved Owen Haywood will drive the "Hounddog" team car. Presumably neither will run at NDRC events, which could be a blessing in disguise in that it will enable the British cars to develop at their own pace to a competitive level, at which point some interesting races can be expected!

In the Pro Fuel class, it looks as if it will be essentially a two-horse race again, with Skilton continuing with Castrol support for his Donovan-powered car, which will have a two-speed transmission and other modifications this year, while Priddle will run his own STP/Revell-backed car in much the same form as last year. Santa Pod will again run their fearsome 426-powered "Firefly," while Mike Hutcherson will be at the wheel of the other Hounddog team car. Later in the year this will probably be replaced by a rear-engined 480 inch late hemi device patterned on Tony Nancy's car, and this could be the first real challenge to the leading two cars. Fred Whittle will be driving the second Skilton car, which according to Clive, could surprise a few people this year.

Persistent rumours say that another American-built car is in the country, though no one seems to know who owns it, but Alan Blount, who ran a twin-engined Chevrolet Top Dragster last year, is negotiating for the famous "Freight Train" twin-engined Chrysler Top Gas dragster from America. In

the last years of the petrol class in the States, this was the most successful of all, and ran several 6.9s at over 200 mph before being retired. Alan plans to switch it to fuel and improve on this.

Positions in the Senior and Middle Competition Classes will only be clear when all the entrants have been weighed and classified, but certainly the Page brothers' Topolino Chev will take some catching in Senior, with Dick Sharpe looking to close the gap in his 421 Pontiac/Austin, now with new rods, pistons and fuel injection, and Steve Short, also from Dorset has a 389 Pontiac in his Anglia 100E. Pete Atkins now has a smaller 371 Olds in his "T" after destroying his big-stroked motor last year, and will switch to petrol to stay in the class. Both the popular "Invader" and "Oblivion" altered have found new homes, and with similar 350 Chev engines will be an interesting match, and John Dickson hope to be doing my thing again with my own team's Duckhams-backed 474 Olds/Anglia, which has been far too long in the building and should have appeared last year.

"Striptease" is another to have Castrol and Accles and Pollock support this year, and with a new B&M Clutchlite transmission and Olds rear end to take the strain, no one will be surprised if it goes into the tens with its Jaguar engine; the other Jaguar and smaller V8 cars will probably end up in Middle class, depending on their weight.

The new Production and Modified classes are explained on page 49, so picking a likely winner here is not easy. Most of last year's entrants will be running again, together with quite a few more new cars. The Rose brothers Barracuda now has a 426 Hemi for power, which should do the trick over arch-rival Richard Smith in his Chevelle.

In Pro Stock there is little change, most entrants having invested so heavily last year that they are carrying on with the same cars. Of the three that went on the market, only Bennet's Nova was sold, to Roy Osbourne, of insurance fame, and after a rebuild, respray and the installation of just about the most radical camshafts known to mankind, he has stocked up with a spare motor and related parts ready for the STP championship. Gary Goggin has had some lowering and rebuilding done to his car, aimed primarily at ease of maintenance, whilst Kevin Pilling will be running his Camaro in virtually the same trim.

Pete Crane has traced his repeated engine failures to a bent crankshaft flange, and with his new injection and some bigger rubber should see some racing at last. Tony Dickson, after failing to sell his Duckhams Camaro in favour of a new car is still undecided, but will probably come out with the same car with suitable modifications a bit later in the year, but will still try and sell in preparation for 1975. Steve Osmond-Petrie rounds out the American runners, or at least the known ones, and with the recent failure of Stone's Escort/Chev in testing, and the demise of Aitkens' Capri/Chev, the field will still be small, but in theory at least, even more competitive.

With the development of Silverstone and Blackbushe, and Snetterton coming along later in the year, the sport has never looked better.

The introduction of Chrondek single beam lights will give us a direct comparison with American times for the first time, and although technically they do give "faster" times, they remain the most suitable set-up for drag racing. Improvements in the order of two tenths for fuelers to perhaps four tenths for Pro Stock type cars can be expected, but with the new class structure virtually all the existing records will have to be re-written anyway.

At the first practice meeting at Santa Pod last weekend (10th), persistent rain stopped any meaningful runs, but the large entry of predominantly street cars showed that interest in the sport is very high—promising an exciting year to come.

● The regulation changes in detail are printed on page 49.

Skilton starts well

THE new drag racing rules and classifications got their first airing last weekend at Santa Pod and for a first event after the long winter lay-off, things went well, with the new handicap eliminator showing up well to the large crowd — which suffered some pretty freezing weather on the banks and grandstands.

The entry was down on last year, not surprisingly really after the past few months, when keeping a business going has taken precedence over preparation of cars.

Unlike last year when Top Street started with nearly twenty cars, this year only a handful of vehicles were ready for the first round of the Castrol/RAC championship and the STP Top Street series as well. Richard Smith's Chevelle, now owned by Mustafa Erol, proved to be the fastest of all, with an 11.9s run during eliminations against Ivan Fryer's Mustang, but a faulty gear box gave Pete Smith the final run in his 2.5-litre Daihatsu/Mini Street Altered with a 13.8s.

The Pro Stock class had only Kevin Pilling, all other entrants being a few days away from completion at best, so he ran in Senior Competition against Dave Page in his 427 cu. in. Topolino — many of the parts of which were once Pilling's when he was running his 440 cu. in. Dodge altered.

Last year the Page brothers proved nearly unbeatable when they got their car fully sorted and with bigger tyres, new carburation and other improvements they were expecting great things. But somehow the bigger tyres seemed to be less effective than the old ones and each run started with hopeless wheelspin, though several 144 mph plus runs showed that the power is there all right.

In the final run Pilling's Pro Stock sharpened reactions had him leaving first, with Page chasing hard. So hard in fact that when the tyres finally did hook up the car veered into Pilling's lane and nearly hit the back of the Camaro forcing him to shut down as Pilling recorded his best ever at 10.44s!

The Top Competition class had the three supercharged Alters of Stone, Elson and Hall and the sight of these made one realise that they still have an appeal all of their own that the funny cars do not totally replace. Stone had to cope with the new blown engine in his familiar chassis whilst Hall had to learn to cope with a new kind of horsepower altogether after

turned an 8.2s the previous weekend in the hands of Dave Stone.

A fault in the injection lines stopped the car from making any proper runs so a hoped for match series between the car and Roz Prior in the Accles and Pollock backed 454 cu. in. Chev came to little — except for Roz who ran several nines during the day including a personal best of 9.2s. But the engine was not running right on any of the runs so an eight cannot be far away for her either.

And so to the highlight of any meeting, Pro Fuel. Favourite right from the start, Clive Skilton's Castrol car, blew a head gasket in qualifying and had to be content with an 8.2s to qualify — an unusual position for him whilst equally unusual, Santa Pod's 'Firefly' now running a new dropped front axle, led the three cars with a 7.4s run. In between was Mike Hutcherson in the other Hounddog team car. It was he that met Skilton first and he made a terrific start to lead the rear engine car by a few scant feet before the Donovan engine asserted itself and pushed the car past Hutcherson. Only 7.09s later, at 211 mph, it was over but in a repeat of his recent American experience Clive found himself without a parachute and only just stopped at the edge of the fields. Mike slowed to an 8.33s.

Allen Herridge had already run a bye at 7.9s in the brutal 426 cu. in. car and it was late afternoon before the two finalists came out to meet each other. As the green came on, the 426 cu. in. engine spat back through the blower and died. Meanwhile, with his foot hard down, Clive was smoking the tyres, well an truly hiding his progress in a vast cloud of boiling white smoke to a 7.17s at 214 mph. J.D.



CLIVE SKILTON began the drag racing season with a win in his rear engine, Castrol sponsored dragster.

Blackbushe this weekend

The NDRC's first drag meeting of the '74 season this weekend at Blackbushe, second round of the Castrol/RAC championship is the first of the three meetings at the Surrey venue this year, and despite being early in the season, has attracted a good entry of leading cars and bikes.

With Clive Skilton having won the first round at Santa Pod, Dennis Priddle will be going all out to even the score in the Top Fuel category, running his car under its STP banner for the first time. Fred Whittle will have his Top Fuel debut in 'Revolution Three', Clive Skilton's British-built 1972 car, having sold his altered to Mike Hall, who went so well at his first attempt a couple of weeks ago.

Mike will face Dave Stone again in the supercharged Chevrolet 'Tee Rat,' with Liam Churchill's Capri, Ed Shaver in Mark Stratton's new Vauxhall and Dennis Priddle in his second car, the STP Avenger. Both Liam and Mark will have to work hard to make the meeting, but if they do, it should be a first-class eliminator on Blackbushe's smokey surface.

Roz Prior and Gerry Andrews are the principal entries in Top Dragster, with Gerry out to uphold the honour of the male sex, whilst Gary Goggin and last year's STP Pro Stock champion Kevin Pilling, lead the street car entries in their Camaros.

Qualifying starts at 10 o'clock, with racing at around 1.30, and entry is £1 including admittance to the pits.



DRAG MICHAEL KEY

CRYSTAL PALACE 74. THE first impression of the Show this year was that the amount of cars was down on last year. This I was told was because out of some 300 entries the final selection was made, but a fair number did not turn up on the Friday. It was also noticeable through the day that the crowds were smaller than last year.

What was there? First I must mention Mickey Bray's Pin Ball Wizard (pictured here), a Ford Pop of some difference! The engine and auto gearbox is a 383 Chrysler taken from a Jensen. The independent front suspension is from an MGB, and of course the rear is independent Jag. But the different thing about Pin Ball Wizard is that the body lifts up like a funny car, so you can eye-ball the chassis and engine with ease. The paint was laid on by Mickey and is yellow with red fogging, enough to turn your head, but not overdone. The rest of the cars seemed to be VWs, with a few exceptions like Rays Rods who displayed two C-Cabs and a

T-Trike.

Ed Shaver had a Chevy Chevelle which had been lavishly sprayed and chromed in the usual high Shaver standard. One outstanding thing about Ed's paint was a portrait of a girl's face on the bootlid! Tee-Rat, Hemi Hunter, Tender Trap are machines owned by the Stones, and they were all at the show. Tee-Rat, my personal favourite, has had the supercharged lump from Hemi Hunter dropped into the old Tee-Rat chassis which makes it look even better. Tee-Rat is always a super clean competition Altered and if it runs as good as it looks, watch yer neck Dave! The aluminium injected engine from Tee-Rat has been fitted into Hemi Hunter, and will run in Top Dragster. Sneaky appeared at the show with a super new paint job and so did the Hounddog Team funny car.

One of the new dragsters which really stood out was Pat Cuss 126 in. wheel base Rat Catcher, a very clean look and a beautiful flame job. It

reminded me of the photos I saw in HRM's 25th Anniversary August 72 issue article on the Beach and San Gabe, where dragsters of similar size were smoking and doing wheelies away from the start. Pat has for power a 354 cu. in. Chrysler Hemi with Hillbourne injection, Donovan valve covers, Pontiac narrowed rear axle, and tube front with spoked wheels. The body was made by Pat at Fibreglass Applications, and he hopes to run 85 in Top Dragster!

● On his recent visit to the States, Clive Skilton qualified 12th at Phoenix in his sponsored ride. The next weekend Clive rolled at Pomona on a 6-sec run, the parachute failed to open and the car ran into the barrier at 70 mph and then overturned and slid upside down for 100 yards, stripping the blower from the engine and damaging the front end.

Clive was unhurt, but the crowd were treated for shock after the event!

● Who's car? Pin Ball Wizard is Mickey Bray's fabulous creation (NOTE: like Pin Ball Wizard was the name of a hit record by The Who ... joke)

