

Bonneville Speed 2013 Salt Lake Tribune Speed Demon Steals the Show



Speed Demon steals the show on Speed Week's final day

Streamliner wins award for fastest car for fifth straight year.

By TOM WHARTON | **The Salt Lake Tribune**

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Call Speed Demon the little car that can.

The California-based streamliner owned by George Poteet and Ron Main might not run as big an engine as its competitors, but it now can claim to have recorded the fastest piston-driven car time in the 65-year history of the Southern California Timing Association's Bonneville Nationals, an outing known as Speed Week.

Poteet drove the car to a top speed of 451.933 mph Friday to claim Hot Rod Magazine's trophy for Speed Week's fastest time for the fifth year in a row. The car's two-day average speed of 437.183 mph smashed the Class C Blown Fuel Streamliner mark of 390.



(Rick Egan | Tribune file photo) George Poteet stands by his car "Speed Demon" along with the Hot Rod Magazine Trophy, at the Bonneville Salt Flats during the 2011 Speed Week. This year's Speed Week runs through Friday.

That time also broke a 14-year-old mark set by the late Don Vesco in the turbine-powered Turbinator as the fastest ever recorded during Speed Week, which ended Friday on the Bonneville Salt Flats east of Wendover.

"We're running against engines twice our size," said Speed Demon owner Main. "We're the spoilers. We're like the high school football team playing against the Rams. We run a 346-cubic-inch small block engine where everybody else is running 500- and 600-cubic-inch engines."

Speed Demon recorded a 436.140 time Thursday and backed it up Friday with an average timed speed of 438.226 mph.

Main said the goal each year is to be the fastest car on the salt. Poteet has driven Speed Demon over 400 mph more than 30 times, the only driver to reach those speeds that many times.

This year's record didn't come easily.

"We came with three engines, three transmissions and three rear ends and blew up all three engines," said Main.

Speed Demon will return to the Salt Flats Sept. 12-16 for Mike Cook's invitation-only Shootout, an event the Utah-based Vesco and Nish teams seemed to be preparing for in limited runs during Speed Week.

"Bring them on," said Main. "Our engines are a mess, but we will have them back together loaded for bear."

Terry Nish of Salt Lake-based Nish Motorsports had nothing but praise for the Speed Demon crew and Poteet as he watched the run Friday.

"It was a beautiful thing to watch," said Nish. "It's quite an accomplishment. George Poteet is the most terrific human being I've ever met."

Vesco's Turbinator made its first runs since 2002 when it recorded a top speed of 458.440 mph during the World Finals trials. Those are usually the last sponsored speed trials held on the Salt Flats and are scheduled for Oct. 1-4 this year. Designer Rick Vesco of Rockville has worked to improve the length, stability and speed of the four-wheel drive vehicle powered by helicopter engines.

Turbinator, now driven by Californian Dave Spangler, is still in its testing phase. It hit a top speed of 235 mph Thursday and then hit 247 in a problem-plagued effort Friday that was aborted when it ran too close to the edge of the track, hit a mile marker and sustained some body damage.

"We're not sure why that happened," said Jinx Vesco, the team's spokesperson. "The car just suddenly veered. We have all the data and will be dropping that off in Salt Lake City with the

data experts. We will compare the video with the data and figure out what happened. There was no wind and everything sounded good. There was a sudden change in the fuel pressure."

Nish Motorsports brought its Project 450 Royal Purple car to Speed Week with a new 520-cubic-inch Hemi engine. It reached 302 mph in its only run of the meet. Nish said the crew is working on some issues and plans to run at the Cook meet.

"As we got into checking the engine out, there were some fuel delivery problems," said Nish. "The engine has some experimental parts on it. It leaned out. It didn't kill it, but it hurt it bad enough that we won't run any further at this meet. Parts are coming. We are enthused about the Cook Shootout and going after a world record."

Nish said the course for Speed Week was treacherous and the 12-mile course set up for the Cook event may be more promising.

Southern California Timing Association official JoAnn Carlson called the annual event successful with a record 550 entries.



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