

## VW SPEED 2012

### BONNEVILLE USA, LAND of SPEED

By Burly Burlile

The Bonneville Salt Flats are located in the western United States and are unlike anything found in Europe with the mountains surrounding this large salt pan barren of trees or grasses, spotted only with the growth of sage brush and the texture of rocks. Spreading across this high desert for a hundred miles in any direction, the arid flat land has become the mecca for all things automotive and high speed with the occasional military F22 Raptor streaking buy low overhead. It is across these salt flats, almost one hundred years ago, a German named Theodore "Terrible Teddy" Tetzlaff, first raced in search of a new world land speed record. Driving the 21.5 litre "Blitzen Benz" he recorded a speed of 141.73(228.092kph) miles per hour that should have become the new world land speed record but lost that tribute due to incorrect documentation of his speed.

A half century later, another German could be found speeding across the salt seeking a land speed record only this time it would be Dick Beith and his little 1958 Volkswagen Kafer. He would achieve success reaching a two way average speed of 124.091 kilometers per hour and setting the world's first performance record of any sort with the ubiquitous Volkswagen. The following year he returned with another older oval window kafer with a supercharged 36hp engine and achieved a second record of 163.663 kph. Other Volkswagens would follow over the next decade but it was not until the late seventies when VW's with water cooled engines began arriving. The Golf/Passat engines were still so new the first water cooled engines found at Bonneville in Volkswagen's were the Taunus In-Line 2.0 four cylinders from Ford Europe. John Weston shoehorned the big iron Taunus into the rear of a Karmann Ghia coupe and eventually reached a 231.616 kph top speed. By the end of the decade the first Volkswagen diesel appeared at Bonneville in a little streamlined coupe designed to test aero-dynamic theory for Western Washington University. Under the direction of Dr. Michael Seal, a 1500cc Passat diesel powered the sleek coupe to 177.140 kph in the hands of driver Stanley Moyes. Thirty years later Dr. Seal is directing the aero design for a streamliner team whose goal is becoming the first wheel driven car to exceed 800 kilometers per hour.

The nineteen eighties began with Volkswagen GMBH entering its only foray into the land speed racing fray with a speed attempt on a public

highways in Nardo, Italy. With F1 shoe Keke Rosberg at the wheel, a specially designed streamliner powered by a one of a kind inline six cylinder 2400cc diesel engine created by adding two cylinders on the end of the little Golf four banger took the Swedish driver to a final speed of 362.086 kph. The next year Keke would go on to capture the F1 Championship Driver series. Another Italian connection with VW's racing for land speed records would come when Ron Benham and Don Watkins teamed together to install a turbocharged 1442cc DOHC Fiat engine into Ron's very aero Opel GT nosed chopped Karmann Ghia coupe. This combination resulted in a time slip of 225.995 kph. By the middle of the decade Jared Collier wheeled a Mike Manghelli built Turbo Jetta 1500cc engined lakester on the long course at Bonneville to 321.711 kph just barely missing entry into the SCTA/BNI 200 Mile Per Hour Club by less than one mile per hour. As the eighties neared the end long time Bonneville Volkswagen racer Larry Monreal had seen the light and swapped his fragile air cooled engines for water cooled Golf engines attaining a top speed of 270.808 kph.

As the millennium passed modern water cooled VW engines had become the norm on the salt with only an occasional air cooled opposed four in sight. One of the original Bonneville Volkswagen pioneers from the early sixties, Tom Bruch, joined the parade and teamed with Mary and Dave Fisher racing a U.S. built Volkswagen Rabbit Caddy. Mary was the first to set a record with the Caddy eclipsing 208 kph after which the pick up was returned to the pits for additional improvements. With the modifications completed, Tom took the wheel and set a second record with a top speed of 218.854 kph. Today, at 77 years of age, Tom has returned to his air cooled roots and is successfully competing in the 36hp Challenge for early bugs. This past year his 1378cc turbocharged New Age 36hp engine propelled Gaylen Andersons 1966 Kafer to a record 203.157 kilometers per hour, more than double the original design speed set by Dr. Porsche when KDF wagens were first conceived.

Currently the new generation of Golfs and Passats are attacking land speed racing venues around the world. Beginning in March of this year, Australian specific Amoraks, Golfs and Polo's will be racing across a salt pan called Lake Gairdner in South Australia's outback accompanied by a group of Team Ratmuller air cooled Kafers and transporters. And in Texas, Jeremy Freedman has reached 335.055 kph with his street driveable VR6 turbocharged Golf tuned by Tony Palo while at the salt Dan Chilson peaked at 342.162 kph in a 2153cc turbocharged Passat powered lakester tuned by his dad, fifties Indy 500 mechanic Bob Chilson. Not all new generation VW's are looking for 300 plus kph with many welcoming speeds half that goal. One unusual combination is the 3 cylinder turbo Lupo diesel engine fitted in an aero-dynamic Honda Insight body. Jacob

Staubs design goal was to exceed 150 kph while getting fuel consumption above above 140 kilometers per U.S. gallon of fuel and both were met. The goal of 150 Mile Per Hour Club membership was Gabe Adams dream and he more than met that goal with a speed of 257.570 kph in his 2004 Golf R32.

Two liter four cylinder water cooled engines from the Volkswagen family climbed to unheard of heights in 2011 with the first and fastest being the Skoda U.K. team led by Richard Meaden. After a long haul from the British isle the crew unloaded the Octavia vRS four door sedan and was rewarded with a Bonneville Nationals land speed record and "200 MPH Club" membership as well as a top speed of 365.449 kilometers per hour using turbocharged production style engine. Not to be outdone, and without factory support, Keith Pedersen and Mike Manghelli took their boxy 1980 U.S. built Rabbit Caddy to the unheard of speed of 314.758 kph, just shy of the highly regarded 200 mile per hour speed goal required for membership in the SCTA/BNI's exclusive 200 Mile Per Hour Club and the treasured Red Hat that goes with achievement.

Reaching 200 miles per hour (321.868 kph) has long been the target for Volkswagen racers and only a select few can claim to have touched or exceeded that speed. In the coming season and just beyond, the unobtainable Volkswagen dream of 300 miles per hour (482.803 kph) may happen. Doug Adler and Frank Klos, two gentlemen from Southern California, have teamed together and constructed a radical new Volkswagen powered streamliner capable of reaching and exceeding those speeds. Helped by Ron Mains 743 kph Speed Demon design team, Doug and Frank have fitted a 5000cc V10 diesel Volkswagen engine and drive train from a Toureg SUV into a Speed Demon clone and with some inside guidance, eliminated the many performance detuning techniques employed at the factory to give the engine almost double the original performance factors. With never before possible Volkswagen torque and power, this streamliner may take the marques name where no Volks has gone before.

If you would like to find out more about land speed racing, go to [www.saltflats.com](http://www.saltflats.com) and follow the links to the different sanctioning bodies around the world. And for visual entertainment with high speed racers check out You Tube and request links to Bonneville and land speed racing and enjoy the rush!

