

A Low Budget, Low Salt Diet

What to do when your winter months contain more snow than beach sand? If you belong to the AMCA's Buffalo Chapter, based in Winnipeg, Manitoba, you build a Bonneville racer and dream of a week on the Salt. The absence of sunlight can drive a man crazy if it were not for dreams like this. So, seeking to keep their sanity, Ross Metcalfe, Sigi Klann, Ted Hector and Gary MacDonald formed Thunder Road Racing. This, we bet, was done over more than just a few Molsons.



Left to right, Gary MacDonald, Sigi Klann and Ted Hector. Ross Metcalfe is behind the shutter.

Ross had a basketcase Indian Junior Scout he had acquired a few years earlier from a collector in Regina, Saskatchewan, so his contribution to the team was a given. A short six months later, and after much sweat equity from the the other three partners, the little red Scout was ready for its maiden run.

You say you don't have a test track handy? Straight pipes a little loud? No problem. Just follow Thunder Road Racing's lead. Their test facility was the neighborhood streets. We understand none of the local residents complained... much.



Doing some mods after the first test run.



Ted Hector straps on his helmet while Ross Metcalfe holds the machine prior to the first test run.



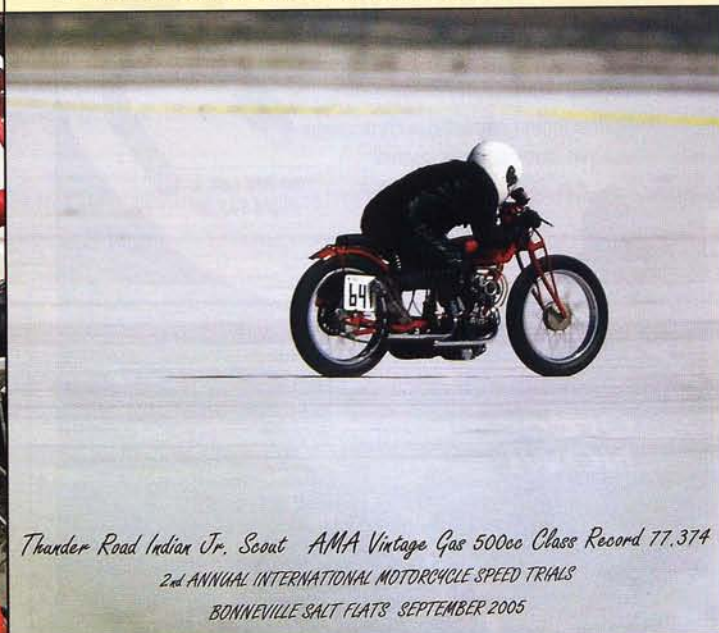
Ted and Gary discussing the oil leak.

When the day came to really stretch its legs they hit a deserted back road. After a lean carburetor was sorted out the little 30.50c.i. Indian turned in a respectable first attempt of 78 mph. "What the heck, we've got this thing nailed," they thought. The current record in their class was only a measly 74 mph. But the Great White Dyno doesn't give up its records easily.

June 4, 2005, saw additional speed trials in and around the Winnipeg area. A bit more jetting work, some time spent on proper front wheel alignment and they were ready. Ted's fastest run that day was a strong 79 mph, though he said, "it seems more like the mid 80s." Suddenly the team was questioning the accuracy of the \$80 baseball radar gun they had purchased. Low budget racing is just that, low budget. Undaunted they decided to press on with a slight timing change in their quest for more speed. Bad decision. Springfield's finest protested by seizing a piston. But old Indians are, if nothing else, resilient and she fired up after a brief cool down and some 50



1938 Indian Junior Scout. The MVG equals Modified, Vintage, Gas.



Thunder Road Indian Jr. Scout AMA Vintage Gas 500cc Class Record 77.374
2nd ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL MOTORCYCLE SPEED TRIALS
BONNEVILLE SALT FLATS SEPTEMBER 2005

Ted on the record breaking run.

weight oil was lovingly trickled down the bores. Then it was back to the shop for a real diagnosis. Not as bad as they had feared. A light hone job had them back in the game.

Bonneville was in their sights now but time was at a premium. Their next outing was set for July 7 and it would prove to be memorable. With the carb and mag dialed in, Ted was pushing the mid 90s. (They had finally sprung for a more accurate radar gun.) "It was screaming like 40 kindergarten kids at a birthday party and the tach needle was north of 7,500," Ross recalled. Just when it looked like everything was going their way, Father Time, in the form of metal fatigue, reared his ugly head. As a weld on the rear frame let loose... the rear wheel slammed into a 45 degree angle, locking it solid... while... the rear fender launched itself into a geosynchronous orbit. The teams contribution to the International Space Station.

"As the bike laid a 200-meter strip of rubber, Ted made a two-second rider decision that his safest bet was to keep his ass on the seat and his hands on the bars. After a quarter mile (of sure panic? Ed) he finally came to a halt," recalled Ross, who still wakes up in a cold sweat over that incident. Ted was questioning the "sanity" of this winter project.

After NASA returned the orbiting rear fender, the team finished some long-over-due frame safety checks, including tig welding the weak joints in the bike's rear frame and they were ready for Bonneville. Ted packed a few extra changes of underwear, just in case.

Three team members, Ross, Siggie and Gary made the Davenport National meet last September but only Gary continued on to the Salt Flats where he met up with Ted. Ross Metcalfe and Siggie Klann headed back to Winnipeg. Both have day jobs that required they put in an appearance from time to time.

Once on the salt their little red rocket experienced one small problem after their first run on Monday. Several valve spring

keepers threw in the towel during their first two passes. Unable to make repairs with the limited tools available in the Bonneville pits, they headed into Wendover, Nevada. Their repair scheme involved an old racer's trick, weld the keepers to the valve stem. A last-ditch decision, but desperate times call for desperate actions. The Wendover Yellow Pages listed three welders. Welder number one sympathized with their plight but was just too busy to lend a hand. Welder number two turned out to be an eco-

friendly, Save the Salt kind of guy and refused to help. (Eco-friendly welder? It's the end of the world as we know it.) Welder number three bought their story and did his best to help their low-budget effort.

With keepers firmly in place (their next valve job should be interesting) Ted and Gary headed back to the salt. Record attempts for the day were all but over, but they stood in good shape for a shot at the record bright and early Tuesday morning. When their number came up Ted tucked down, attempting to crawl under the paint on the tank, and ripped off their best two-way average of

78.163 mph. Besting the old class record of 74 and change. A surprisingly good first effort. Most competitors leave home with high hopes, only to have them dashed on the salt.

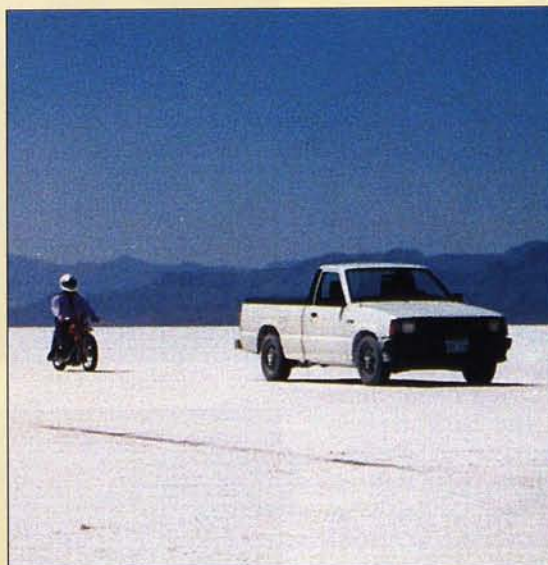
Mission accomplished, Ted and Gary were welcomed home with a champagne toast from Ross, Siggie and dozens of well-wishers. When asked what lies ahead for the team, Ross replied, "We'll most likely sell the little

Scout and move up to the 45ci class, perhaps with a Sport Scout or a Harley 45, but a Flathead for sure. Or we might stay in the 30ci class and run a 500cc OHV British twin."

In either case, this year's long winter nights will be occupied by four guys putting in the hours, tipping a few Molsons and once again dreaming of Bonneville.



After the record run Scrutineers confirm the engine displacement.



Ted on the long five mile tow to the staging area.



Team Thunder Road celebrates their world record.