

DRAG RACING

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PLAYING IN THE

SANDBOX



Story/photos by John Campbell

The reporter wanted to talk about the big Top Fuelers sitting in Marve Brimacombe's yard. Marve wanted to talk about this summer's sand drag season. The two were related topics, of course, but Marve was locked into big picture mode and not quite ready to be drawn into a discussion about pistons, gearing or frame dimensions.

"Cool bikes Marve! Where did you get these paddle tires?"

"Uh, yeah those things. Well, those are just Goodyear slicks we send to California. They put on the

Brimacombe: "...the fans can see the whole show..."

paddles. Say, did I show you the poster for the Sand Drag series?"

"Hey Marve, what's this thing displace? What kind of horsepower are we talkin' about here?"

"I don't know...117 inches, I guess, must be about 250, 300 horse. So anyway, about the Sand Drags. you guys should come out. Real good fun for the whole family. Fifty cc class all the way to Top Fuelers. It's really starting to grow..."

"Marve, that's some kind of wild set-up here. Are you going to run this in the CMDRA series?"

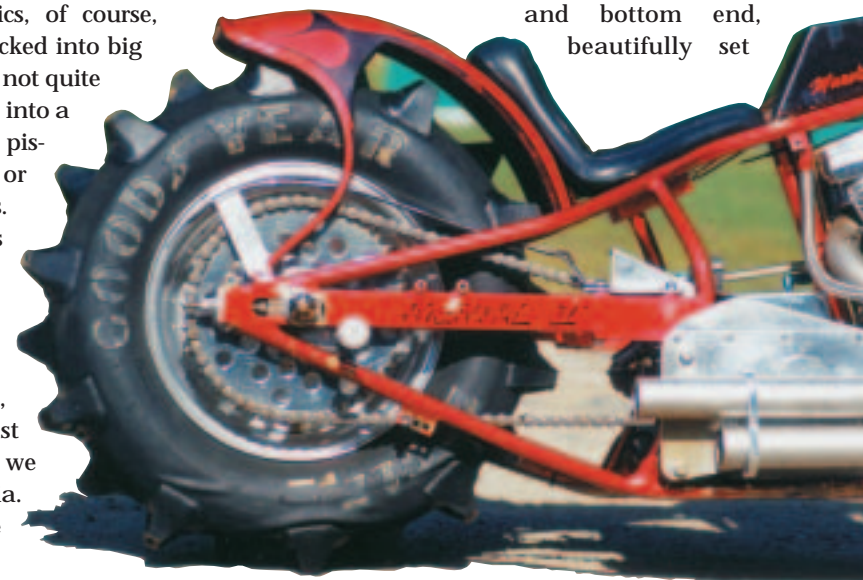
"Nah, too much money. Sand's easier on the drive-line components. You're not rebuilding all the time. And the beauty of sand drag racing is that the fans can see the whole show, not like the quarter-mile strips. That's why we're getting the good crowds now..."

The reporter wasn't an overly bright fellow but he was wise enough to understand subtle shifts in conversational ebbs and flows. In his mind he had come to get "the story" about one man's Top Fuelers. In his subject's mind, the topic was the race season, not one or two machines. Sometimes you gotta go with what ya got.

Not that Marve Brimacombe isn't proud of what his Mental Racing team has accomplished in the Cowichan Valley Motorcycle Association Sand Drag Series. Last year, with Jimmy Girdlestone in the pilot's seat, the Cobblehill, BC boys became Canada's fastest team on sand, passing over 330 feet—a 1/16th mile strip—in 4.44 seconds at 127 kmh. Marve says the goal this year is a 100 mph pass under four seconds—really too much speed to be carrying on a shifting surface. After that, the danger factor begins to multiply as the bike slides into a full-on hydroplane.

To get to that point Marve and the Mental Racing Team have brought in a new machine for the 2002 series—a bike once owned by Robin Gauthier, one of Canada's premier Top Fuel racers, who in 1995 rode it to a 193 mph pass in 7.48 seconds. But Marve is quick to point out that it's undergone a major transformation since then, with loads of technical support from other drag race icons, Dave O'Hara and Ron Houniet. The 117" fuel-injected nitro sled will take to the

sandbox with a wholly rebuilt top and bottom end, beautifully set





off by Little Valley restoration work.

“Little Valley did the trailer too, remember to mention that.”

Girdlestone will return as team rider and Marve couldn't be happier. “He was the one piece of the puzzle that was missing.”

This isn't a well-known motorsport, neither here in Canada nor in the United States. “The guys in California never even heard of it,” says Marve. There is some motorcycle activity in one or two American Four-Wheel sand series, but for the most part it's a niche sport. But, because this is British Columbia—where transmissions are sent at a slightly different pitch than elsewhere—Top Fuelers race on sand.

“A bunch of us were doing hill-climbs and we thought it would be kinda neat to drag race the bikes we were using. That's how we came up with sand drags.”

And Marve insists that support for this moto-anomaly is growing.

“It was kind of dying out there for a while but it's turning the corner now with the fans coming out and with more bikes—it's now a better show.”

One of the more attractive features of this homegrown sport is that it represents an opportunity for families to play together because of the variety of classes from “small kids' bikes to extreme bikes.” Admission and entry fees are modest, camping is available and the competition is friendly.

“Come and watch the show,” invites Marve, who also reports that last year's Mental Racing ride is for sale.



CVMA SAND DRAGS CALENDAR

May 26 Lake Cowichan
June 16 Lake Cowichan
July 7 Lake Cowichan
Sept. 22 Lake Cowichan
Oct. 6 Lake Cowichan

**FOR MORE, CONTACT
(250) 748-8465.**

