



Street Legal

The 45th running of the Port Road Drags once again cemented the event as the best street meet in the country

Like good wines, some things get better with age and the racing at Port Road in Lower Hutt certainly gets better every year. The team at Cam County have been hosting this meeting for a few decades now and they put a lot of effort into making it the best closed road meeting around. As usual they turned on the sun too. I say this as in 45 years Port Road drags have never been rained out! For the 45th anniversary Cam County pulled out all the stops and had a race schedule that provided non-stop entertainment for the huge crowd. In addition to the 64-car field, there was a huge contingent of competition cars doing burnouts and exhibition passes, drag bikes and even a pair of racing trucks

doing massive burnouts for the crowd. As with any event of this nature, safety for the public and racers is paramount, so in addition to the safety barriers and other crowd control measures that need to be set up for closed road meeting Cam County go the extra mile. Following scrutineering and the drivers' briefing, every driver is breath-tested by the Police before racing can begin. As usual there were no fails, but it does show that these guys take safety seriously. Also taking thing seriously were the racers, with some very serious street cars lining up to race. Ben Morris looked like the man to beat with his blown big block Camaro (NZV8 issue 77). Having run 8.9-second quarters at Fram two weeks earlier, some quick >



“ The hardcore burnout brigade were just there to make big smoke and have fun ”



1/8th mile times were expected, and Ben did not disappoint. Strong burnouts followed by some hazy 1/8th mile passes showed Ben was trying to give the track all it could take and a bit more, with wheel spin from one end of the track to the other. Other racers also got serious for the meeting, such as with Mark Coffey aiming for 1000hp after adding a twin plate NOS system to his 572-powered '34 Chevrolet Junior. Unfortunately for Mark, the car was plagued with ignition problems and he withdrew after qualifying rounds. Luke Trybula with his sleeper twin turbo Torana was happy just to spin the tyres for the pleasure of the crowd, joining a few others from the hardcore burnout brigade who were just there to make big smoke and have fun.

Also having fun were some of the drivers of the competition cars. Events such as Port Road are a good opportunity to raise the profile of the cars and their sponsors, or get a little extra seat time in a new/rebuilt car. Others just go out and do some power skids and show off a little, this year we had a little of each. Start line traction was not a problem for Dion Crook, who was amongst the first out with huge smokies, followed by some strong half track passes. John Neilan put on a fantastic staging show with a burnout the full 1/8th mile before backing up to stage. Having run a track (1/4-mile) record of 5.88 at 239mph in Nelson the day before 'Johnny5' launched hard before getting a bit loose due to

the camber on the road and pulling the chutes to straighten up. Another great display of horsepower was Graeme Bates, who debuted his rebuilt twin turbo Vauxhall Cresta. Following a massive burnout Graeme found he had no reverse, so he was pushed back, and launched straight and hard. We can expect some fast times at the strip from Graeme this year. For the racers there were three rounds of practice to sort out which of the brackets they belonged in, then competition began with knocked out racers given the option to come back for grudge racing. With everything from Fast Eddies' Malibu Gasser (NZV8 issue 74), muscle cars and some sneaky sleepers, there was fierce competition in every bracket, with some racers possibly sandbagging and running right on the break-out for the bracket. With the Cam County crew applying TrackBite all day to help with the traction there were several cars lifting wheels and no-one getting too out of shape. Ben Morris struggled all day to get the power to the ground and unfortunately the one pass he did he broke out running quicker than the 6.5 breakout. A grudge match was arranged with the winner of the bracket Darren Richies in his immaculate big block Chev-powered Pop. Darren unfortunately got a puncture in a front wheel while driving up to stage, so withdrew. Darren may have won the bracket, but there is no dispute that Ben had the quickest car on the day! **V8**

