

Vintage BMW Racing Team on a fever pitch to Bonneville 2009

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- Track conditions reported extremely good -
- Helmet cams will capture POV during speed runs -
- Vintage BMWs dominate vintage stock class motorcycle speed racing!

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Â Lacey, WA: Brooks Motor Works' Flying Fox Racing Team is loading the trailers and doing last-minute packing. Thursday they will be on the road, determined not only to set new world records, but have fun trying.

"It's the first thing I tell all the guys," explains Kevin Brooks. "It's cool to set records, but what it's really about is going out there, staying safe, not breaking anything, going really really fast, and having a lot fun. If you can do all that, it's success!"

Kevin means it, and the team is becoming a well-oiled machine when it comes to having fun. That makes it all the cooler that they set two world speed records last year in the 250 and 500cc vintage pushrod production class. And it's very likely new records will be set this year too. Track enthusiasts are already phoning in reports that the track is even better than last year, and last year they said it was the best in 20 years!

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At Bonneville, a great deal depends on the condition of the salt lakebed. Just like a ski slope, the salt can be hard or fluffy, and in addition to going fast racers may face real challenges to keep from spinning out sideways. It all depends on the salt. This year's hard pack is ideal for safety and control, and that's perfect for high speed.

Temperatures too are a big part of record speed racing. At Bonneville temperatures of 110 are common, but it isn't just comfort that makes racers welcome cool temperatures. Cooler air means a denser fuel charge and higher top speeds. This week Bonneville has been in the 70's and is predicted to be in the 80's all weekend. Speeds will be at their peak in all classes.

Word has leaked down from Munich, in case anyone wondered. "We're watching you guys." With good reason. Brooks' team makes vintage BMW motorcycles look good, as they deserve to. Racing has always been a vital part of BMW engineering, especially when these vintage machines were new. Now pre-1956 BMW's stand to dominate vintage stock class speed records.

The Flying Fox team plans to arrive Friday and get their pits set up, and begin getting the bikes through technical inspection. All entrants at Bonneville have to pass a mandatory safety technical inspection. They aren't kidding, either. Decades of speed seekers have found all sorts of ways to endanger themselves, and tech inspection rules out disasters most drivers have never even considered. From fireproof fuel line to tire selection, every entrant must prove they will neither endanger themselves or other racers who might hit their debris.

Record holder R50S 'Bonita Rapide' with the required deadman switch that kills the motor if the rider falls off. (click image to view as wallpaper size)

Saturday the runs start, entrants begin to test their mettle against the salt. If they come within 10% of the current record, their bike is put into 'impound'. Then the rigorous stripdown begins, in case a new record is set, that the vehicle conforms to class regulations -- in stock classes this means original fenders and bodywork as well as displacement. At Bonneville you'd better be sure your frame and castings are all correctly date coded, because no matter what vintage iron you bring, there will be an expert there who knows all about it.

"How'd you do?" asked the guy in the tent next door, when Uncle Phred and the team trudged back to the campsite late in the evening after a hard day of speed trials on the salt flats last year.

"Not so good!" Phred looked dismayed, then added with a twinkle "they impounded our bikes!"

The team is campaigning three bikes again this year, Kevin's R50S 'Bonita Rapide' which broke the record and the

100mph mark last year; Dean's R60 Rennsport, now with its own trick engine; and Rob's R25, which set the world record by opening its class last year.

All the bikes are poised to do their best. Kevin expects to see 'Bonita', the 1955 R50S, push 105-108 mph (keep in mind that would be about +10mph at sea level). Rob's 1951 R25, with a newly rebuilt motor and Ron Brown as jockey, expect to see as much as 75 mph from the 'little' 250. Brent's radical Rennsport is back as well, cured of the shift linkage hangups that kept it in 3rd gear last year, thanks to a trick Junior Nelson 2-into-1 exhaust. Kevin speculates it could see 115 mph or more.

Team member Brent is also campaigning his own Rennsport as a privateer, with plenty of fast development. The vintage modified 650 class could turn into a shootout between BMW Rennsport replicas!

Team Flying Fox's Ace in the hole this year is rider Barb (aka Kevin's sweetie). She's well known in Lacey as the fastest rider on the team and a speed demon on a /2. When it comes to wringing every last bit of speed, Barb is a natural. Like any racer, she's had to contend with equipment failure -- last year her Bonneville-tech-approved riding leathers failed to arrive, sidelining her for the season. This year however, she's poised to best last year's record aboard Bonita Rapide.

In the morning a dozen team members will hit the road to convene on the salt flats. Another half dozen fans are riding down from Seattle and Tacoma to represent the VME (Vintage Motorcycle Enthusiasts and hosts of the off-the-books Isle of Vashon TT).

Members of the Flying Fox Racing Team now include several videographers, so this year BMWs at Bonneville will be filmed, edited in the pits, and uploaded to the team's Youtube channel so viewers at home can taste the thrills. New helmet cam technology brings the salt flats home!

Stay tuned here for updates from Bonneville as world speed records are challenged!

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