

feature countdown

If you've watched any type of racing you've seen them out there: the big monster factory team trailers. It seems like these teams roll up and open the truck and out jump 24 mechanics in immaculate coveralls with sleek shiny new tools, lifts, a gazillion brand new spare parts and a pimped lounge for the racers. While there is no denying that these racers have talent and have probably worked hard to get to the pinnacle of their sport, the true biker in each and every one of us cries out for the underdog. Where is the common man willing to challenge these prima donnas? Where is the racer who still turns his own wrench and then races his machine with unbridled passion?

Well it turns out there are quite a few of them out there. In fact, the heart and soul of racing – be it dirt bikes, flat track, supersport, dragsters etc – is fueled by guys and (some) gals who pour their heart and hard earned dollars into prepping and racing their machines each and every weekend with a shot at the big boys. And every so often they have the right mix of talent, experience and ingenuity to give the hot shots a run for their money. Hal Cort of Houston Texas fits that description to a T. Welcome to his world – the world of Harley Pro Fuel drag racing

HOUSTON HAL

Houston Hal has been a Harley guy since he got his first ironhead Sportster at age eighteen. He's been building and repairing them ever since. A fabricator and precision welder by trade, Hal has a knack for making all things mechanical work. This made him an ideal fit when Cool Arrow racing was looking for a crew chief for their drag bike. With Hal as chief for five years, the small team took 4 out of 7 races in their final season before retiring. This gave Hal the perfect opportunity to try his hand at piloting the bikes he had been building and tuning. As he will tell you, his pilot training consisted of "Get on, grab a handful of throttle and we'll pick you up at the far end of the strip". Blasting from 0-100mph in just over a second proved to be very addictive for Hal and he bought the Cool Arrow bike.

BUILDING A BETTER BIKE

Hal and his MetalCraft Racing team ran the Cool Arrow bike for a season when they decided they could build a better bike...from the ground up. Not only did Hal have the personal background to do this, his business partner and crew chief Tom Young runs American Heli-Arc Welding; a perfect match if you're going to get into this. They hand fabri-



HOUSTON HAL'S HARLEY HAULS



Custom Harley

Pro Fuel

Dragster



FLAT OUT

So what exactly does all that engineering and tuning get you? A wild ride down a 1/4 mile strip with mind blowing acceleration. Hal figures that his bike puts down somewhere between 450-500 hp and an 'ungodly' amount of torque. A good launch will see him carry the front wheel for over 1000 feet, something Hal loves since he actually feels the bike is more stable when up on its fat rear tire (mandatory huge wheelie bars ensure that things don't turn into a stunt show). The first sixty feet fly by in just over a second and he has topped out at 189mph for a 7.01 second quarter mile. Hal was tinkering with his fuel settings at the races in Baytown and found a tenth of a second with a minor adjustment. This gives him hope that he'll break the 7 second barrier before the end of the year – giving him a perfect excuse to build an even faster bike and move up a class.

So why would you keep getting on this monster of a bike which requires you to wear Kevlar plated chest armor, engine straps to keep flying parts together and a tank full of nitro methane also know as 'liquid dynamite'? According to Hal it's the competitive nature in him. 'Lining up with another bike makes me want to run as hard as I can to beat him. It doesn't matter if he is in my class or not, I want to win". Competing in AMRA and AHDRA events has given him plenty of chances to match his Nitro Funny Bike with the best in the country and more often than not MetalCraft is competing for the top spots. The little three man team of Hal the pilot, Tom the crew chief and Ken Doss the data analyst proved it could hang with the big boys and finished seventh in this year's AMRA national standings.

We love builders and racing and nothing beats winning on your own creation – just ask Houston Hal and his Haulin' Harley. For more info on MetalCraft Racing see: www.metalcrafttracing.com

cated a new chromoly frame with each piece shaped, bent, cut and welded meticulously to tight tolerances – critical to a dragster that will be putting enormous stress on the frame as it launches. The resulting MetalCraft dragster spans a whopping 85 inches and sports a fat 20 x 12 x 15 rear wheel.

While a rigid and robust frame is essential to going fast on the strip, it all means nothing if you don't have the power plant to make her run. MetalCraft runs a tuned 151 cubic inch nitro methane fuel burning Harley style V Twin. The two engines the team uses – while one is running you rebuild the other one – are so called 'Fast Cat' motors, a Sportster design also known as Quad Cam engines. Purpose built for Harley Nitro drag racing by Nungesser Engineering, the 44 degree 4 cam design is set up with a 4 3/8" bore and 5" stroke bushing style crank case. Running in the Pro Fuel category, the MetalCraft team uses a Jackshaft with a slipper clutch setup – meaning it is essentially

a single speed or 'high gear' bike. A 4 inch wide Kevlar belt feeds the power to final chain drive. Fuel is delivered to the engine using a Kinsler pump and injectors with timers for fuel control. This fuel control as well as the clutch pressure is where most of the tuning is done on the bike. While being a bit off won't spell instant disaster, it will cost you the race.

Running a privateer Harley drag team is a hard sport. Not only is it hard on your wallet, the runs consume parts faster than your average lineman eats chicken wings. One of the team's goals has been to build a reliable setup which can complete all its runs competitively. Hal still grins from ear to ear when he takes his bike through tech inspection and tells them it's a custom hand made one of a kind dragster. Time and time again the workmanship and quality baffle the inspectors. This also pays dividends on the track as MetalCraft is often one of the few privateer teams able to complete all their runs in the sessions.

