

*The Marsh Motorsport complex is tidy and well laid out. Any engine building procedure is capably carried out to the finest detail.*

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## Marsh Motorsport

By Greg Stokes

WITH any aspect of rod building or racing, the result is only as good as the time and money invested. Talent and skill are major factors and when it comes to engine building it's hard to go past Tony Marsh and the team at Marsh Motorsport. It's a pretty bold claim but when you stop to consider the lengthy career of Tony dating back to the early seventies in the Hawkes Bay area, you begin to understand where the knowledge and talent at Marsh Motorsport stems from. A little ironic as Tony and his son Anthony are set to campaign an ex Kalitta/Read NHRA-spec Top Fuel Dragster as well as their A/Fuel version. Tony's humble drag racing beginnings were coming runner-up to Butch Reid's Dr Zhivago Ford Pop with his 1800cc Anglia! That was at the Napier Airport in 1972 and Tony was both a member of the Hawkes Bay Car Club and the

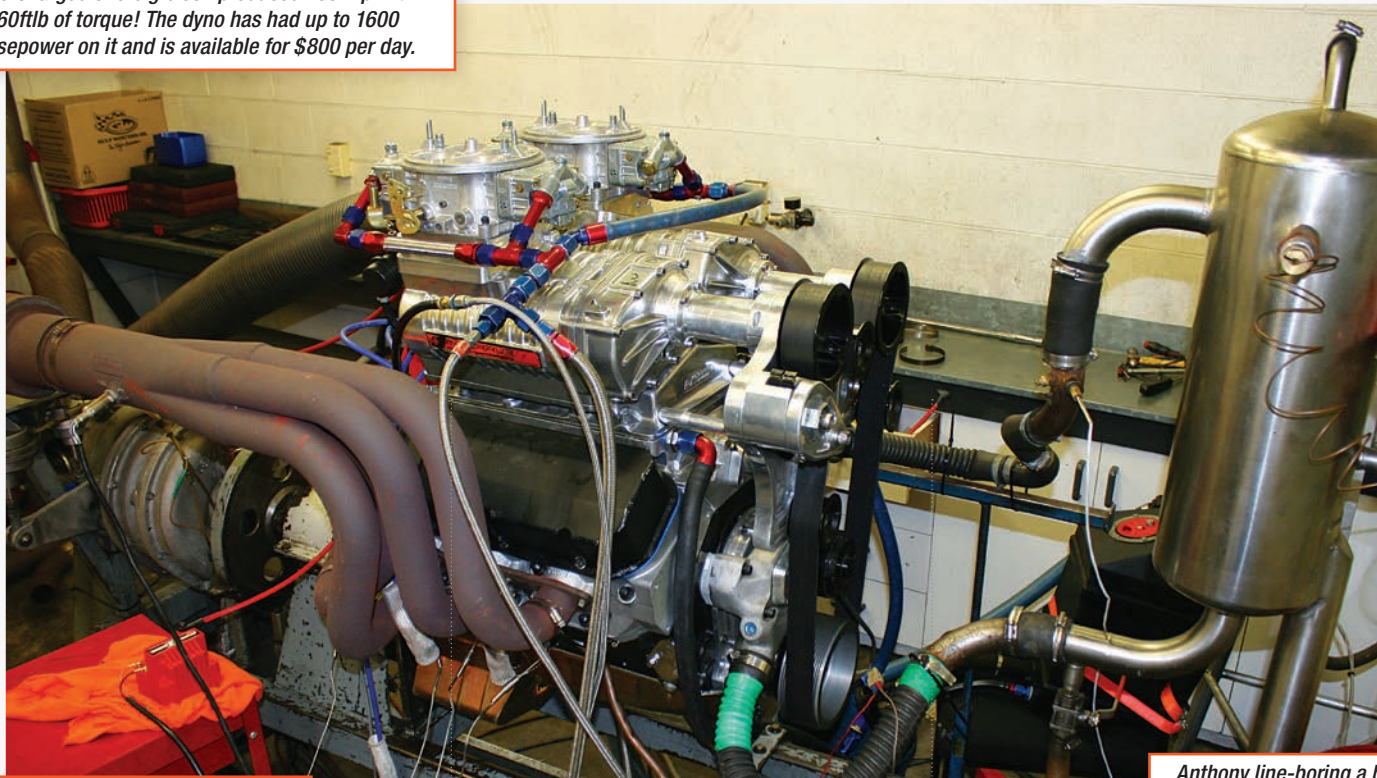
Hawkes Bay Rod & Custom Club.

Tony then built his first purpose-built front engine dragster with a Vauxhall 3.3 Cresta engine and ran it at the first Thunderpark shakedown meeting in 1975. It was with a Chrysler 265 for power where Tony was able



*Father and son team who work and play together.*

*Mike Black's Marsh Motorsport built-twin supercharged 540 big block produced 1092hp with 960ftlb of torque! The dyno has had up to 1600 horsepower on it and is available for \$800 per day.*



*Tony is honing lifter bores in the Sunnen lifter bore hone.*



*Anthony line-boring a block in the Sunline hone.*



to run in the high nines at 146mph. This engine was then put into what was known as the Stud Cola Fiat altered and ran 10.4 at 131mph. Next up in 1980 was another front engine dragster running an injected smallblock Chev running a 9.0 off the trailer but it blew the trans every pass. Dejected with the rail, Tony parted it out and this came to be the Martin & Rea dragster now owned by Greg & Mark Stokes. Tony's trade background was as a motor mechanic and he'd finished his apprenticeship in the Watties Foods workshop and went on to Nuttall Auto Services which had a dyno and was a local hang-out for rodders in the Hawkes Bay area.

After getting out of the dragster, Tony decided to give circuit racing a go in the hugely popular Shell Sport Series and actually won the 1983-84 championship with a Datsun coupe. Along the way in 1982 he went and worked for Reg Cook who was also racing in the Shell Sport Series. Working at Reg's only lasted two years as they were competitors on the track. "We were always at each other", says Tony so he started Marsh Motorsport in Manukau City,



*Scott Marsh turning down counterweights for crankshaft balancing.*

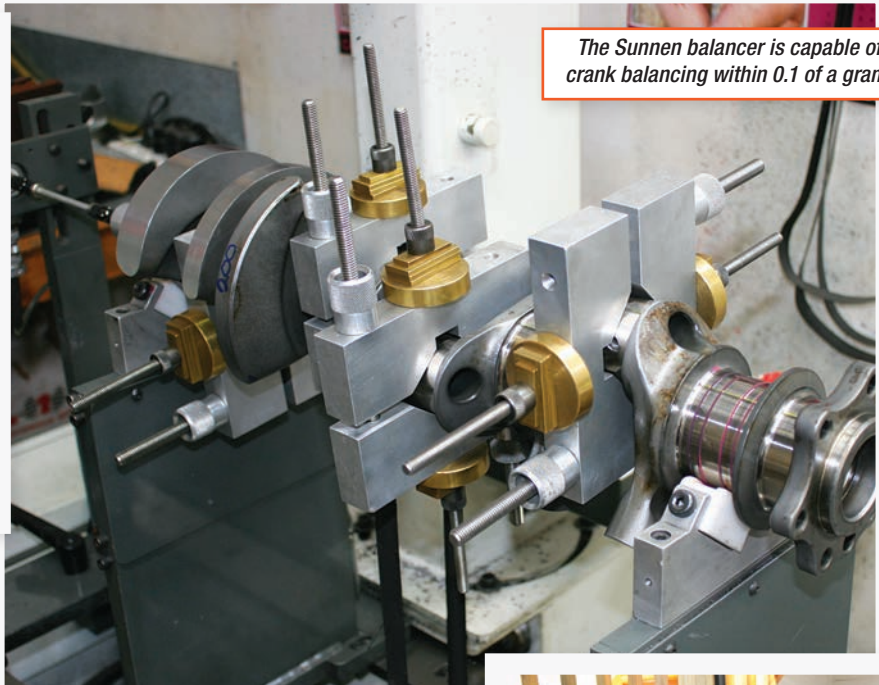


*Chris detailing and deburring a block in the porting room. Port matching, cylinder head porting and flow-testing is all carried out on-site and the team know all the tricks!*

Auckland. Trying something totally different, Tony went rallying from 1985 to 1988 with the Possum Bourne RX3. Tony would stop racing to focus on the business and built the Keiran Wills RX8 which was a Mazda RX7 with V8 power. Running in the Sports Sedan class, the car was sponsored by Mobil then TV3 and then Wills' own business Aztec Corn Chips. The car was campaigned very successfully until 1992 which was around the time the business was relocated to East Tamaki where it's now on 3b Smales Road.

"It sounds like we left drag racing

behind but we've always been into it as well as a wide variety of most forms of motorsport", says Tony. In fact, past Top Alcohol drag racer Dave Bright worked at Marsh Motorsport while campaigning his Donovan powered Top Alcohol rear engine dragster. Kieran Wills then bought an ex USA Riley Scott Camaro for Trans Am racing and Marsh Motorsport ran that until 1994. Heading off in a different direction, Tony



*The Sunnen balancer is capable of crank balancing within 0.1 of a gram.*



*Chris machining Cleveland heads on a Sunnen Head Shop.*



*The A/Fuel dragster will be run a few times this coming season.*



*The new Top Fuel dragster is sponsored by the Mount Shop and Marsh Motorsport and has run a 4.40!*



*Tony's Stud Cola Fiat made the cover of the March 1978 issue of NZ Hot Rod Magazine.*

then went offshore powerboat racing with "Midnite Express" which Anthony now owns. The blown 532 big block Chev built at Marsh Motorsport produced 1060 horsepower on Marsh's in-house dyno. It was 2000 when Tony returned to drag racing with a Berry-built rear engine dragster which was known as the Forest Loaders and then the Metalman car. With a naturally aspirated

smallblock Ford engine it was the first carburetted dragster to run a 6-second pass over the quarter mile outside the USA at Willowbank in 2004!

A Spitzer rear engine car was purchased from the USA in 2007 and Anthony started his drag racing career in 2009. It was 2010 when the team laid claim to having the world's fastest naturally aspirated smallblock Ford! It ran a best of 6.79 at 199.22mph just shy of the elusive 200mph! What's interesting is the Americans have only achieved 196mph with similar configurations! The engine is now in Australia and holds the

B/Altered record in Phil Otto's car. The frame is now



*A timeless shot is Tony circa 1980 in the smallblock Chev powered front engine digger. The rolling frame is now owned by Greg & Mark Stokes.*

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*The naturally aspirated smallblock Ford dragster was a huge credit to Marsh Motorsport.*

Jon Bates's Mazda Rotary powered dragster. After talking with Bill Douche and Darryl Peterken (Marsh's longstanding crew) the challenge was put forward to look into stepping up to a nitro car – an A/Fueler to be precise. Tony sold his house, his car, his boat and bought Tom Conway's A/Fuel Dragster in October 2010. Running in the Top Alcohol class, Tony's son Anthony has pedalled the beast to become the fastest and quickest at 5.40 at 268mph.

Just in July this year, the next chapter of nitro racing at Marsh Motorsport began. "It was Plank Sherwin who planted the seed, after talking about Reece Fish buying the Bob Shepherd Top Fuel car from Australia", says Tony. It was learnt that Jim Read Racing had a car available for sale so Tony gave Jim a call and then called the bank and a deal was done! "You only live once and are a long time dead", says Tony. Even with the knowledge and lengthy career which Tony has, he even admits running a Top Fuel car is a huge learning curve and a great deal of

respect has to be taken as if handling a grenade with the pin pulled. We guess that train of thought sums up things with Marsh Motorsport very well. Tony comes from a diverse racing background and has some strong relationships with performance parts manufacturers all over the world, which keeps him well up to date with the latest technology.

Experience, race wins, technology and creative thinking is what the success of Marsh Motorsport is built on. Whether it's a mild-to-wild street engine or a full-on high performance race engine, Tony and the team at Marsh Motorsport are definitely the go-to guys for a range of services through to complete engine building and dyno tuning. Like most good things, Marsh Motorsport offers excellent bang for your buck and has a great deal of repeat business. "We are also proud to have built 44 NZ championship winning engines over all forms of motorsport", says Tony.

Visit [www.marshmotorsport.co.nz](http://www.marshmotorsport.co.nz) or email [tonymarsh@xtra.co.nz](mailto:tonymarsh@xtra.co.nz) or phone 09 274 7997.