

# First Fire Up Of The Danny Thompson Challenger Land Speed Racecar



In upcoming issues of HOT ROD Rob Kinnan interviews Danny Thompson about his reinvention of father Mickey's Challenger 2, and his plans for becoming the fastest man on earth in a piston driven land-based car. Then in the next issue we cover more of the specifics of what Danny has done with the Land Speed Record car since being mothballed in 1968 as well as some great historic photography of the car when Mickey first assaulted the salt at Bonneville.

For now we'd like to show you video of the first testing of the Challenger 2.5 from May. Having a problem with the front Brad Anderson Top Fuel engine meant firing only the rear engine at 50 percent nitro and trying out the B&J three-speed transmission for the

first time.

First constructed in 1968, the Challenger 2 was noteworthy for its unprecedented who's-who of talent. With drag racing fabricator and driver Pat Foster overseeing the construction, Thompson hired Quin Epperly [famous Indy car builder and fabricator] for chassis construction, Tom Jobe [from "Surfers" Top Fuel fame] and Nye Frank [the proverbial Zellig of automobile racing endeavors] handling the many aluminum panels necessary to sheath the racecar, with assist from 'Lil John Buttera. Ford supplied money and talent, with some fab help from Kar Kraft in Detroit. Though Thompson would pilot the machine, his backup driver was the talented Danny Ongais, just to complete the assemblage of the All Stars aspect of this racecar development.

We should also add that this car was being constructed while Thompson was also in the middle of building his Bonneville Mustang, and three Mustang Funny Cars; one of which was the experimental "monocoque" car. Like we said, Thompson was nothing if not prolific.

So check out the vid and we'll have more for you.