

Athol has a rookie year to remember

By JARED SMITH

The roar of an engine and the smell of its nitro is the sound and scent of success for Pokeno's Athol Williams and his Stud Racing Ltd team.

The dragway bike rider and his crew held a special demonstration of their 1500cc displacement engine on the Pete Davis-Frame modified bike at their base in Pokeno for sponsors and supporters on Friday.

The event was a celebration of their remarkable rookie-year achievement in the Australian National Drag Racing Association (ANDRA) 2007-8 championship.

Held with seven major events from August to June - Stud Racing made history by finishing second overall in the championships - which included winning the 2008 Summer Nationals from Sydney and the 2008 Winter Nationals from Brisbane.

No New Zealander had ever won a single Group One event in the ANDRA before Williams' winning of two Gold Christmas Trees, the trophies for those events of which only four are given out a year.

"We ran probably the five quickest lap times and four quickest qualifying times of the season," Williams said.

The Winter Nationals is the biggest drag racing event in the world outside of the United States



REMARKABLE YEAR: Pokeno's Athol Williams with his Gold Christmas Trees - the 2008 Summer Nationals from Sydney, and the 2008 Winter Nationals from Brisbane.

- around 100,000 fans attend over three days of competition.

"All the tracks have been easy to deal with and it's been a pleasure taking part because everything is so professional over there." The team bike was built up entirely by the team in their home base - from motor to crank shaft.

Williams said any work they did was done out of the team trailer at the dragways - they could only go to events a week early to test, whereas some of their Australian rivals could do up to 40 passes on the track before the event.

In total, Williams and his crew won two of the three major events on the seven-event calendar.

They made three finals out of

seven, qualified for all events, won five Top Qualifier medallions, got bonus points for fastest Lowest Elapsed Times at four meetings, bonus points for fastest mph at three meetings, and were the outright fastest and quickest bike at two events. The rewards were also given to the Stud crew which flew back and forth across the Tasman all year - they won best appearing bike and crew at November's Golden States Nationals at the Perth Motorplex (and also the longest travelled award), while crew chief Roger Bloor was recognised back home with the Crew Chief of the Year award from the New Zealand Drag Racing Association.