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NEW NZ Top Fuel bike

From Peter 'PC' Callen

Just landed is this country's latest addition to the nitro burners and it looks like it might raise some eyebrows around our tracks.

Athol Williams, who is no stranger to drag racing in New Zealand (see this month's Hall of fame), has raced his own, lesser-classed machine in the past as well as crewing for Mike Gearring on his dragster. Now Athol is about to get back into racing on two wheels, this time with nitro methane in the tank. British racer, Chris Hanham, has sold his Puma Top Fuel bike to Athol and the bike's debut on New Zealand soil looks set to take place in Christchurch during Labour Weekend.

The fifty-year-old youngster got the racing bug again in 2003 when Brett Stevens toured here with his T/F bikes and two ex-pat kiwis, Margie Hoggard and Steve Paris. When Margie departed her machine at 1/3 track Athol picked up her bike the following morning and got it running in time for the next meeting which Margie won. The drag racing bug had again bitten Athol hard and seeing Larry McBride run his first five at Gainesville during the World Finals didn't help either. So, thanks to a session on eBay, a T/F bike in England soon became bound for kiwi soil.

Even when doing a term of service in the navy Athol was liking and breathing bikes, he even had bike parts stashed in his cabin. It wasn't just a spare set of spark plugs either;

Athol says his new bike will be a learning curve. The gurus heading here from overseas will help with the tune, as well as Athol's riding technique. "I've never ridden a square tyre before," says Athol.



Athol tries the bike for size. Like the rest of us, he's looking forward to the day the machine spits nitro fumes on kiwi soil. The machine has run sixes at 200mph in the UK.

there were things like a fairing, rear sets, cams, pistons, a four-into-one exhaust system, carbs, snoods and a frame kit. His superiors must have seen the funny side of it though, as Athol wasn't ordered to walk the plank.

Intentions are to take part in the five televised drag meetings during the coming season as well as taking part in the trans-Tasman bike challenge, which next season takes place in Australia. Athol has added the Winternationals (at Willowbank) to the list of events. Word is that the Brits might also travel to New Zealand to help Athol get to grips with the bike and show him how to tune it. The whole operation will be centred in a 40ft 'highcube' container, towed by 2553 Mercedes Benz 6x4 tractor unit.

This man doesn't do things by halves!



Here's Athol's new ride being uncrated. Athol intends to compete at the five main televised drag racing events.

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