



# For Swingers Only! PART III



## *The 9th Annual Winternationals was the proving grounds for our Swinger Project Car, with results that more than satisfied*

*Text and Photos by Jerry Mallicoat*

**"D"** DAY HAD FINALLY arrived! It was Saturday, February 1, 1969, the day for class eliminations at the Winternationals. There was excitement and tension in the air, as this was the time we had been working towards so hard during the past few months — Dart Day.

Our first project car of the year started out as an off-the-showroom-floor Dodge Dart Swinger, but now was transformed into a fully competitive F/S machine. With the help of sponsors like Cragar Industries, who will be giving the car away to some lucky winner this spring, Keith Black Racing Engines, who blueprinted the 340 engine, the chassis team from Saddleback Dodge, Schiefer Manufacturing, Pennzoil, Baldwin Filters, Hurst Performance Products, Stewart-Warner, Cure-Ride, Classic Wax, and Goodyear Tire Company, we had the necessary ingredients for a strong runner. Wheelie King "Wild Bill" Shrewsbury was the final addition to our package, as he was assigned the all-important job of powering our project car down the track. Bill's ability with a four-speed

trans and a keen eye for the lights made him a natural selection for the job.

Time and weather had been our biggest enemies during the two weeks prior to the Winternat's, as the Los Angeles area had been thoroughly drenched by winter storms. Due to this, we hadn't been able to take the car to the track to see how she would perform. Finally, on the day before we were to go through inspection, the skies cleared and we loaded the car and headed for Orange County International Raceway to conduct some much needed test runs. On arrival we unloaded the car and warmed up the motor before making any full-blast passes. A quick change of plugs, along with a fresh supply of Pennzoil Racing Oil and a new Baldwin filter, and we were almost ready. One final check remained to be made, and that was to weigh the car. Under the F/S rules for NHRA the car had to weigh at least 3,160 pounds — the advertised shipping weight of the car. During the chassis preparation we had trimmed a lot of excess weight from the car with the installation of a lighter exhaust system, removal of the radio,

sound deadening material, and anything else that wasn't necessary. On the O.C.I.R. scales the car came out light — too light — the beams balancing at 3080 pounds. We almost had heart failure until the official told us that the scales were off as they had been damaged by the recent bad weather. How far off we didn't know, so this area remained a big question mark.

For the first pass Bill took it easy, wishing to break in the clutch, trans, rear-end gears, and the new Goodyear 9.00x15 tires carefully. Even at that the car ran a respectable 13.06 e.t. and 108.50 mph. We had a way to go though, as the NHRA minimum record for this class is 12.70 seconds. The second pass was better, as the car dipped into the twelves, recording an e.t. of 12.89 with the top speed about the same as the first one. The third and final pass for the day was the best yet, as Bill worked over the four-speed for a new low of 12.72 seconds and a new top speed of 109.12. We were all pretty happy, as we had just begun and were already knocking on the record door with more still to be tapped in the way

of performance. To have the car run this well off the trailer is a real credit to all the people who helped us out on the project. Our "paperwork" combination was definitely in the ballpark.

Thursday morning we loaded everything up and headed for Pomona and the tech lines. The name of the game here was hurry up and wait, as there were already several hundred cars in line ready to be classified, and it was only 9:00 in the morning. By noon we had reached the head of the lines, and it was our turn. An NHRA inspection can be a frightening experience with a brand new car. We had built the car to the letter of the rules, but there is always that little note of uncertainty, as the interpretation of the rules lies in the hands of the official. The inspectors checked the Swinger from stem to stern, and passed us with flying colors. The only thing left before receiving our credentials was that all-important weight check. This time we came out looking good, as the scales registered 3170 pounds with a half-tank of gas in the car.

We wanted to get some additional runs on the car, so we headed for Irwindale Raceway which was opened through the courtesy of Schiefer Manufacturing and Grant Industries to allow National contestants to make free timed runs in order to tune for the Pomona meet. To say the track was crowded is an understatement, as it seemed as if all 800 Winternationals entries were there to try their tricks. We only managed to get in two runs, and on the first pass Bill missed on the two-three shift. The block under the clutch pedal was too tall now that the clutch

had seated itself. After a minor adjustment Bill made a strong 12.71-109 pass. Several other F/S cars were also in attendance, and it appeared that our strongest challenge would come from the Ram-Air Oldsmobiles. These cars have ten more inches, fifty more horsepower, yet weigh only 80 pounds more than the Dart. One of these Olds was recording some 12.60 e.t.'s, so we went back to Keith's shop to see if we couldn't find some more power.

As a precautionary measure we gave the engine a leak-down test to see if any valves had been damaged when the shift was missed, but fortunately none were. Dave "Flintstone Flyer" Koffel was around, and suggested that we add some seven-inch extensions to the collectors, as ours appeared a little short. This would give better power throughout the rpm range. By the time we finished this the sun was creeping over the horizon, and it was time for a quick breakfast before returning to the battlegrounds at Pomona.

We made our first pass without the extensions and recorded a slow 12.90 and the speed dropped off to 107. This left us somewhat concerned, until we checked the air density and found it to be much lower than that at Irwindale or O.C.I.R. Putting the extensions on picked everything up again, and Bill put down a 12.79-108.95 run. We were still looking for a couple of miles-per-hour though, as the Oldsmobiles were running 109-110 mph. The Ram-Air setups really work on the top end. We tried advancing the timing on the Dodge, but this hurt performance, so we set everything back as it was when the engine came off the dyno. With this

combination the car recorded a good 12.72-108.82. Time had run out for us, so rather than try anything desperate we decided to run the car as it was. Indiscriminate changes would more than likely hurt our chances, rather than help.

Saturday morning came all too soon, as we finished the final preparations for the F/S class elimination runs. This included another oil and filter change, along with a fresh set of Champion N-64Y plugs. The final step was to give the car a thorough going over with Classic Wax — and then we waxed her three more times. Not only did this make the car look good, but more important to us at this point, it gave the car a very smooth finish to cut down on air friction. The weather was starting to warm up and we knew this would cut our performance slightly, so we were looking for every possible advantage.

The class call came and we headed for the staging lines. As we approached the head of the lines, Bill fired the engine to warm it to operating temperature. We didn't want the car to stumble off the line with a cold engine. This engine is quite critical in this respect, as it runs best around 140 degrees. Just prior to the class call Bill decided to check the tire width. Stock car classes cannot run tires in excess of seven inches wide. Oops! One was almost a quarter-inch too wide. Out came the vixen file, and we trimmed the tire to the correct size.

They say the first round is always the roughest, and ours was no exception as Bill pulled to the line facing the Bar-

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The final run for class honors pitted the Swinger against Division IV Champ Gary Moore with his 1961 Pontiac. The "Tin Indian" was hard pressed, but caught the Swinger at the finish.

The strain of waiting to make a qualifying run is reflected on "Wild Bill's" face as the Swinger rests dormant in the staging lanes. Once on the course, performance was excellent.

Swingers Four — driver Bill Shrewsberry, Cragar's General Manager, Tom Shedden, and Cathie Weddle, from Keith Black Racing Engines, pose with the Car Craft Dart at the Winternationals.

# "SWINGER"

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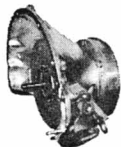
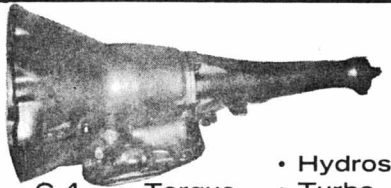
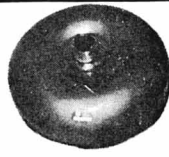
racuda of Duffy's Performance Center from New Jersey. This car had been running close to our times, so it would be a good race. Bill staged carefully and the Christmas tree started its countdown. Coming out at 4500 rpm the tires spun too hard. Rather than back out, Bill let them spin and grabbed second gear. From my vantage point it was hard to tell who was ahead, but finally the win light came on in our

lane. Bill had turned 12.79 e.t. with a top end of 109.62, a new high for the screamin' Swinger.

The second round looked plenty grim, as our competition was none other than James Wheeler from Massillon, Ohio, driving the '68 Ram-Air Olds out of Remlinger Oldsmobile. This car had the advantage on us as far as speed and e.t. were concerned, but we had Shrewsberry. And this was the deciding factor as James drew a big red-eye trying to beat Bill out of the gate. Time for this run was 12.73-108.30. The third round was a little easier, as the competition,

in another Barracuda, was only turning in the 13.30's. Bill waited for the green, feeling he had this race "covered," and won with a 12.77-108.43

Here it was—time for the trophy run! Our Swinger Project Car had far exceeded our wildest expectations. Regardless of what happened on this final run, we were guaranteed winners in our own minds. The many long hours of flogging had been justified, and everyone connected with the project was totally happy. The final run pitted us against Gary Moore's stormin' 1961 Pontiac from Tullia, Texas. Gary's car is the current mph record holder in the class, and would be hard to beat. With his 400 inches (389 stock) and tri-carb setup he was looking good. When the lights came down Bill put a gate job on the Poncho, and held his advantage through 2nd and 3rd. But in fourth gear, those extra 60 inches told the tale and Gary nipped the Swinger just as they went into the traps. The "Tin Indian" ran a strong 12.69-109.48 to our losing 12.77-108.43. The taste of defeat is sometimes hard to swallow, but in this case, I can't think of a nicer guy than Gary to lose to. We had gotten our feet wet, and who knows, maybe next year we'll be in the winner's circle!

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