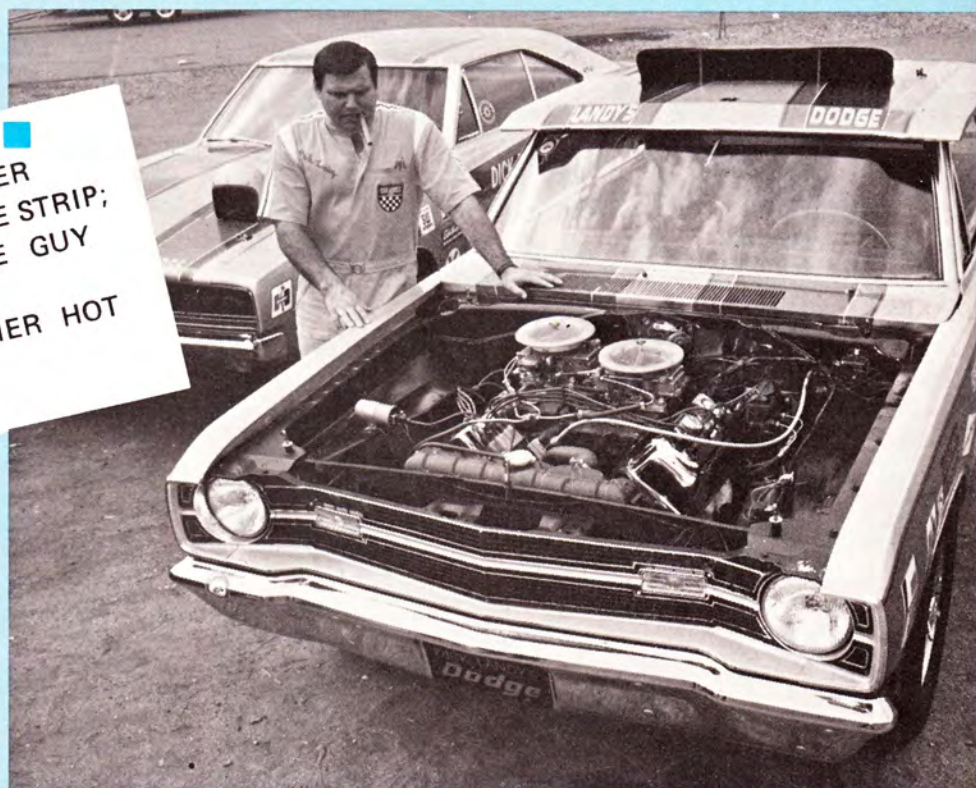


# DICK LADDY SPEAKS OUT ON...

TRICKS TO SETTING UP A SUPER STOCK; HOW TO DRIVE AT THE STRIP; THE BEST WAY FOR A LITTLE GUY TO RACE AGAINST THE PROFESSIONALS PLUS OTHER HOT SUBJECTS ON RACING!

"The yellow had just gotten bright. After you stare at a Christmas tree a while, you can see the progression of the lights from dim to medium to bright to medium to dim again and then OUT. Since the car had an automatic transmission, I left as soon as the last yellow started to come on. If you wait to see green, you'll never make it. The only time to check on the green is as you go by; just to see if it is green and if you've pulled it off or not."



*Dick campaigns a Hemi Dart with a four-speed and a B & M clutchflite. Driving techniques vary with each type of car as do gear and tire combinations.*

That voice of experience belongs to one Dick Landy, cigar-chewin', crowd-pleasing, super-competitive professional drag racer who captured the Street Eliminator trophy at NHRA's '69 Winternationals in a B/Modified Production MoPar.

"Why did you switch to the Modified Production classes, Dick?"

"Our whole thinking at this point is that Super Stock drag racing has become too much of a professional thing to have it on a handicap basis. As it is now, the professionals are pitted against amateurs in the Super Stock classes, and it's not a real accomplishment to win. It's not really fair to the amateur either to be racing against the big guy with factory parts. In Modified Production classes we're still racing the little guy, but it's on a more even basis. He can do whatever he wants to make his car as competitive as ours. We also thought some of the new 429 Fords and new aluminum Chevrolets were going to be ready for Winternationals, and we'd be able to have some really 'heads up' racing for the fans."

"You had several cars at the Winternationals, didn't you?"

"There were three of us—Bob Lambeck drove the A/Modified Production Hemi Dart, Herb McCandless drove the B/Modified Production Charger, and I raced the A/Modified Production four-speed, to start with. Bob and I went out, and Herb retired to let me drive for the Eliminator after he'd done a fantastic job during class competition."

"You ran the cars at the AHRA meet in Phoenix, too, didn't you?"

"We took them over just for the exposure. They were set up differently, though—not Modified Production. In the Super Stock classes there we had a fiberglass hood on the Charger, installed a plastic windshield, stripped the interior, etc., to try to get the weight down. It was running against the lighter Hemi Darts, and we knew it wouldn't really be competitive, but we wanted to try it out. Then when we decided to enter the Modified Production classes at Winternationals, we had quite a conversion job to do. We felt that the Pomona track was going to be slick, so we took the Hemi Automatic car and put a B & M Clutchflite in it. In MP classes, the safety rules are much stricter, so we had to have roll bars, special scatter shield, drive shaft loops, rerouted fuel and brake and battery lines, and a whole series of changes, including reinstalling glass windows, steel hood and other parts. In order to get through Tech Inspection, we had to borrow pieces from a friend so the vacuum headlight doors could be made operable. These changes were in addition to the routine preparations such as getting the engine ready, lining up spare pieces (transmission, rear gears, etc.) and finding the best tire/wheel combination. And with four cars entered, the number of pieces that have to be collected as spare parts adds up to a sizable amount, much more than people probably realize."

"Do you encounter these same problems as you go from meet to meet?"

"Some of them. We always have to check out tire/wheel combinations. Track surfaces and conditions are all important in getting a bite at the starting line, and it's a trial-and-error situation. For the Winternationals meet, as an example, we hadn't decided whether to use the 10.15 Goodyear tires or the 11.00's. There is a difference of an inch in width and a quarter-inch in height between the two types, and they require different size wheels. We didn't know beforehand what size wheel would work best, so we had to make runs on nine-inch wheels, eight-inchers, and on down the line until we found that the six-inch worked best for the 10.50, and an eight-inch is required for the 11.15. The other problems we have to solve at each big meet concerns the gasoline to be used. Strip gas has to be used; you can't bring your own. There's often a variation between the gasoline at the strip and that which you've been running. Ignition timing and carburetor settings have to be adjusted to compensate for the particular fuel being used."

"What are the gear setups on the cars you're currently running?"

"The Hemi has a 4.88 gear with a 29-inch tire. The Wedge has a 4.89 gear and also uses the 29-inch tires."

"What rpm levels do you set?"

"The Hemi turns about 7400 through the traps; we like to shift the four-speed Hemi at about 7500. The Wedge is shifted at 6200 rpm and reaches 6500 in the traps. With the Clutchflite transmission, we leave the line at about 6500 and shift at 7500."

"Dick, you mentioned earlier some dissatisfaction with the handicapping system. What are your feelings on how it should be set up and how factoring should be handled?"

"It's a tough problem. If smaller, slower cars are going to race the higher horsepower vehicles, there has to be handicapping of some sort. Today, it's a matter of rating cars by horsepower to total-car weight. The horsepower figure is then factored by a group of people (NHRA) who often decide the engine produces more horsepower than the factory says it does, and so on. I would personally like to see a system whereby you are handicapped by weight, so that when you race another car, you leave the line together. The first one through the lights would win. As it is now, there's brake-slammings, racing the Christmas tree and the Chrondek clocks instead of an opponent. The new rules we'd like to see incorporated would also allow some of the cars which are not as competitive now to change to some of the parts and pieces that would make them more competitive. As an example, our Chrysler cars have fiberglass front ends. With the new ruling we're suggesting, other people could do the same on down the line, with a whole list of modifications in that



Touring as a professional has many problems. Landy uses a truck with a trailer and two station wagons with trailers to take the cars to the strip.

area. I think it would help restore competitive-type drag racing."

"What about match racing, Dick?"

"That's an area where really good, 'heads up' racing takes place, and I like it. You're dealing with professionals in this situation, and it's easier to get the ground rules established. There's handicapping involved, but it's been possible to work it out with the racers so that it's fair to everyone. With people such as Dick Harrell, Bill Jenkins, Ronnie Sox, Hubert Platt, and Don Nicholson, just to mention some of the leading contenders, there's plenty of excitement for the fans, and the racers feel they are competing more

fairly and on a more even basis. It's not a matter of the big guy against the little guy, so there's more pride in winning. The cars are generally so evenly matched that track conditions, equipment, and driving skill are pitted against each other, and anybody could win."

"How do you work out a match-race campaign for a given season?"

"Usually, we get together with the other drivers and discuss what we plan to run as far as car weight, engine size, type of fuel, etc. This way we're able to work out the type of matches we'd like to see put on. We've been talking about the 'heads up' approach for a

*Factory super stockers have advantages that would be difficult for the non-factory racers to follow. Landy recommends that a new racer campaign the lower classes to avoid the professionals.*

*One of the most popular street machines is the 440 Wedge Charger. Landy will campaign a modified production version of the 440-engine to make the '69 clinic program more informative to the enthusiast.*



couple of years, now, and most drivers favor it as the best way to put on a good show for the fans and still have more real competition in the various classes."

"How about the Landy Clinics; you've made some changes in your basic approach, haven't you?"

"Our original plan for the clinics was to spend about 80 per cent of our time with what we call the 'hard core' racer—the fellow who goes to the track every week or at least twice a month, rather than the 'enthusiast' who maybe runs once a month or competes in grudge races or just likes a high performance automobile. We geared the clinic program toward the hard core racer because we thought that was the type of people who'd come. We found out during our first year that by far the majority who've attended the clinics are the enthusiasts; only 10-20 per cent were of the hard core group. So the clinic program has been changed to spend about 80 per cent of our time with the development of the wedge both at the track and at the clinics. This engine is not really competitive at the track on a professional basis, but it is very good for grudge racing and general high performance use."

"Without kidding anyone, it's obvious that Dodge Division of Chrysler was interested in our clinic approach because they felt it would interest people throughout the country in Dodge products. We all felt it would be a good way to let the people know what they can do to get better performance—the parts and pieces available not just for the new models but for the older ones, too. For example, if you have a '56 model and want to put in some '68 parts, they'll bolt on. We also found out right away that the clinics increased dealer show-

room traffic. Not only did fellows that were interested themselves come, but they also brought in their buddies, and their parents. We are able to answer questions for them, and they can look over the drag cars and see the changes that have been made."

"Are the clinics scheduled along with match races, in general?"

"That's about the way it works out. We travel on the road with a couple of the cars—a Hemi Dart and the Charger Wedge that we're testing and developing. We change engines and other pieces to run Super Stock "F" classes of Modified Production, depending on the occasion. And the other drivers come in for the match races which they've scheduled."

"What advice do you give to fellows who want to get started in drag racing, Dick?"

"I usually tell them to get an automatic transmission car and try to class themselves in the lower classes. The higher up you go, the more professional race drivers you'll encounter and the more expensive the whole venture is going to be."

"Just how expensive is it to go 'professional'?"

"A fellow would definitely have to spend around \$35,000 if he wanted to be there every time. This would not put him in the winning circle; it would only put him in the last four, three, or two rounds of the race each time. From there on, it's a matter of playing ET brackets. I suggest that fellows think twice before doing this. It's better to do a little grudge racing and get the feel of it. The professional approach involves a good crew of mechanics and good driving skills as well as good equipment. Right now, the whole trick with racing is being able to run on or near the records—not how fast or how quick, but being

able to juggle your car to keep from running out of the bracket."

"It sounds relatively simple, Dick, but it's a complicated matter, isn't it?"

"It has got to be one of the biggest gambles there is. It relates to reaction time of both drivers involved. In other words, if both of you left the line at the exact same time, and you both ran well (didn't miss a shift or over-rev the engine, etc.), you could lock up the brakes at a certain point on the track and turn close to identical ETs. But if you left a tenth of a second late, then you have to make up that time in order to beat your opponent, and this means you may break out by a tenth of a second. It's hard to know if you left a tenth late or if the other guy left late, and it's a kind of guessing what you should do—slam on the brakes, stay on the gas right through the lights, or what. It takes a lot of driving experience, and even then it's gambling."

"Staging, I think, is one of the most important elements of drag racing. If you stage two inches too deep, you'll have to leave as much as four or five hundredths of a second later in order to keep from red-lighting. The farther back you can stage, the more of a run you'll have with your front tire before the beam opens, and the earlier you can actually start without breaking the beam and causing a redlight."

"How does a Landy Dodge differ from a 'dealer' Dodge, Dick?"

"The '68 Dart we're running has acid-etched doors; so do all the Dodges, actually. The factory builds them that way. Front fenders and hoods are fiberglass. We use a street Hemi engine with the dual-quad-ram Holley carburetor induction system, a transistorized ignition, Stewart-Warner tach, oil pressure and fuel pressure gauges."

"One final question, Dick. How do you think your 'old reliable' hemi engine will stand up against the new Ford 429 and Chevy all-aluminum power plants?"

"Our engine has been around since 1964; that's why we call it 'old reliable'. And Ford and Chevrolet are taking advantage of design features which have made our engines successful. The Chevrolets will have a big advantage in weight, and that can't be discounted, especially when it's put in a light Camaro with a few fiberglass parts. The Ford engine is a new design, and I think we still have an advantage since we've been racing the engine for five years. They'll both offer some stiff competition, however. But by the time they get their engines tested and proved on the track, we'll have parts and pieces to keep us competitive."

So there you have it, the one and only Dick Landy Story. Landy's rather candid and outspoken at times, but his cars get the job done and he goes out of his way to help the "little guy" in any way he can. He shows no mercy on the drag strip and asks for none. Landy is a professional.



Landy's trademark at the strip is his un-lit cigar. He relates the difficulties encountered during his victorious week-end at the NHRA Winternationals and tells which drivers are the toughest to beat.