

San Jose-based team aims for 322-mph motorcycle land speed record

For Immediate Release

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SAN JOSE (Oct. 7, 2004) – Beat 322 miles per hour on a motorcycle.

That's the goal of Mike Akatiff, the San Jose man who designed and built the bullet-shaped Ack Attack motorcycle, and Jimmy Odom, the former motorcycle racer from Tracy who hopes to drive the projectile into history next week on Utah's Bonneville Salt Flats.

Breaking the record, set in 1991, means "I can stick a plaque on the wall saying 'Been there, done that,' and then I can move on," said 59-year-old Akatiff, who manufactured motorcycle parts and did some racing earlier in his career before going into business for himself making precision aircraft instruments. He spent about \$100,000 of his own money and two years in design and construction of the Ack Attack.

Odom, 56, a former national champion who now works for the California Department of Water Resources, said the opportunity to drive the Ack Attack gives him about 12-15 seconds of the kind of thrill he once experienced as a competitor. "For me it's just about the accomplishment, just being part of it."

The team leaves Friday for Utah and is scheduled to make its first record attempt Wednesday on the salt flats just east of Wendover, Nev.

In August Odom tested the machine – powered by a pair of four-cylinder Suzuki motorcycle engines, which produce a combined 700-plus horsepower – in Utah and crashed it at more than 300 mph.

"As soon as I saw the horizon start to tilt inside my windscreen, I thought 'Oh no, this is a bad one,'" Odom said, recalling the mishap in which his machine skipped more than 1,000 feet on its first bounce across the desert floor. It was upset by a tiny gust of wind. A pair of parachutes, normally used to brake the motorcycle at the finish of a speed run, deployed automatically, perhaps saving Odom's life.

Fortunately he was not injured and the motorcycle, built of tubular metal inside an aerodynamic carbon fiber shroud, needed only minor repairs to be ready for a new record attempt. Two rival efforts – one by a team in Arcata and another from Grass Valley – also will be going for the record.

"Our data showed him at 316 mph when he crashed," Akatiff said.

The team

Owner, designer and builder

- Mike Akatiff, 59, of San Jose
- President of ACK Technologies, downtown San Jose, manufacturer of general aviation avionics
- Former motorcycle mechanic and parts manufacturer #

Rider / driver

- Jimmy Odom, 56, of Tracy
- Works for California Department of Water Resources
- Former motorcycle racer for factory-backed teams Bultaco, Triumph, Honda, Suzuki and Yamaha #

The machine

Ack Attack

- Two stock Suzuki Hayabusa 1299cc turbo-charged engines, 700-plus horsepower
- Chain drive
- Cromoly tubular frame covered by carbon fiber skin with driver's cockpit
- In-cockpit video and data acquisition system
- Handlebar throttle
- Foot pedals for gear shift and brake
- Twin parachutes for stopping
- Maximum speed 350+ mph (estimated)
- Estimated value \$100,000 in materials only

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