

## FEATURE STORY

# HRD Racing Heads

## No longer a well-kept secret...

Story by Wes Buck

"I guess I'm one of the hold outs," explains Al Dicksen, owner and proprietor of HRD Racing Heads based in Idaho. "We're truly a custom shop. I open the doors here every day not in expectation of a call from my banker with an account balance update, but for the Monday morning phone calls from my customers telling me they kicked everyone's ass at the track over the weekend. It's not as much about making the money as it is getting the results. Therefore, I haven't made that much money."

It's hard to believe such a statement, but with the open and honest Al Dicksen from HRD Racing Heads; you can count on it. As the motorsports industry continues to mature; we're seeing more and more race-related businesses straying from the hands-on

approach. Anymore, it's all about production numbers and efficiency. While those are two items that are near and dear to the heart of any good businessman, there is comfort in knowing the guy who owns the place is still the guy working on your stuff.

When you work with the guys at HRD Racing Heads, based in Dalton Gardens, ID, you are working with experts in airflow and the science of making big power. Racers, more often than not, are a group of hard-working people who spend most of their extra funds on parts and services they can't afford to pay for twice.

"Good results are the absolute most important part of what we do," explains Dicksen. "That's what we like to provide our customers; real results that are instantly evident and true-life num-



bers about our stuff."

Good results aren't necessarily impossible to find, but there is something to be said for a set of cylinder heads, or just about any race car part, that is built or designed with a specific application in mind. With serious increases in technology in metal working, the advent of the CNC machine and ability to digitize designs; more shops than ever are mass-producing items that might not work as well as they could if intentionally constructed for a specific engine combination.

"There just aren't as many innovators out there as there used to be. Rightfully so, I guess, as everyone's out here trying to make a living, but my desire to innovate, find power and simply do things better is what drives me. At 64 years old, I feel great, I feel young and I know it's my passion for this stuff that keeps me going."

Now that we've obviously put some merit in the cylinder head efforts at Dicksen's HRD Racing Heads facility, it's probably important to know why this gentleman can make the claims that he does.

"Getting my name out has always been a problem for me," admits Dicksen. "Most of the people I worked for paid me to work only for them or at least keep quiet to the competition what I was doing for them. We're a research and development shop more than anything and we've been battling people taking our technology and bringing it into their shop and mass producing our stuff - which kind of leaves my business out in the cold."

A list of customers ranging from the biggest names in NASCAR to the biggest names in drag racing, including Jack Rousch, Robert Yates, Rick Hendricks and Bob Panella, Eaton

Enterprises and Frank Aragona; HRD is proud of their clientele and has used their customers as their advertisement since day one. Well, the word is out now and racers looking for someone to take care of their needs and do something with them can look to HRD.

"Quality control is monumental here and I think it's safe to say there aren't many business owners, let alone owners of cylinder head shops who can say they have done the valve seats on every set of heads that have left the shop in the last 35 years. I can, because I have."

Dicksen, who's been referred to as one of the best repair welders in the world, is confident in his work and proud of it as well. HRD remains one of the only true custom shops in the industry and one of the only places that human hands massage every set of cylinder heads that leave the building.

"We don't have all the 'Dragon's Mist' and 'Lion's Breath' product lines you might find elsewhere, but we do pride ourselves in doing work that equates to more power with heads that are specific to a project. We like to say that we take a Corvette and turn it into a Ferrari. Basically, we're taking pieces that are pretty good and making them great; there's just no replacement for spending the time and effort necessary to obtain perfection."

If you're looking for someone to have a truly vested interest in your success or failure at the race track; the guys at HRD will fit the bill. The performance of their customers over the weekend is a direct reflection of their ability and their main interest is in maintaining their good reputation.



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