

# Global speed bump

## Coronavirus delays new world record attempt

By Joe Sage  
with Valerie Thompson  
Lead photo: Lou Fischer  
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"LandSpeed" Louise Noth contributed to this article

"Who else is ready to get back to doing what they love...? Looking forward to the days I will be back in one of these speed demons crushing records..."

Valerie Thompson, "Queen of Speed" and Sturgis Hall of Fame member



The land speed record for motorcycles in Australia was set by eight-time record holder Valerie Thompson of Scottsdale in 2018 at the Lake Gairdner salt flats in South Australia, during the 28th Annual Speed Week competition hosted by Dry Lakes Racers Australia (DLRA), with an official run of 328.467 mph, defending her status as "The World's Fastest Female Motorcycle Racer" and earning her membership in DLRA's 200 MPH and 300 MPH Clubs, only the second competitor to gain membership in the 300 MPH Club, plus the honor of their "Fast Lady on the Lake" award.

She was there that year in pursuit of a bigger goal: to become the World's Fastest Motorcycle Racer, period—without any gender qualifier.

That record has been held for just shy of ten years by Rocky Robinson, who recorded 376.363 mph at the Bonneville Salt Flats in 2010 aboard his Top Oil-Ack Attack streamliner.

Valerie's last day at 2018's DLRA event set one more record—the hard way—as she survived a horrific end-over-end airborne crash at 363 mph in the Team "7" Racing Streamliner, making this the world's fastest survived motorcycle crash.

"We had a singular goal of running 377+ mph to capture the world record during the World Speed Trials," says Thompson. "We used Speed Week to test and tune the bike, and I'm happy we set a new record and received the 'Fast Lady on the Lake Award.' The wreck during the World Speed Trials was unfortunate, but we are not giving up on our quest for the new record.

"Most importantly, we proved the superiority of the monocoque carbon fiber design and safety features utilized by Denis Manning and John Jans.

Without their dedication to high speed safety engineering, I would not be talking with you now."

This spring she was ready to tackle Lake Gairdner again—this time on four wheels, in the Treit and Davenport Target 550 Streamliner bearing dual Dodge HEMI supercharged engines putting out over 5,000 hp. Her goal: to break the current AA/Blown Fuel Streamliner land speed record of 415.867 mph held by Tom Burkland and Burkland Racing since 2008. The Target 550 would have to surpass the old record by one percent to set a new World Record under Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) rules (420.026 mph or better).

The team and the streamliner were already in South Australia in March, and Valerie was within just a couple of days of flying over—when, as dominos rapidly fell in the spreading global coronavirus quarantine, DLRA Speed Week joined a growing list of event cancellations.

The return of the crew to the US was its own challenging logistical travel adventure typical of the times. The craft remains in South Australia, wrapped back up in two shipping containers, as it had arrived there earlier this year.

Thompson's Lake Gairdner goals, long on two wheels, now also four, are interwoven with those at Utah's Bonneville Salt Flats each year. Bonneville Motorcycle Speed Trials (two wheels) this August has been cancelled. SCTA Speed Week in August and USFRA World of Speed in September (both with both two- and four-wheel events) are still on—as of now. Any runs here by Valerie would be two-wheeled, anyway, as salt conditions at Bonneville are seen as currently having a course too short and too thin for the Target 550.

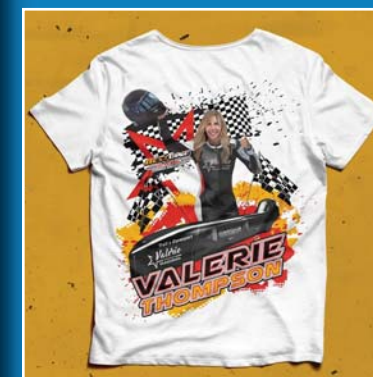
As for Australia, the Target 550 is waiting there, the DLRA event is set to run next year, and all parties hope to pick up where they left off. ■



We had Valerie all set to be on this beautiful cover of our May/June issue, well ahead of time, in honor of her late March World Record run in Australia, but this, too, was postponed.



The San Diego Roadster Club recently presented Valerie with a stylish plaque commemorating the Nolan White Top Speed Car award for her run in the Target 550 land speed racing streamliner.



BestLine Racing signed on as an official sponsor for Valerie Thompson Racing in Australia and created this T-shirt, donating every order to Valerie's GoFundMe racing page. Visit www.racingadditives.com