



By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

Dirk Bauerle of Champion, with his 1975 966 International limited pro stock pulling tractor, capped off his season Saturday night with the winning pull in Brush, Colo.

He won the event with a pull of 280.4 feet, making it the eighth event he's won this season.

He may have added some more wins had his tractor not broken down, requiring him to replace the motor.

Bauerle competed in the Heartland Pulling Series in western Nebraska, the Nebraska Truck & Tractor Pullers in mid-Nebraska, the Colorado Truck and Tractor Pulling Association and the National Sled Pullers Association, also of Colorado.

Third year of competition

This year marks the third year Bauerle is competing with a limited pro stock tractor.

He's been an enthusiast of antique tractor pulling as well and has competed throughout Nebraska.

Bauerle said it took him more than two years to build the tractor, named "High Dollar Hooker." He did much of the work himself with help from Imperial NAPA on the engine.

He estimated it cost him between \$35,000-40,000 to build the pulling tractor.

The six-cylinder, single turbo diesel engine is capable of producing from 1,000 to 1,500 horsepower.

Bauerle said water is also injected into the engine to keep the pistons cool during the 12-15 second pull down the track.

In that short time, the engine will burn at least two gallons of diesel.

During a second pull at one of the events, the water valve to the engine shimmied closed without Bauerle knowing it.

During the pull, he watched the temperature of his engine climb to 1,200-1,300 degrees F. That kind of heat will melt down an engine, he said, but fortunately, he had his pistons ceramic-coated to withstand heat up to 1,600° F and the engine wasn't damaged.

After Bauerle backs up to hook on to the pulling sled, he revs the engine up to 5,000 RPMs before letting loose of the clutch.

He's most concerned about keeping the tractor steered down the track as the front wheels of the tractor lift off the ground at the start.

As the sled moves down the track, a weight moves up the sled, increasing the weight against the tractor.

Watching gauges and his exhaust during the run is nearly impossible so Bauerle mounted a small video camera on the post of the steering wheel.

After a pull, he can go back and watch the video to check his gauges and exhaust during the run as well as get a replay of the run itself.

Throughout the season, Dan Rowley of Imperial has accompanied Bauerle to the pulls. He helps drive and serves as his pit assistant during the pulls.

Rowley also runs the pulling sled for the antique pulls. Bauerle and two others own the sled

used by the antique association.

The length of the sled used by the antiques measures about 20 feet.

Just the slide pad on the front of the sled used for the pro class is 20 feet. The antique sled is too small for the high-powered pulling tractors.