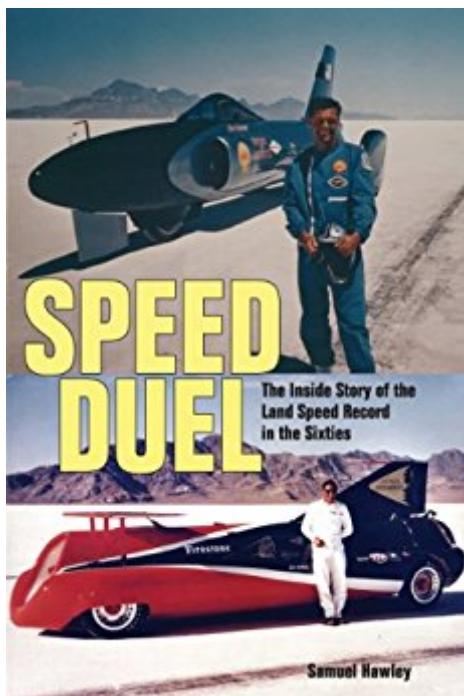


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# Speed Duel: The Inside Story Of The Land Speed Record In The Sixties



## **Synopsis**

The quest for the land speed record in the 1960s and the epic rivalry between two dynamic American drivers, Art Arfons and Craig Breedlove. "Interesting and complex. . . . The best job I've seen done on the subject so far." -- Craig Breedlove Until the 1950s, the land speed record (LSR) was held by a series of European gentlemen racers such as British driver John Cobb, who hit 394 miles per hour in 1947. That record held for more than a decade, until the car culture swept the U.S. Hot-rodgers and drag racers built and souped up racers using car engines, piston aircraft engines and, eventually, jet engines. For this determined and dedicated group, the LSR was no longer an honor to be held by rich aristocrats with industrial backing -- it was brought stateside. In the summer of 1960, the contest moved into overdrive, with eight men contending for the record on Utah's Bonneville Salt Flats. Some men died in horrific crashes, others prudently retired, and by mid-decade only two men were left driving: Art Arfons and Craig Breedlove. By 1965, Arfons and Breedlove had walked away from some of the most spectacular wipeouts in motor sport history and pushed the record up to 400, then 500, then 600 miles per hour. Speed Duel is the fast-paced history of their rivalry. Despite the abundant heart-stopping action, Speed Duel is foremost a human drama. Says author Samuel Hawley, "It is a quintessential American tale in the tradition of The Right Stuff, except that it is not about extraordinary men doing great things in a huge government program. It's about ordinary men doing extraordinary things in their back yards."

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

This book made me happy. I was in grade school when these land speed record battles occurred. I was enthralled during the period, latching on to Craig Breedlove as a main hero, and Art Arfons a close second. No reason other than Goodyear vs Firestone...for no logical reason for a kid in grade school. But the battle for land speed record supremacy during arguably the most intense period for the record was real during my impressionable youth. This book brought it back. Superbly researched, tragedy, success, near tragedy and more success. I followed through newspaper articles and magazines, often months after the fact, such was the period. It was breathtaking for a youth, and this book took me inside to distraction. I did maybe 50 or so Google searches as each car and driver, far more than the aforementioned two heroes, were described in the book. Looking for articles, images, videos. And then I inadvertently landed on the author's web page ( does not allow the link, search for his name and you will find it) and a plethora of images, videos and interviews coordinated with the story. The book does not contain images....but the author's website is a treasure trove. And he has added to the images after publication. Read the book, visit Mr. Hawley's website. If the subject is of interest, the book and the website will not disappoint. Well done, Mr. Hawley.

I have been fascinated by the LSR business since I was a kid in the 1960's, I have scrounged every piece of written material on the subject that I could get my hands on. The unique thing about this book is that there is not a single photograph contained in it but somehow the author paints such a vivid picture of what REALLY happened at that time that you feel as if you're in the same place watching it all happen. I have a huge motorsports library and this may just be the single most well-written book I have ever read, it's really that good. The LSR chase has always been the most dangerous pursuit in motorsports, and you can really feel the tension that Arfons, Breedlove, Graham, and the others must have lived with as they engaged in this insane pursuit. Lastly, and also to the author's credit-I could not find even the simplest grammatical or spelling error anywhere within this book's pages, something that is almost impossible to find these days. That alone lends an astute quality to this volume, and gives the story real credibility. Well done and HIGHLY

recommended...

The author conducted many interviews, and has produced a very credible story of the efforts of Craig Breedlove and the Arfons brothers to obtain the land speed record on the Bonneville Salt Flats in the mid-'60s. Be forewarned, however, that although the story is interesting, the people involved were not. They were backyard auto mechanics with a dream, willing to risk their lives to obtain it.

Now that the Spirit of America has been removed from the Museum of Science and Industry, this is the only link I have to the insane chase of the land speed record between Gablich and Breedlove. This book takes you into the souls and minds of the people who risked their money, lives and reputations to be called, "The Fastest".

A super book! A must for all those who are interested in the Land Speed Record, especially the competitive years in the 1960s. I grew up during this time and as a kid I thought it can't be that hard - just put a bigger engine in and drive the car straight for a mile, turn around and do it again. It seemed simple. Reading this book showed me how naive I was. The technology needed to push the limit to 400, 500 and then 600 MPH was cutting edge in these years and sometimes it failed with fatal consequences. Throw in the politics of tire giants Goodyear and Firestone sponsoring the competitors and it only adds to the drama. Samuel Hawley did a great job with this book. It was hard to put down when I knew that I had to get up for work the next morning. I would absolutely recommend this book!

A well developed and researched account of the insane quest for the land speed record and an incisive account of the personality's and mechanical obstacles involved. Insane only because of the inclusion of jet engined projectiles, not driven through their wheels but by thrust from their ever larger engines, never hampered by traction and other natural impediments that might face any automobile. I had to constantly ask myself about the integrity of the company's financing and thus encouraging the jet powered attempts. Generating headlines at the expense of others with cars which loosely fit the description of a car. Ignoring the accepted rules of the organization that monitors such records. Aware if the lives lost but willing to take the chance. Company's were selling the image of a tire that is the best for your car because it was tugged along under a jet propelled object and nearly ignoring attempts of vehicles with tires that drive them over land for the accepted

record. A very good book that tells the whole story of the last race for a misunderstood record by a fascinating and very different group of people..

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