

Volume XI, Number 10 - October 2009

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Burk's Blast

By Jeff Burk

JUST WONDERING WHILE WATCHING THE LAST NHRA RACE AT VIRGINIA MOTORSPORTS PARK....AGAIN

Just Wondering ... Why the stick and ball media who cover NASCAR making such a big deal about 50 years-old Mark Martin winning a few races and contending for the their championship? It's no big deal in my book. Ten years ago in 1999 when John Force was 50 he won eleven national events and a Winston World Championship in Nitro Funny Car. That same year, at the ripe old age of 56, Warren Johnson won seven national events and the Winston World Championship in Pro Stock. If Mark Martin or any of those NASCAR guys get close to that record when they are 56, then I'll start to be impressed.



Just Wondering ... Why the NHRA doesn't bother to report the speeds as well as the ET's of Comp, Super Stock and Stock racers? For some of us knowing how fast a Super Stock racer who records an 8.11 E.T. went is just as important as knowing Mike Edwards' speed when he ran a 6.509 in Pro Stock.

Just Wondering ... If the speed of a Top Fuel, Funny Car or Pro Stocker are truly unimportant to the point that setting or breaking the speed record in those classes aren't worth awarding points, then why put them up on the boards at all?

Just Wondering ... Could there be a shift in the force? A Pro Mod team got the NHRA's best appearing award at VMP! Could a Pro Mod get named best engineered next? Could this be a precursor of NHRA considering adding Pro Mod as a professional class? If Mr. Burgess waves enough money at the NHRA management, I'd say yes.

Just Wondering ... How can the mainstream media and Corporate America really take drag racing seriously as a business or a sport as long as ESPN continues to pre-empt the NHRA broadcasts for virtually any other sports event? I believe that Tom Compton cut the best deal he could when he negotiated the current ESPN contract. But for NHRA's own good and that of its sponsors, it is time for Tom to renegotiate the deal. A 2 a.m. broadcast of qualifying hurts NHRA drag racing's image more than it helps.

Just Wondering ... Am I the only one who hopes that Angelle Sampey gets a Top Fuel or Funny Car ride? I think her post-race interviews and quotes could rival those of the great Shirley Muldowney -- and drag racing needs someone to take the burden of great interviews off the ol' truck driver, John Force.

Just Wondering ... Will Alan Johnson and Al-Anabi team owner Sheikh Khalid Al Thani step up to multiple Top Fuel and Funny Car teams in 2010? My money is on yes. Especially if two or three of John Force's or Don Schumacher's teams finish in the top five in points in T/F and or F/C. World championships, not wins, are what is important to the owner of the Al-Anabi team and sponsorship money isn't an issue.

DRAG RACING Online will be published on the 8th of each month and will be updated throughout the month.

DRAG RACING Online owes allegiance to no sanctioning body and will call 'em as we see 'em. We strive for truth, integrity, irreverence and the betterment of drag racing. We have no agenda other than providing the drag racing public with unbiased information and view points they can't get in any other drag racing publication.

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Just Wondering ... When will a major sponsor step up and back a nostalgia series? Most of the major market cities now host nostalgia races and the fastest growing professional class in numbers of new cars being built is nostalgia Funny Car. Nitro sells and nostalgia racing offers more nitro classes and cars than the NHRA.

Just Wondering ... What are the chances of seeing four-wide "exhibitions" at Bruton Smith's Charlotte track when circuits other than the NHRA (like Super Chevy Show, NMRA, NMCA, and others) come to that track in 2010? I make the odds 10-1 for it happening from at least one of those circuits.

Just Wondering ... Have you noticed that although the NHRA pro classes at national events have for the most part been full fields that the pool of cars in each class has shrunk dramatically? Where there used to be 80-100 pro teams at an NHRA national event to fill the four 16-car/bike fields now there are almost never more than 70 teams to fill the 64 spots available.

Just Wondering ... Did you know that Bruton Smith tracks now hold a quarter of the events on the NHRA calendar?

Just Wondering ... NHRA says publicly that they have little or no control over content of the broadcast of their national events. How can they pay ESPN between \$7M and \$9M for the air-time and have little or no influence on the content? If that is true, Tom did a lousy job of negotiation on that one point. The race broadcasts are for the most part sports entertainment in my opinion and therefore not subject to the rules of objective journalism so NHRA should have a big say on the content -- which I believe they do, by the way.

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Just Wondering ... Am I the only who has noticed that the broadcasters of the NHRA races no longer speak as if there was a chance that the sanctioning body could go back to the quarter mile?

Just Wondering ... Does it make you as crazy as it does me when the broadcasters of the NHRA drag races talk about some nitro racers making their fastest pass ever when they make a 315-mph pass and you know that the driver has gone over 320 in the quarter-mile?

Just Wondering ... Why my initial reaction and those of some readers to monster trucks drag racing at an ADRL event was one of dismay? As my pal Ian Tocher of the ADRL pointed out, no one gets upset about jet cars or wheelstanders making a lap at a drag race, so why get upset about a couple of monster trucks. He's right about that.

Just Wondering ... Could the reason why the NHRA national events have such relatively expensive tickets be that most of the tracks actually hold 25,000 people or less and sell no more than 18-20,000 tickets a day. With the overhead and purse they now have they simply can't make the return on investment they need selling tickets in the \$20-\$25 range. **DRD**

Jeff Bueck

DEAD-ON

by Jok Nicholson

How was your experience at the tracks you raced at in 2009?



The other day I was talking to friend and fellow Stock Eliminator racer Dic Geary, and we started talking about the experiences we had at the tracks we raced at this season. He raced at thirteen NHRA National and Divisional races in 2009 (I hope I remembered that number correctly), which included eleven different tracks.

I have raced at a total of twelve different racetrack facilities this year and I have raced several times at a few of them. Before I get too far into how the experience at the track went, let me set some guidelines that will let me clarify my opinions a bit.

I am NOT going to take into account the actual racing at the event. We all know we can't win them all and that is not part of the "experience" I am telling you about this month.

I am NOT going to take into account the entry fees and payouts at these events. If you don't know what the payout is before you leave for the event and what the entry fees are, you probably shouldn't have gone, and I would imagine your experience started off badly and ended badly as well.

SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY – NORTHERN HOSTILITY: FACT OR FICTION?

I found this to be more true than false. I am not sure if it is because the tracks in the southern part of the country have more tracks to compete with, so customer experience is important to their success or if it is the more "take it easy" attitudes the people in the southern states seem to have.

The one BIG EXCEPTION to this South versus North theory is Bill Bader's Summit Motorsports Park in Norwalk, OH. If there has ever been a complete track operation to use as a model to improve other tracks, Bader's facility has set the benchmark and it is set high! You have probably all heard this before but it is worth repeating, just in case some track operator out there wants to improve his customer's experience. I will keep this as short as possible but each item is important onto the other.

- ▶ When racers arrive and line up in a field or in a line by the pit gate, they get a numbered ticket and a matching number on their bumper or windshield. That WILL BE the order they get into the gate. They do not allow racers to sneak around others, cut in line, etc. Get there in order, go into the pits in order. Simple, effective and fair, so that creates a good experience from the start.
- ▶ Not a single person affiliated with that track tried to tell me what to do or where to go, they simply asked me to pull in a certain lane or asked me if I had been to tech. Again, a simple way to enhance the "experience" for a customer.
- ▶ I noticed a sign on the wall of the concession stand called the "B-Guarantee". Simply says if you have a problem the track personnel will solve that problem to your satisfaction, GUARANTEED! If you are not satisfied, the sign has Deb Bader's personal cell phone number listed and you are asked to call her and she will take care of it personally. That, my friends, is how you improve any experience for a customer.
- ▶ That same attitude goes throughout the facility and the employees. No bad attitudes, no rudeness and no employees who look like they hate what they are doing. You know what happens? Your customers enjoy the event as well. Enthusiasm is contagious and it is something we all can use a little bit of from time to time.

Now, back to the North vs South and the "experience" you and I may have had.

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Here is my list of important things I want to see as a customer who just left a pretty big chunk of money at the entrance to this event.

- ▶ I want the pit gate people to be informative and friendly. They should be able to answer questions about the event and should have an **event information flyer** to hand out.
- ▶ Parking: Track operators should not allow parking to become a stressful thing for customers. It is the first "experience" for customers inside the facility. The track should have a written rule about racers saving spots for other racers. Either allow them to save one spot or don't. It is a simple rule that should be in the **event information flyer** everyone gets at the gate and is simple to enforce. Why aggravate a customer by making him drive around the pit area looking for a spot between a bunch of lawn chairs and crime scene tape?
- ▶ Tech Inspection: Tell your customers where and when tech inspection is taking place. Do not trust the PA system to be enough to accomplish this. Hand out an **event information flyer** at the pit gate to inform your customer about what is going on and the experience becomes better.
- ▶ One experience that is so easy but sometimes made difficult by some of the tracks I was at is the simple process of getting certain classes or brackets to the correct staging lanes. Want that to be a better experience, all the track has to do is put the time trial order and lane assignments on the **event information flyer** everyone should get at the gate.
- ▶ Track Personnel: If there is one thing to really grab a customer and make his or her experience better it is the attitude of the track personnel. Go to the Staging Lanes and ask a simple question like, "How are you pulling cars out? Three or four pair; or do you empty a pair of lanes then go to the next?" Hopefully you won't get an answer like, "We will pull them out however we want to and you better be ready" or "what difference does it make to you, we will tell you when to run so just get ready or get out." I heard those remarks several times this season and even worse was when I asked the Staging Director a question and he wouldn't bother to answer it. That puts a damper on my experience for sure.
- ▶ Track facility: Not every track can be as detailed and well-groomed as Norwalk's track; I know that. Every track can have the facility cleaned up, mowed and trimmed, and electronics in the best working order possible. There is NO EXCUSE not to make that effort. If the track appears to be well taken care of, it signals to the customer the track operator cares about his customer's experience. I went to one track this year that had weeds growing over the guardrail, sand and gravel all over the staging lanes and pit roads, and the entire place looked like it was about ready to be shut down. Why would a business owner let that happen? From the crabby people at the front gate to the rude people throughout the facility it was a bad experience no matter how the racing ended up.

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In the end I have to conclude the Southern tracks I raced at won the experience challenge. The tracks up North came close, but the deciding factor ended up being the track personnel. Quite simply, Southern Hospitality is not a myth.

Thank you **Immokalee Raceway** in Florida; **Beech Bend Raceway Park**, Bowling Green, KY; and leading them all and best of the Northern tracks, **Summit Motorsports Park**; Norwalk, OH.

Rather than name the tracks that created "poor experiences" for me, I will tell you this. One has a national event and a LODRS event and the other is a newly renovated track under new ownership, and I was disappointed how poorly the track personnel treated customers at both places and the general lack of effort overall to make the event a better experience.

We are headed to the Winter Series of bracket racing in Florida at the end of the month and besides some results and highlights, I will be rating my experience at each track. It should be an interesting follow-up story. Will the big money bracket races and very long days be hard on employees and will they be able to make the effort to make the racer's experience a good one? **DRO**

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View from the Left Coast

by Darr Hawthorne

Name your poison

There's no doubt that if you are reading this issue of DRO you are a drag racing fan. Duh, you say ... well, let me explain. Drag racing is the coolest motorsport that I have experienced, having watched my first auto race as a kid when Roger Penske won on the road course at the 1962 Los Angeles Times Grand Prix at the vaunted Riverside Raceway.



NASCAR raced on the same Riverside road course in 1963 and my pre-teen sister fell in love with Fireball Roberts, having had a chance to meet him in the Riverside 500 pits. When Roberts ironically died the next year as a result of his fiery crash at Charlotte Motor Speedway, my sister gave up on auto racing until the whole family started going to the drags together.

I know this is old news, but the drag racing many of us grew up on was a rough, rugged, raw motorsport with total unpredictability. My friends and I used to madly anticipate the Winternationals every year, where the baddest racecars from across the planet would strut their new wares, new mechanical innovations, paint jobs and body styles.

On some levels, today's Big Show drag racing has devolved into an over-regulated, over-ruled, ultra-professional, nitromethane-infused, straight-line entertainment monster truck show. Ask yourself, at the 50th Winternationals will you be looking to see who has ultra-new innovations or who simply has a new sponsorship ... where's the excitement?

I'm hardly advocating a return to the days of changing engines in the Holiday Inn® parking lot or cleaning parts in the motel room bathtub, but damn, when everything becomes so homogenized and void of innovation, where's the excitement? The drags, what was once a real challenge for the hearts and minds of the American race fan, will forever play second fiddle to the other kind of racing America loves, NASCAR, the 900-pound gorilla.

Recently NASCAR took the lead in meeting with their team engine builders on ways to incorporate fuel injection into Sprint Cup racing, not just to remain the industry leader but to make the racing better. So now anything that the Big Show does to incorporate FI into Pro Stock will give the impression to the motorsports media that it is simply playing follow-the-leader.

Wally Parks' passing, I think we can all agree, marked the end of the old NHRA; actually the 50th anniversary of the sanctioning body may have been the beginning of the end of that era. Most of the attendees at the special 50th anniversary race at Pomona that year can probably agree.

The IHRA is going through their re-upholstery and re-paint hoping to re-invent the Other sanctioning body into a single-day nitro entertainment delivery service. Hopefully this new formula works with booked-in shows and a strong sportsman series.

There are few people in drag racing who have left their mark on the sport and those visionaries are far between. Such is the case with Rich Christensen, whose small screen debut in 1995 with his Pinks! TV show introduced competitive drag racing (albeit a made-for-TV-show shot on a drag strip) to an entirely new generation of viewers. His fans range from young viewers to old shut-ins, but with Christensen's game show format taking place on our hallowed drag strips, I submit that he may be one of the most important influences on the drag racing market of this decade.

Christensen's simple original concept: if you lose the race, you lose your car.

I got a lot of crap from readers and friends about enjoying the Speed TV show Pinks: it isn't traditional drag racing, the host has a big ego, it's rigged, nobody has to really give up their racecar if they loose, stuff like that. What I witnessed at the recent Pinks All Out show at Famoso Raceway was great entertainment with the racecars already built.

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Christensen's rapport with the audience sitting for hours in packed wooden grandstands was amazing to watch; he had that crowd in the palm of his hand. He spoke with a headset microphone and the collective response was nothing short of evangelical. Now with the many drag strip-based TV shows his company has spawned, I will bet that more viewers are watching his shows than the NHRA/ESPN2 programs on a weekly basis.

I saw a couple of NHRA marketing brass standing on the Famoso starting line, baffled by the spell Christensen had on his flock. You didn't see John Force T-shirts on the fans, no NHRA Full Throttle hats, and no kids playing with NHRA-branded plastic toy dragsters. What you did see was long lines of Pinks fans heaping money and credit cards at the well-stocked shelves of dozens of cool hats and T-shirts with the Pinks brand.

Another amazing thing I saw was spectators sitting through hundreds and hundreds of door cars and cheering wildly when a beautiful '66 Nova made a 300-foot-plus smoky burnout. They were captivated and they were even enjoying a sportsman show, something the major sanctioning bodies have been unable to accomplish. I contend that the huge crowd that weekend at Famoso was ripe for the picking by NHRA to get them back into those seats for Division 7 events and maybe even a trip over the Grapevine to the upcoming World Finals at Pomona.

It is also really heartening to see how nostalgia racing has grown, without any major sanctioning body intrusion. There are some very political racing clubs for elitist owners, but few willing to give back to build this brand of drag racing. Not to bring in today's big corporate sponsors, but to build a

marketable form of racing that takes place on a drag strip, with cars that can be built at home. I am convinced that a Big Show points-earning series is not important to many nostalgia racers; taking home cash and an event trophy or round money appears to be the goal.

The few big-money nostalgia events are well known, but the break-even events or ones that only lose a small amount of dollars are not healthy for this group of racers, but turning nostalgia racing into a mini Big Show is not the solution either.

We've got to find new blood for drag racing. Way too many of our competitors and spectators have left the fold, many don't think of drag racing at all anymore, and the thrill is gone, the thrill that, thankfully, a lot of us still have.

Where's our new Wally Parks? Where's our new leader? Not a marketer or MBA. Who will lead our sport into the future? Please don't repeat the recent BS mantra of taking it to the next level; all we've got now are figurehead "leaders" without action, content to keep the status quo. **DRO**

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Michael Knight's
ALL BUSINESS

So much for controversy

All the sound and fury of the Mac Tools U.S. Nationals wound up signifying nothing in terms of ESPN2's ratings two weeks later at the Carolina Nationals.

Final eliminations produced a 0.5 number, actually DOWN from last year's 0.6.

All involved should be, well, I'll use a polite word – disappointed – given the "momentum" NHRA supposedly had post-Indy. I include under that umbrella not only the publicity stirred by the John Force-Pedregon brothers dust-up, but also the celebrity factor of Ashley Force Hood's victory, notably heralded in a huge (if garish) USA Today ad. (Results reporting in the paper amounted to a couple of lines on Tony Schumacher.) Plus, Carolina was the start of the Countdown to One championship, and hosted the much-ballyhooed four-wide exhibition runs in Top Fuel and Funny Car.



In fairness, ESPN2's lengthy presentation of the Indy eliminations got a ratings bump, 0.7 vs. 0.6, compared to 2008. Overall, however, the average for finals coverage has been in decline throughout the Full Throttle season. (The qualifying and race preview show numbers basically are flat as of this writing.)

Not surprisingly, the blame game is being played by some within the NHRA power structure. Fingers are being pointed at the ESPN broadcast booth and production trailer.

I presented, in some detail, the producer's philosophy in my May and June columns. Agree or disagree as you wish. Sure, John Force gets too much time (not counting Indy and Carolina, where true news had to be reported.) Especially for someone who hasn't been winning. The Seattle weekend obsession with how many miles John put on his motorbike was the year's most ridiculous storyline and deserved every bit of heated criticism it generated. It was an embarrassment. But, as for the down trend, we should ponder a few other things:

- ▶ Traditional quarter-mile fans' unhappiness with 1,000-foot racing. (I include myself in this group. Yes, before anyone gets on my case, safety comes first.) I think this is bigger than anyone cares to admit.
- ▶ No Angelle Sampey, Melanie Troxel (in Top Fuel or Funny Car), Tommy Johnson Jr., Hillary Will, or Dave Connolly.
- ▶ Limited appearances by Hot Rod Fuller, J.R. Todd and Doug Herbert.
- ▶ Warren Johnson's sub-par performance.
- ▶ Lack of outreach beyond the NHRA fan base by Full Throttle, despite what was promised when Coca-Cola's energy drink took over from Powerade. (Economic conditions have caused advertising, marketing and PR budget cuts, but I didn't see any evidence this was happening even before that became a good excuse.)
- ▶ Lack of one-on-one relationships with journalists. That especially impacts this time of year, with intense competition from the NFL, college football, baseball playoffs and World Series, and NASCAR's Chase. The list of general audience media people willing to go out of their way to cover drag racing right now is shorter than a bike burnout.

It occurs to me that, the wisest and most effective course of action, would be for the Lords of Drag Racing to stop complaining and do something productive. How about gathering together leaders of the various constituency groups (team owners, drivers, promoters, sponsors, media) – and some experienced, unbiased outside consultants – for a good, long, deep, and HONEST think session?

Or, is that idea too controversial?

Michael Knight

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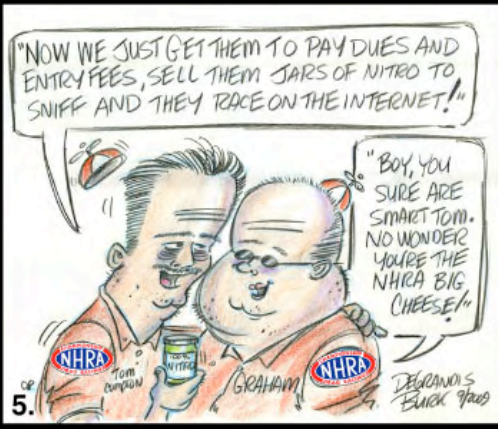
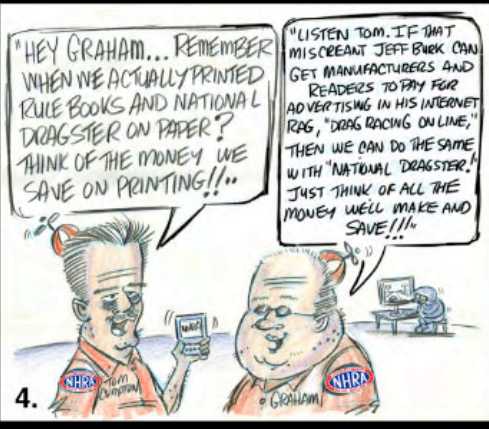
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NEW KID ON THE BLOCK

Words by Jeff Burk - Photos by Jeff Burk and courtesy Racing Head Service

What if small block Chevy diehards had a "small" GM block that had all the benefits engineered into it that the best high-tech aftermarket racing blocks have to offer. What if there was a lightweight cast aluminum block that featured cross-bolted four-bolt mains and non-press fit sleeves, a block with enough clearance in the basic design that a crankshaft with enough stroke to build a 500-inch small block can be installed without any machining or grinding required to make room for it, a block with the camshaft galley moved up in the block also for clearance purposes.

This is what the engineering department at Racing Head Services (a division of Comp Cams) has done with a new aluminum GM LS series block that is now in production.



This front view of a production block shows the cam gallery and the timing chain case.

Developing this new block has been a project that has taken just two years from concept to development. Comp Cams VP of Engineering Brian Reese and his boss Scooter Brothers are the two guys mainly responsible for the new LS block that you are seeing here. We think it is one of the most exciting products we've seen for the GM small block racer in a very long time.

The venerable GM Chevy small block has been massaged in many ways over its more than 50-year history. In the pursuit of more performance the cast iron GM blocks have been given four-bolt main bearing caps. Racers have ground on and machined the original to make it lighter and cleared it to accept a stroker crankshaft. Deck plates have been added to allow more stroke and engines over 450 cubic inches. GM themselves have improved the block over the years developed the SB2 block and cylinder heads. The aftermarket manufacturers have tooled up to make both cast and billet versions of the Chevy small block.



Here is a close-up look at the Crankcase. Notice the six-bolt mains with cross bolting.

A few years back GM introduced the LS line of aluminum blocks and cylinder heads that are used to build EFI, small blocks, and now GM cars come off the assembly lines with the LS all-aluminum engine, but these blocks didn't lend themselves to building and racing "big cubic inch" small blocks that make a lot of horsepower and torque. The new Racing Head Service LS block is the answer to those applications and problems.

The primary issues for engine builders with the aftermarket aluminum and steel LS blocks available to them is that while they are improved versions of the factory blocks they retain some limitations of the stock design. Those limitations hamper the LS engine builder who wants to build a really big cubic inch small block.

The RHS LS block has an external fixture for the "Knock Sensor" as well as in the stock location.

Aware of this dilemma, the research and development team at RHS went to work designing and testing several different versions of a GM LS engine block until they developed one that offers many benefits and options for performance engine builders and racing enthusiasts of the LS block.

Racing Head Service's LS Race Block is designed with added clearances and performance features. It is available in both standard (9.240") and tall (9.750") deck heights with an extra-thick deck surface (.750"). This RHS block features a raised cam centerline and priority main oiling via an oil galley that is shifted to the outboard of the block to allow more rod clearance, allowing a much longer stroke (4.600") while minimizing windage in the crankcase.



Using computer-aided design, the cylinder walls are Siamese cast with press-in spun cast iron liners. Cylinder liners are available in both standard deck (5.67"/5.87" – same as the LS7) and tall deck (5.94"/6.38") lengths. Also featured is a 6-bolt head design with a full water jacket around each cylinder (based on the LS7 design). The crankcase is somewhat reminiscent of a Ford "Y" block or Mopar block with the crank recessed below the pan rail but with the added feature of cross-bolted mains similar to the Ford 427 blocks.

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The blocks themselves are made in England by the same folks that used to do the Cosworth blocks for IRL racing. Scooter Brothers said he would have preferred to have the block cast in the U.S. but he could not find a foundry that wanted to cast the block to the specifications he demanded. In fact, the U.S. foundries recommended that he take the job to the English manufacturer. In order to see if the LS blocks they had engineered were as good as they thought they were, Comp Cams' Brian Reese built and dyno tested a motor using the block. They built a 500-inch small block.

"We didn't have to grind or clearance any part of the block to build a 500-inch engine," Reese said. "Because of the raised camshaft and more room we had in the crankcase we didn't have to grind a thing to have plenty of clearance.

"The engine was built using a set of dished pistons and a some nothing special heads. We used a single four-barrel intake and carb and burned racing gasoline," Reese explained.



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On the dyno, the engine made 700 hp and over 500 ft-lbs of torque at under 5000 rpm. (Note: We are waiting for a dyno sheet from Brian Reese)

For quality control assurance, RHS performs a CT scan on each block (similar to a medical CAT scan) to maintain maximum casting precision and consistency. Combine all of these features with a superior finish quality, thanks to the RHS patented Clean Cast Technology™, ultra-precise computer aided design and extra surface material to allow custom machining, and you've got a GM block that sets a new benchmark for LS horsepower, torque and durability.

Currently RHS has taken delivery on and shipped about 30 of these blocks to various customers ranging from street to full race applications



Here is the short block used to build the 700hp dyno test engine. Notice siamesed sleeves.

QUICK SUMMARY

Product: RHS® LS Race Block
Part Number: #54900 (9.750" Tall Deck, 4.165" Bore); #54901 (9.750" Tall Deck, 4.125" Bore); #54902 (9.240" Std. Deck, 4.165" Bore); #54903 (9.240" Std. Deck; 4.125" Bore)

FEATURES & BENEFITS

- ▶ Designed from heavy-duty A357-T6 aluminum material
- ▶ Available in standard (9.240") & tall (9.750") deck heights with beefy .750" deck thickness
- ▶ Accommodates up to 4.6" stroke with standard rod pins (2.100") & oversized 60mm camshaft
- ▶ Raised cam centerline (.388"/9.86mm) to allow larger stroke; 2 extra links in the timing chain
- ▶ 4.125"-4.165" Siamese cast bore walls with press-in spun cast iron liner
- ▶ Priority main oiling, galley moved outboard for longer stroke clearance & minimal windage
- ▶ Dry sump friendly with big front & rear AN-12 side feeds
- ▶ GM Gen III/Gen IV compliant with race mounts for Gen I, Gen II, Gen III & Gen IV engines
- ▶ Block weighs under 140lbs

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In developing the new LS block, the engineering folks at Comp Cams also are working on the EFI induction system predominately used on the motor. What they have done is to develop a fuel injection intake manifold with individual runners that can be changed and modified to tune each cylinder.

What engine tuners have known for some time is that an engine really consists of a bunch of engines trying to work together. In other words a V-8 engine is actually eight individual engines bolted together and in order for it to develop and deliver the most power, each one of the engines need to work at peak efficiency.

One of the issues in making peak power with a naturally aspirated engine is getting the right fuel/air mixture to the combustion chamber, and the length of the intake runner can be critical in doing that. For years street/strip racers have been limited to cast aluminum intake manifolds. The intake runner distances were not able to be changed.

Now the guys in the back room at Comp led by Brian Reese are working on an intake where you can adjust and tune the runner length as a tuning tool. We thought our readers would be interested in seeing the prototype of this new manifold. According to Reese this new manifold will be available in the near future.



Brian Reese poses with the stock EFI intake and holding one of the new tuned runners for that intake.



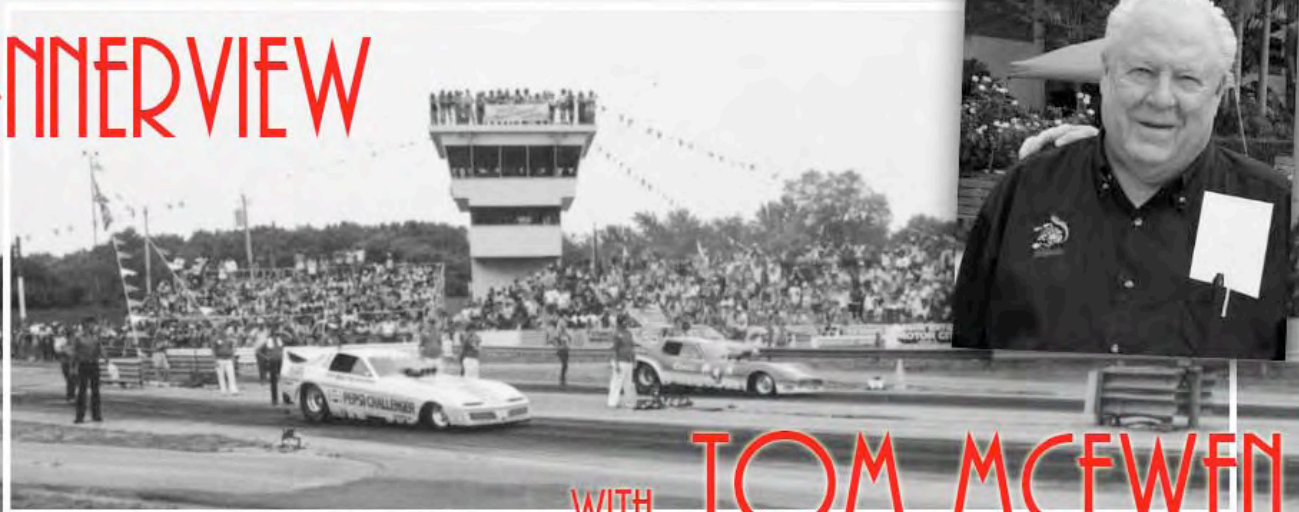
(above) On the left is the original EFI intake shape for the LS engine. On the right is the same intake with a runner with a different shape replacing the stock unit.

(right) The stock LS intake with a couple of different intake runners.



DRO

INNERVIEW



WITH TOM MCEWEN

Tom McEwen has been successful in drag racing both as a sport and as a business. He is a seminal figure in the sport as a racer, having won every major race worth mentioning including the U.S. Nationals. As a driver and team owner he joined with arch-rival Don Prudhomme to get one of the very first big money sponsorships with the Mattel Company. The Snake and Mongoose rivalry sold tickets and models cars for years. He was active as a driver into the late 1990's and his '57 Chevy Fuel Funny Car remains one of the most unique racecars in the sport's history.

When his driving days were done he got involved with the drag racing magazine business as an advertising salesman and advisor for Drag Racer magazine, where he remains to this day. Tom McEwen was there at the beginning of professional touring drag racing and continues to be involved. Few drag racers have seen, done, or accomplished what Tom "the Mongoose" McEwen has in drag racing. DRO is honored that he would sit down with us for a no holds barred interview.

DRO: You've been involved in every aspect of drag racing, from being a team owner to being a driver, and now you're working with a magazine. In your career, have you ever seen the economy quite like this, and how it's affecting drag racing?

Tom McEwen: No. In my lifetime I've never seen the economy like this. I was born in 1937. I think the last time the economy was like this was in 1933, and hopefully we'll never see anything like it again. It'll turn around like it always has. It might take one or two more years, but it's tougher to make a dollar now. You've got to make deals and really scratch out there.

DRO: How is the recession affecting the high-performance industry in general?

TM: It's affected everybody, all types of racing. NASCAR, drag racing, and sprint car racing. It's affected football, baseball. It's affected everybody. Too many people laid off, nobody has any money. So you just have to tighten your belt and cut back. They laid off a bunch of people at our place (Beckett Media) and cut the staffers pay back ten percent, and that's just how it's going to be. We're just going to have to get by until things get better.

Smart guys, big teams, have lost their sponsorships, going to have a hard time re-signing them right now when they're laying people off; they don't want to spend three million dollars on something. Bernstein was lucky to fall into that Coparts thing he's got for just one year next year, and I guess Prudhomme was looking for a deal for next year, and a lot of other guys. It's tough out there right now, but like anything else, everyone will survive. You'll lose some and you'll gain some, but that's just the way it goes.

DRO: What do you see as the biggest problem between owning a team in the 1970s and owning a team today?

TM: Well in the '70s there wasn't very much money in the sport. You know, I went to Mattel in 1969 to set the deal for the Snake and the Mongoose, that was really the first big money to come into the motorsport. That started in 1970 to '72, '73 that area. That was the very beginning of money in the sport.

In those days you could build a whole car for \$1,000. Now an engine is \$50-60,000. Nitromethane back in those days was \$100 a drum. Now it's \$1,400. Everything changes as it goes. Back in those days we used to race for nothing but a trophy. Then they started giving us savings bonds at Santa Ana. Where I first started racing in 1953 with C.J. Hart, you'd get your choice of winning a trophy or a \$25 bond, which I guess was worth \$17.50 or something. Now they've got purses of \$100,000 at Indy, or whatever it is. The world championship's worth half a million now.

I bought a brand new '57 Chevrolet in 1957 for \$2,300 that I raced at the track, and now those same cars are probably \$15-20,000.

DRO: What do you see as NHRA management's current issues?

TM: I think NHRA's got their hands full right now. They're seeking sponsorship money to bring in to keep their gates open. The fans don't have the money to bring their families out to the races, so to try and fix that I see that they're (NHRA) selling one-day tickets for less money, so if you come on a certain day it's less money; they're trying to help a little bit along that line.

As far as the racers are concerned, you know the racers are their own worst enemies. NHRA learned years ago that if you open the gates, they'll come. When I was with UDRA in the '60s, we were the ones who started to have



the drivers' licenses for the drivers and we pressed NHRA and Wally (Parks) for the \$200 round money way back when. I think now you can go to an NHRA race, qualify and get \$10,000 for first round loser.

To me it is a lot of money, but if you figure out what it costs to run these cars nowadays with the size of crews, it isn't enough. We used to have one or two guys on a crew, now they've got a dozen. Some of those guys change a motor every run. So there's big corporate

money out there but not for the little-guy professional who's out there trying to run and compete like (Jack) Chrisman who goes to those races and qualifies, but has to be very careful and not ruin anything. The NHRA has to find a way to help those racers like Chrisman.

DRO: How do you think racers and fans see the NHRA?

TM: I think a lot of people like NHRA, a lot of people don't like NHRA. But people really don't understand how the NHRA could be having money problems. I've raced for the IHRA, AHRA, NHRA, and private track owners over the years since 1953, and it's always easy to be the guy who looks into the bleachers and goes, "Oh man, they've got 20,000 people paid," when actually there's 2,000. People don't know, looking at the stands.

The owners have always got beat up about the money, and NHRA gets beat up all the time, oh we like them, we don't like them. But stop and think for a minute: without NHRA, how much racing would there still be going on with the corporate and the nice dragstrips, just like we watched that Charlotte track where they ran four abreast on that concrete track. I mean, there's some heavy money spent on some of these tracks. If it wasn't for NHRA, you wouldn't have any of that. So love 'em or hate 'em, without 'em we'd be in big trouble and so we just carry on.

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The little guy's going to complain and the big guy's going to make money, and that's just what's going to happen in the sport, I think.

DRO: When you were an owner, and it wasn't that long ago, you could run any tire and buy any fuel you wanted.

How do you feel about Goodyear tires and VP Racing Fuels having a monopoly?

TM: Well, back when I started racing, all we had was recaps. And then M&H came out with that 20/15 tire that we all ran for a long time. From there eventually Goodyear came into the sport, and other people tried to come into it. I had a lot to do with the design of the Goodyear tire in the early days. I used to enjoy that, and I've seen it come a long way. 'Course now you've got a company the size of Goodyear in there. They're the only ones who kind of survived with the engineering basis. You'd have to see, to go to the engineering building in Akron and watch them build those tires to really appreciate what goes into that tire for safety and strength.

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InnerVIEW - Tom McEwen - Page 2 of 6 - DragRacingOnline.com

They don't make a ton of money on those tires, and every time something goes wrong at the dragstrip, Goodyear gets blamed for the tire problem. And I'd say that 80% of the time, they run over something on the track and you don't know what caused the thing. So I think they (NHRA) are happy to have Goodyear out there, because if it wasn't for Goodyear, I don't know who'd make a fuel tire that would run right. I don't think there would be tires for the top cars if it weren't for Goodyear.

With VP, I don't know what the deal is with them and NHRA and the money. I've heard so many different things, lawsuits, and Schumacher, Kalitta, that kind of stuff. I really don't know what the deal is with that kind of thing. I think that sometimes we should just be grateful that's someone makes the stuff and we're able to get it, because it's such an exotic thing, and your insurance liability is so high that a lot of racers forget sometimes that if they couldn't buy it, they couldn't race. I think they forget about that.

DRO: In regards to liability, do you think NHRA's decision to shorten the distance for fuel cars was a good idea or a bad idea?

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TM: I think it's okay. I think a thousand-foot track is fine. People are already over that issue now. I think racers would blow up their engines if they ran a hundred yards. I don't think it would matter. What you need to do is remember that these tracks were made 40 years ago and they didn't have enough shutoff distance then, so the biggest problem is getting the cars stopped when you have a catastrophe happen to you.

And you can still get killed at a thousand feet, if your chute doesn't come out and the thing is running wide open, you're off the end. But I think it doesn't hurt it to shorten it up a little bit, and the shows are still good so I don't think that hurts anything.

DRO: How do you feel about adding a class like Pro Mod as a professional class?

TM: I think Pro Mod is really good and I'm surprised they haven't done more with it. I think it's an exciting class to watch. I used to like to watch it when I ran at IHRA tracks. Everybody came up with a different body style and I liked all that.

I get bored sometimes with the Pro Stocks even though they're running quick and fast, but I think the fans need some different stuff to watch. I'm involved with Drag Racer magazine; I like to see things where the guys have to buy a lot of parts. The Pro Mod guys buy a lot of pieces and stuff and it's very exciting,

especially with Sheikh Al Thani from Qatar involved in the Pro Mod thing. He really likes that. That's brought a lot of color and brightness into the sport I think.

DRO: Plus you've got the variations of supercharged and nitrous and turbocharged cars. There's even more variety for you.

TM: Right. And I think they've kind of held down a lot of that stuff. Drag racing has always been about the engineering guys, you know, the backyard guys with silver tape keeping the cars together. We used to try things and they didn't work. I remember years ago, when we first started having superchargers we ran a chain drive, like a motorcycle. We went from there to a Gilmer belt-drive setup. Well, the engineers who made the belt said it would never work. Now days it takes about 1,200 hp to drive that belt that turns the blower on an 8,000 HP for the engine, and they said the belts wouldn't be strong enough. And yet they learned how to make the belts work. So a lot of stuff that goes into everyday passenger cars is learned off the dragstrip, I believe, from the trial and error of the backyard mechanics trying stuff.

DRO: During the time that you raced, particularly in funny cars, what was your budget for a year? And how was that offset by purses?

TM: I never really had a budget when I raced, we just had X amount of dollars and we just tried to make it stretch. You know in the early days, you had one of everything, and then we started getting money in. When we (Prudhomme and McEwen) got the Mattel money in 1970, we were able to get bigger trucks, and we had two engines instead of one and extra cylinder heads and extra this and extra that. The more money racers brought in over the years, the more parts they were able to put in their trailers.

Now today's racers carry two or three cars with them. Now they've got a dozen engines, twelve clutches, seven superchargers and between rounds they re-strip the superchargers. Everything is custom made on those cars now. Where we used to just run Chrysler or Chevrolet parts, now everything is made of billet exotic material so that it'll handle the horsepower.

DRO: Do you have any idea what you would spend in a year racing in those days?

TM: Well, the last major sponsor I had back when I was running my own stuff in the '80s, was Coors beer. We used to take in a couple million dollars a year and run a couple of Funny Cars, plus we had a tractor-pull Corvette that was on the circuit. I had maybe six guys working for me, and we had an eighteen wheeler (tractor trailer). We had the best of everything in its day, and at the end of the day it paid for everything, plus I made a few bucks on the side.

Now I see that some of these guys are getting anywhere from two to three million dollars a year per car and, like John Force has got like over sixty people that work for him and maintains the two daughters' cars and I don't know, he's got six or seven race cars and a fleet of trucks on the road. I can't imagine what his budget would have to be now.

DRO: Force said in the *Sports Business Daily* a couple of months ago that he spent \$22.5 million to run all the cars that he's got.

TM: I believe that. I think his total sponsor package is... I used to hang around, I used to fly back and forth to the races on an airplane, and I remember one time he had a \$15 million budget. Now he'd have to have closer to thirty to do it.

DRO: Did you ever think of coming out of retirement after you quit driving?

TM: No. When I quit driving in '92, I was driving for Jack Clark, and it got to the point where I think he thought my age, I was 58 or something, made it harder to get sponsors. The sponsors all wanted the younger drivers and he wasn't getting a sponsor, so I think he wanted to try something else or whatever the deal was, so I figured I'd done it for 45 years, hadn't gotten hurt, had a good time and everything, and it was time.

Not that I wanted to or anything, not because of the money, but I like driving. It wasn't to the point that I couldn't drive anymore, but if the money's not there and you can't do it the way you want to do it, there's no use in doing it. I know that when Prudhomme quit, he wanted to stay involved and get his own teams, and he's done very well. I had no interest in doing that, whether I could have or not. I probably could have, I think, but I was over-traveled. I was done with airplanes and hotels and crews and all that stuff. I wanted to stay home.

I race quarter horses that I own, and I wanted to stay home and sleep in my own bed and do local stuff. I'd done it long enough and I still love it, still involved with it, you know with *Drag Racer* magazine, and I still go to some of the races, talk to people every day, and I'm still involved in the sport, but I like staying home now.

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DRO: When you and Prudhomme were barnstorming around the country, two or three one-night-stands a week, were there ever any team orders, or did the two of you just go at it every round?

TM: Oh no! Never! Ever! On my kids' lives, did we ever talk about throwing a race or taking turns winning or anything like that. There's never been a rivalry like the Mongoose and the Snake, and it's still on today. So, no! We always raced straight up and tried to beat the other guy to the win, and there was never hanky-panky with that.

You're probably thinking about what's been going on in the drags lately with the Force/Pedregon thing? Any time an association, whether it's NASCAR or Formula One or drag racing or whatever it is, allows more than one car to a class, then that breeds a problem. If one of your cars is running for the championship, you're automatically going to help that car. I don't care who you are, whether you're Penske, Prudhomme, Force, Schumacher, Alan Johnson, it's just the way it's going to be.

I don't know why they make such a big deal out of it. It's a show; Force spends a lot of money, puts a lot of show out there for the fans, and you've got some guys that are just kind of complainers. If the shoe was on the other foot, I think you'd have seen it go the other way if they had multiple teams and enough money to do it.



DRO: After Prudhomme, who was the hardest guy for you to beat?

TM: There were a lot of guys. I raced a lot of people over the years and you know, you have your good days and your bad days. Here's a funny story about that. Jim Dunn's a local Long Beach guy that's raced forever, still out there with a car. He and I used to race all around southern California: Lions and all the different tracks around here. Whenever he and I would leave town to go to a national event, whether it was Indy or Englishtown, we'd always end up drawing each other first round. We always laughed about that because we couldn't get away from it.

But I always had tough times with guys. A lot of guys beat me. I think I got up more against certain people. I loved racing Garlits and Prudhomme and Karamesines and all the rest of the guys. Because you're only at your best when you think the other guy can beat you. They used to complain about me not being up against the smaller names. To me, they were all the same. I enjoyed it, and some beat me, some didn't. I'd say Prudhomme was the toughest racer out of everybody.

DRO: What do you like or dislike about nostalgia top fuel and nostalgia funny cars? Are you a spectator? I know I've seen you at the reunions, are you a fan of nostalgia racing?

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TM: Yeah, very much so. I think that's really neat. I know the young people are really into nostalgia stuff. I see they're building lots of cars. We're getting ready to go to Bakersfield here, middle of October, for the NHRA museum nostalgia thing [California Hot Rod Reunion], which will be a big deal.

I know they have them all over the country now because I've been invited to go and join them like Garlits goes to them. Roland (Leong) goes to them, but I don't like to travel. But I think it's really neat. I know that Yeakle, Lou Baney, and Vince Rossi had the Yeakle car that I drove for a long time in the '60s that won a lot of races and had a lot of fun racing Prudhomme -- they've redone that car. It's beautiful. Steve Davis did it, Kuhl did the motor. I like being around that car. They take it to Bakersfield. I know there's a lot of cars being rebuilt out there right now and I think the nostalgia thing is good for the sport.

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DRO: There are some fifty nostalgia funny cars out there right now. Have you seen them, and how do you feel about those particular cars?

TM: I like them, but I worry about the safety end of the nostalgia cars sometimes. I think some of the guys get a bunch of guys together and build a car like they did 40 years ago, and I don't think they're careful enough safety-wise. They've got to be very careful, 'cause you can still get hurt in these cars.

But I think over all you've got guys, like the Plueger bunch and the guys that have the nice stuff out there. There's junk and there's nice stuff, depending on how much money they've got. I've seen them, I've watched them race. I watch them on TV when I can, and I read about them, and we do a lot about nostalgia in *Drag Racer* magazine. Randy Fish has got a real thing about nostalgia, and I know that (DRO editor Jeff) Burk and you guys like them a lot and feature them.

I think it's good for the young people coming up to get to see what we did in the old days, how they tell stories about how we started driving. You know, the first dragster I drove was a 92-inch wheelbase with the engine in front of me.

Now they're 300 inches long and they have no concept of what it's like on the bad tracks with a little short fuel car like that. At night they had one searchlight behind the starting line while you're racing, and sometimes that light would go out, and the shutoff was short. We learned the hard way; we lost a lot of good friends the hard way.

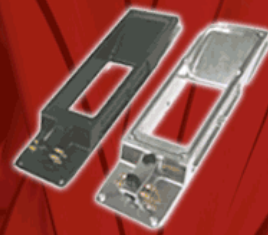
You know I got with (Bill) Simpson in the old days and the first parachute with Deist, and I invented the facemask with the screw-in filters with Simpson. I had a lot to do with the firesuits, helmets, all that stuff. So we learned the hard way over the years as guys got hurt and killed. Without what we did then, these guys today wouldn't be able to do what they do, and I think a lot of people forget that, so it's nice for people to learn that. **DRO**

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JAY PAYNE REPEATS AT RICHMOND, ROMPS OVER RECORD FIELD

Words by Jeff Burk - Photos Todd Dziadosz
and Ron Lewis



Brad Personett (Todd Dziadosz photos)

In the two decades of Pro Modified doorslammer racing only the IHRA season opener at Darlington Dragway where then unknown Bill Kuhlmann battled with doorslammer icon Bob Glidden to drive the first 'slammer through the 200-mph barrier, can compare with the dramatic performances the doorslammer fans at Virginia Motorsports Park were witness to. At the historic Darlington race Missouri-based UDRA Pro Stock racer Kuhlmann, driving a garage-built car, edged out Glidden, who recording his own 199+ pass in a effort to be first.

As historic as that race was it pales in comparison to the orgy of record Speeds and ET's that the NHRA sanctioned Get Screened America Pro Mod Challenge served up to the doorslammer fans at Virginia Motorsports Park. They witnessed the fastest doorslammer pass in drag racing history, a mind-boggling 253.28 blast from Oklahoma racer Brad Personett's turbo Hemi-powered Camaro. They witnessed history being made not only seeing the absolute quickest pass ever in the semi-final round when Melanie Troxel and Ray Commisso ran the quickest ever side-by-side round, with Troxel's record-breaking 5.829 at 247.79 losing to Commisso's even quicker 5.817 at 246.03.



Raymond Commisso and
Melanie Troxel in round 2.
(Todd Dziadosz photo)



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There has been much talk in the performance community lately concerning the arrival of "bargain" performance blocks and heads from various sources. These parts generally claim to be high quality performance pieces at extremely low prices. Sometimes the sellers don't mention much about the materials used, the quality control or where they're made. Sometimes they are misleading about it, and sometimes they outright lie about these facts.

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Mike Castellana (Ron Lewis photo)

The fans were also treated to a Pro Mod field filled with examples of every type of powerplants legal for NHRA Pro Modified including supercharged, nitrous oxide-injected, and turbocharged powerplants and engine sizes that ranged from 526 cubic inches to nitrous motors approaching 900 cubic inches in size.

The weather at Virginia Motorsports Park was nearly perfect all weekend long as was the track surface thanks to the track crew and the combination delivered record performances in all of the doorslammer classes including a stellar 6.509 ET and speeds over 212 from NHRA Pro Stock.



Roger Burgess (Ron Lewis photo)

At the end of the first round of qualifying on Friday, series rescuer and racer Roger Burgess was low qualifier with a 5.936; then it started to get really quick and fast. In round two, Rick Stivers drove his Trane-backed, Brad Anderson-tuned, supercharged Dodge Stratus to a 5.906 to be the provisional low qualifier after two rounds.

Saturday afternoon saw the corrected altitude, water grains and track temp drop, and the performances start rising. The third pair down track in the last qualifying session saw nitrous standard bearer Dennis Radford pilot his mountain-motored nitrous-injected '70 Duster to the quickest ever nitrous-powered lap with a great 5.924 at 237.13 mph.

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The very next pair, another Brad Anderson-tuned car driven by the 2008 winner at VMP, Jay Payne, broke into the 5.80-zone with a 5.870/242.67 clocking. Then Personett dropped a bomb on the rest of the racers with a history-making lap of 5.843/253.28 in his turbocharged, Hemi-powered Camaro to grab the provisional pole.

Then, unbelievably, Stivers' supercharged 'Vette powered to a once unthinkable 5.837/245.81. That number stood as the number one qualifier as qualifying was ended.

The march of .80s continued in round one of eliminations with six drivers passing the mark. Notably, Commisso's supercharger car took out points-leader Burton Auxier's nitrous car with a 5.843 and Stivers beat Scott Ray's Vette with a 5.835. Number 15 qualifier Joe Baker faced off against No. 2 qualifier Personett in the B&J Transmissions \$500 Bonus round. Baker upset Personett with a holeshot, 5.873/244.34 to Personett's 5.866 at 249.49. Personett's quicker but losing lap did set the class speed record at 249.49!

Baker used another holeshot in round two to send No. 3 Danny Rowe packing and took away any chances for him to take advantage of Auxier's early exit, 5.865 to 5.854. Payne ended Burgess's hopes of making any advances on Auxier as well, taking him out with a 5.836 at 244.43 to a 5.911 at 246.30.

In the same round, Stivers had a near-perfect .001 reaction time in his victory over Tim Tindle, running a 5.836 at 247.11 to Tindle's 5.914 at 240.81. The win put Stivers within striking distance of the top eight in overall points and the chance to run for the cash in the Matco Tools \$35,000 Pro Mod Clash at Las Vegas later this month.



Melanie Troxel (Ron Lewis photo)

Melanie Troxel and Commisso added even more drama to the second round, running the quickest ever side-by-side round, with Troxel's record-breaking 5.829 at 247.79 losing to Commisso's even quicker 5.817 at 246.03. His 5.817 now stands as the World Record in Pro Mod.

Semifinal action paired Commisso against Stivers and Payne against Baker. Baker's luck ran short and he struck the tires while trying to swing for the fences, losing to Payne 5.944 to 8.411.

"Truth be told, we got greedy. We didn't detune the car enough for the climate conditions. With everyone clocking such great times we just got carried away," Baker said.



Jay Payne (Todd Dziadosz photo)

VMP Qualifying

1. Rick Stivers 5.906
2. Roger Burgess 5.911
3. Danny Rowe 5.948
4. Raymond Commisso 5.948
5. Jay Payne 5.949
6. Tommy Gray 5.961
7. Brad Personett 5.967
8. Melanie Troxel 5.969
9. Mike Castellana 5.995
10. Burton Auxier 6.002
11. Tim Tindle 6.013
12. Chip King 6.018
13. Joe Baker 6.027
14. Dennis Radford 6.027
15. Scott Ray 6.07
16. Kirk Kuhns 6.092
- NOT QUALIFIED---
17. Adam Flamholz 6.135
18. Mike Knowles 6.153
19. Rickie Smith 6.156
20. Rick Distefano 6.24
21. Frank Patille 6.404

Pro Mod Points (After 9 of 10 events)

1. Auxier 610
2. Burgess 578
3. Rowe 573
4. Baker 532
5. Payne 509
6. Castellana 508
7. Commisso 501
8. Tindle 437
9. Stivers 424
10. Personett 384

Stivers blasted to a 5.823 at 246.93 to take out Comisso, who was slowed by a broken spark plug to a 5.998 at 235.35. His win set up an all Team BAE final of Stivers versus Payne.



Jay Payne (near lane) and Rick Stivers. (Todd Dziadosz photo)

Stivers either had to set an ET record or win the event in order to pass Tindle for the last slot to qualify for the Pro Mod Clash. It appeared Stivers would pull off the move, but at half-track the Lexington, Ky., businessman couldn't control the monster tune-up Brad Anderson put into the Stratus and it spun the tires, drifted and crossed the centerline, forfeiting the round and handing the win to teammate Jay Payne.

"It just wasn't meant to be," said a disappointed Stivers. "I wanted that record so bad I could taste it, and Brad gave me a tune up that would have run a 5.70-something. The air was there, the conditions were right, but when the wheels went up after I shifted, I couldn't hang on, and it just got away from me."

Payne's victory was his first of the season and his second at Virginia Motorsports Park, his first coming just last year. Stivers won the event two years ago.

Next up on the schedule for the Get Screened America Pro Mod Challenge is the series final race of the season at the NHRA Las Vegas Nationals at The Strip at Las Vegas, Oct. 29-Nov. 1. [DRO](#)

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Here is the answer to the future trivia question, who were the last NHRA winners at VMP? (from left) Del Wosham, Brandon Bernstein and Mike Edwards (Todd Dziadosz photo)

Upset wins and record runs mark good-bye to Richmond

Words compiled from team press releases by Kay Burk
Photos by Ron Lewis and Todd Dziadosz

The final NHRA sanctioned race at Virginia Motorsports Park was a doozy, full of surprises and record performances. Pro Stock driver Mike Edwards went wire-to-wire, earning the maximum 150 points, to all but clinch his first NHRA Full Throttle Series world championship. In Top Fuel, Brandon Bernstein ended a more than two-year winless streak that spanned 52 races when he blew away Antron Brown. In Funny Car, Del Wosham got the win.

TOP FUEL

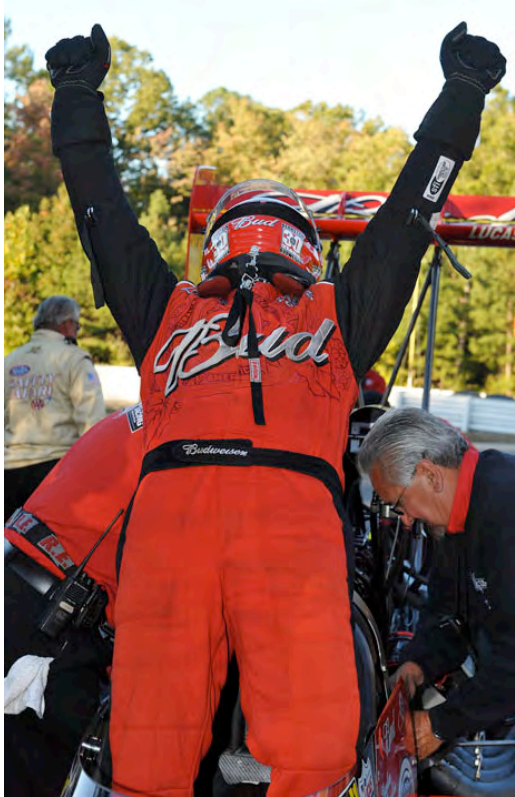
Brandon Bernstein declared his 18th career victory at Virginia Motorsports Park a total Budweiser/Lucas Oil team effort and the result of everyone staying positive during the tough times.

In the opening round of eliminations, Bernstein took the round victory over Scott Weis. Bernstein clocked a 3.842-second elapsed time (at 313.58 mph), nearly as strong as his qualifying effort, as Weis broke after the burnout. In the second round, the Budweiser/Lucas Oil team got another bye run when Scott Palmer was unable to return after suffering serious engine damage in round one. Again, the Kenny Bernstein team ran a very competitive 3.871/308.85.

In the semis, Bernstein was spectacular out of the starting gate with a .023-second reaction time. Both drivers were making a lot of horsepower down the track until Brandon took the lead, streaking across the finish line with a 3.851/313.66, while Cory McClenathan's engine erupted into a ball of fire at the stripe. McClenathan was close behind with a 3.902/290.82.



Brandon Bernstein pulls away while Antron Brown goes up in smoke off the line in the final round. (Todd Dziadosz photo)



Ron Lewis photo)

Bernstein pulled to the starting line in the money round to face Antron Brown. When the Christmas tree turned green, Bernstein was on his way to victory, straight and smooth, while Brown struggled with loss of traction at the hit of the throttle. Bernstein got the win light with a 3.844/307.09 to Brown's 9.009/75.99.

"This gives us a lot of motivation going forward," said Bernstein. "But I just can't say enough about the whole team and the positive attitude everyone has kept, especially my dad. We just kept at the grind and we knew eventually we were going to knock down that door and get the win.

"In the first few years of our career it seemed like if we made it to the final round we were a shoe-in for the victory. Lately, we just haven't been able to get the win light. Finally, today we put all the pieces together in our fifth final round appearance this year."

Bernstein is now tied with the legendary Shirley Muldowney with 18 career Top Fuel victories.

Antron Brown scored a get-healthy weekend as the 23-time NHRA winner powered his Mike Ashley-owned Matco Tools dragster to a



(Todd Dziadosz photo)

A day after setting the NHRA national speed record at 319.60 mph, after qualifying fifth at 3.797-seconds, Brown bested No. 12 qualifier Chris "the Greek" Karamesines, six-time Top Fuel champion Tony Schumacher, and 31-time winner Doug Kalitta before smoking the tires in the final round against Bernstein. The Matco Tools team now trails Schumacher

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by 81 points with two races remaining on the 2009 NHRA schedule.

Racing in the semifinals for the first time in the Countdown to 1, Brown advanced to his ninth final round of the season by carding the wire-to-wire win over Kalitta. The Matco Tools flagship driver used a starting line advantage and a lap of 3.846 at 318.47 to hold off Kalitta's pass of 3.886 at 310.70. Brown is now 3-1 against Kalitta this season.

Competing in his 47th career final round, Brown was defeated by the Budweiser car when the Matco Tools/SpongeTech car smoked the tires at the hit of the throttle.

FUNNY CAR

Del Worsham (Ron Lewis photo)

Del Worsham played spoiler with his milestone 25th career win over still-in-contention Tim Wilkerson, 4.091/305.98 to 4.179/81.13.

"I had a good feeling this morning," said Worsham, who drives the Al-Anabi Toyota Solara. "You know, things were just kind of going my way. I was in the car right before first round, and I was just running through everything and I felt the reverser. It felt OK and then all of a sudden, it just felt too loose, and the reverser cable wasn't hooked up. Right before they started the car, I'm screaming for the clutch guy, 'Hook up the reverser cable.' When you find things like that, it's just kind of your day and you can't make a mistake."



(Ron Lewis photo)

Sunday dawned cool and sunny, but the same stout race track the racers had enjoyed on Saturday was still in play. Wilkerson and his crew were calm, focused, and confident as the first-round date with the '08 champion neared.

Running in the right lane, Wilkerson got a jump on Cruz Pedregon at the tree, and this race was over quickly. Wilk's 4.064 nearly matched his best qualifying run, and was easily the best e.t. in the round, as only Ron Capps' 4.085 came close. It was a trend that was, fortunately, going to last for a while.

In round two, the task got tougher as title contender Robert Hight was the opponent, with all the might and knowledge of John Force Racing (JFR) on his side. Wilk again took the right lane, with his lane choice, and this time the two drivers left nearly together, with Hight grabbing a microscopic 5-thousandths edge at the tree. Again, though, it was Wilk running low e.t. of the round, posting a 4.097 on a slightly hotter track, while his opponent faded and fell behind in the other lane.

It was then on to the semifinal, where yet another JFR car offered the opposition. This time, it was Mike Neff, and this time Neff got a sizable jump at the tree, bouncing out to a 17-thousandths advantage at the start. The lead was short-lived, however, as Wilk made up the difference by the 60-foot marker, and then pulled away for a third straight win, with a third straight low e.t., clocking in at 4.106 to Neff's 4.159.

In the final, Del Worsham was the opponent, and Wilkerson seriously considered swapping lanes.

"I think they were pretty even, really, and by that time the sun was starting to go down and the left lane might've been a little better," he said. "First off, you've got a lot of sun in your eyes over there in the right, and secondly with the sun setting to the left of the track, it would be setting on the left lane first, so we thought about it pretty hard. After we got to the lanes, though, we just couldn't make that call knowing we'd just run three near-perfect runs in the right. You move over to the left for the final, and if anything goes wrong you think you're a numbskull and so do a huge grandstand full of people."

Running again from the right, and running for his third win on the season (as was Worsham), the "Tim & Del" show was fairly strong at the lights, with both drivers leaving well but Worsham grabbing a quick hundredth. Wilk, however, began to charge and the cars appeared to be dead-even for the full first half of the track, before odd flame patterns and a ton of smoke began to appear from the LRS car.

The Levi, Ray & Shoup Shelby lost traction, flashed a quick fire under the hood, and the win-lights went on in the left lane, where Worsham and his Al-Anabi car earned every bit of the victory with a 4.091.

"We must have hurt a piston very early in the run, maybe even on the burnout, for it to be that bad that soon," Wilkerson said. "It finally got so bad it blew an oil line off, and it made a pretty big mess, to tell you the truth. We spun in our own oil for a bit, and it did flare up, but the worst part is that we hadn't so much as nicked anything all weekend, and we were on a string of some pretty good runs, all in a row, but we couldn't seal the deal.

"We ran great here, and we gained a heck of a lot of confidence. Of course, when you get that far you can taste it, but his time Del and his bunch yanked the dinner away and we messed up on our side. Still, it did us a world of good in the points, and even though we still have a big mountain to climb, I think we're in the game. Two races to go, and we just need to keep winning rounds."

In a John Force Racing versus John Force Racing first round match-up Robert Hight defeated team leader John Force. This was the second year in a row that Hight dispatched Force in the first round at Virginia Motorsports Park. The win gave Hight the points lead once Ashley Force Hood faltered in the first round. Unfortunately Hight was not able to extend his points lead when he fell in the second round to eventual finalist Tim Wilkerson.

"This track is very, very tricky. It is very good and it is so good you can't get initial wheel slip. It is a fine line. You saw that last night with John's Mustang blowing the tires off at the hit. My car almost did that now. We ran a 4.05 in the last session last night and the first round today we ran 4.10. It just got crazy upset in the second round. We have had the same trouble here over the years and we just haven't figured it out like some of the other guys have," said Hight who carries a thirteen point lead into Las Vegas.

"I am disappointed since we had a chance to distance ourselves and we let some guys back in here. If we would have just kept pace we would not have let them back in. We have had good success in Las Vegas and Pomona. The next two weeks will be very important for us to get everything prepared and do our jobs right so we give ourselves the best opportunity to win."



In the race Force tried to get every advantage versus Hight considering Hight had a performance edge. As Force pulled his Castrol GTX High Mileage Ford Mustang into the staging beams he deep staged on his teammate, an aggressive move especially against your son-in-law. At the top end it was Hight's 4.104 besting Force's 4.353.

"I had Robert aggravated at me because I went deep on him. I went down the race track. I had him covered until half track. It dropped a cylinder I think I need to confirm that, but it also lost a blower belt. He went around me at the other end. I was trying to get a win. A lot of people are saying you want Robert to win or you want Ashley to win; what about me? I fought hard to get into this Countdown and I made it. I am still struggling but (co-crew chiefs) Austin Coil, Bernie (Fedderly) and I have been together for a long time. We'll get John Medlen in here and try and straighten this thing out. If nothing else we'll get a hot rod we can race next year," said Force.

Force made a crew chief switch leading up to Richmond in an effort to strength his team's chances of moving up in the points. For the rest of the season Ford Drive One crew chief John Medlen will be working with Force's crew chief brain trust Austin Coil and Bernie Fedderly. Mike Neff will once again take the

reins of his Mustang as crew chief and driver. Earlier this year Neff raced to the final in Phoenix pulling double duty.

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Mike Neff debuted his "Zippy the Surfer Dude" look at Richmond. (Todd Dziadosz photo)



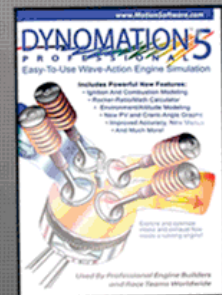
John "Bodie" Smith took the controls of a Funny Car at Richmond and knocked out Jack Beckman in the first round with a 4.259 at 291.01 mph to Beckman's 4.582/257.58. Mike Neff eliminated Smith in the next round. (Todd Dziadosz photo)

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Mike Edwards (Ron Lewis photo)

Mike Edwards qualified No. 1, earned the maximum 12 per-session qualifying bonus points, and the 20-point bonus for setting the national record (6.509 seconds) to become the first driver to record the maximum 150 points at a single race.

"This day was near-perfect," said Edwards, who defeated Greg Anderson and the Summit Racing Pontiac team in the final on a slight holedshot, 6.526/211.43 (with a 0.019 reaction time) to 6.522/212.03 (0.027). "It's unbelievable what I did here today, what my team did here today. My team was phenomenal. I'm going to enjoy it while I can because my daddy always told me, 'One day it will start raining, so get 'em while you can.'"

Edwards, who drives the A.R.T./Young Life Pontiac, extended his lead from 78 points (over Jason Line to start the day) to 128 (over Anderson), meaning he has more than a six-round cushion (a round win is worth 20 points) with only eight rounds left.

"I'm thinking (championship), but I don't have it yet," said Edwards, who beat Line in the semifinals. "It's close, but you've still got to stay focused. You've still got to keep your goals ahead. Those two Summit cars are going to be burning the midnight oil to try and get back up there with me. I'm not going to count my chickens yet before they hatch. But I'm living my dream right now, and I'm real close to it right now."



Okay, except for a mustache trim, who can tell these guys apart? Greg Anderson (left) and Mike Edwards. (Ron Lewis photo)

In many respects, Greg Anderson and the Summit Racing team had an outstanding day during Sunday's final eliminations of the Virginia NHRA Nationals in Richmond, VA. In each of the four sessions, he posted one of the quickest elapsed times in Pro Stock history, highlighted by his 6.517-second clocking in the opening round. In addition, he was the only car to post four top speeds above 212 mph, resetting the Pro Stock national record at 212.36 mph. Finally, he advanced to his fifth final round of the 2009 season, and 87th of his stellar career.

Unfortunately, there were two missing elements that prevented this from being a perfect outing for the KB Racing crew. After trading quick times throughout the day, Anderson and current points leader Mike Edwards put on a tremendous display in the final running, the quickest side-by-side pass in Pro Stock history. However, Anderson's 6.522-second, 212.03 mph run fell four thousandths of a second shy of overcoming his opponent's slight starting line advantage, as Edwards used an equally impressive 6.526-second run to gain the extremely narrow victory. In addition, Edwards further padded his lead by resetting the national elapsed time record in the first round, building an advantage that Anderson admitted would be hard to overcome. Even so, he found some reason to be pleased leaving Virginia.

"For the most part, it was a great day for the Summit crew," said Anderson. "It ended with a heck of a drag race in the final, where we lost to a tough customer. Still I'm proud of the way we ran this weekend, and very happy that we were able to run with Mike Edwards. This is the closest we have been to him in six to eight months. We're definitely gaining on him. With every race we're learning and getting better."

"Unfortunately we're running out of races, and today we lost a tight battle with him that we had to have, which dealt a severe blow to our chances in the Countdown. I certainly don't want to wish anything bad on Mike or anyone else, but unless his wheels fall off in Las Vegas, we're probably fighting for second, which is certainly a let down. But I'm proud to say we're giving him a battle, and today he had to dig down, and he did a little better job than we did."

"I know there are a lot of positive aspects to our performance this weekend. Jason and I put some distance between ourselves and the guys behind us, and we both ran well. Still, we didn't come here to finish second. We came here to win the race, and a championship. We had a great shot to achieve that today and let it slip away. It hurts now, but we'll put today behind us and focus on finishing the year strong. After all, there are two races left, and we plan on winning both of them."

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The Countdown has been cruel to Jeg Coughlin. (Ron Lewis photo)

Reigning back-to-back Pro Stock champion Jeg Coughlin Jr. suffered his third first-round loss of the last four races to all but extinguish his hopes for a championship "three-peat" Sunday at Virginia Motorsports Park.

Racing from the No. 12 qualifying position in his JEGS.com Chevrolet Cobalt, Coughlin put on a great race against first-round foe Greg Stanfield, who he'd beaten four times this year. This time, the odds finally caught up with Coughlin and he lost with a 6.569 at 210.83 mph to Stanfield's marginally better 6.562 at 210.34 mph. The race was close all the way down the track, and Coughlin was actually gaining ground towards the end of the quarter-mile, but a swerving start had knocked enough steam out of his car to give the win to Stanfield.

"These last four races have been so uncharacteristic for this team," Coughlin said. "We go through the regular season without a first-round loss, we win seven races, eight if you include the K&N Challenge, and we lead the points for 14 events...we couldn't have asked for more. But then the Countdown to 1 started and we just shot ourselves in the foot.

"We've struggled to get the car figured out and when you have hiccups like that in this class, you're toast. It's very tough because ever since the NHRA went to a playoff deal, we've been the team to turn it on and excel. This year, all the teams that had their struggles in the regular season are now running great and we've fallen off.

"We'll just race out the year and try to win the last two events. I have all the confidence in the world in this team. We're the same group that won the last two championships. It just wasn't meant to be for us this year."

POINTS

Top Fuel

1. **Tony Schumacher**, 2,427; 2. **Larry Dixon**, 2,380; 3. **Cory McClenathan**, 2,359; 4. **Antron Brown**, 2,346; 5. **Brandon Bernstein**, 2,307; 6. **Morgan Lucas**, 2,269; 7. **Shawn Langdon**, 2,254; 8. **Spencer Massey**, 2,225; 9. **Doug Kalitta**, 2,218; 10. **Clay Millican**, 2,093.

Funny Car

1. **Robert Hight**, 2,362; 2. **Ashley Force Hood**, 2,349; 3. **Tony Pedregon**, 2,314; 4. **Ron Capps**, 2,299; 5. **Tim Wilkerson**, 2,280; 6. **Jack Beckman**, 2,276; 7. **Bob Tasca III**, 2,259; 8. **Del Worsham**, 2,227; 9. **John Force**, 2,216; 10. **Mike Neff**, 2,203.

Pro Stock

1. **Mike Edwards**, 2,524; 2. **Greg Anderson**, 2,396; 3. **Jason Line**, 2,373; 4. **Jeg Coughlin**, 2,292; 5. **Greg Stanfield**, 2,276; 6. **Allen Johnson**, 2,244; 7. **Johnny Gray**, 2,233; 8. **Ron Krisher**, 2,222; 9. **Kurt Johnson**, 2,184; 10. **Rickie Jones**, 2,020. **DRO**

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Mustang Champs Crowned in the Bluegrass State

Words by Greg Acosta

Photos courtesy NMRA

After an amazing year of racing, with new tracks and new faces, all the competitors of the Keystone NMRA Ford Nationals converged on the small town of Bowling Green, Kentucky, to contest the 11th running of the Nitto Tire NMRA World Finals at Beech Bend Raceway.

Going into the weekend, nine of the twelve classes were undecided. With so much on the line, the racers turned up the wick in hopes of ending the year at the top of the heap. Even as the skies darkened on Sunday and delayed the completion of the race until Monday morning, nothing could stop the racers from giving it their all.



The quickest class in the series, Turbonetics Pro Outlaw 10.5, put on a great show for the finals. At the end of qualifying on Saturday, it was the man with the "1" on his windshield at the top of the ladder, Conrad Scarry, with a 6.75-second blast at over 218 miles per hour. Also, by virtue of qualifying, Dan Millen locked up the points championship before eliminations began.

However, that didn't seem to faze any of the racers as they all had it set on "kill" on Sunday, with only Jim Brown and Keith Neal left standing in the finals. With the race delayed, both racers' schedules prevented them from staying over, so a coin toss was agreed upon. As the shiny quarter landed, it was Jim Brown who took the win.



The Ten-Inch Tire Freakshow, a.k.a. ProCharger Super Street Outlaw, had a healthy battle between the defending champion John Urist and John Macdonald for the 2009 championship. In qualifying, Urist had troubles when his 'chutes didn't open on the top end, sending him on a wild ride that ended just short of the sand pit. Not to be shaken, Urist was ready to rock on Sunday. As the ladder played out Urist and Macdonald met in the second round, and Urist's victory secured his unprecedented fourth-consecutive and fifth-overall SSO championship.

However the day wasn't over, and in the final round, Urist had to face Sam Vincent. With his new and improved small-block nitrous combination, Vincent had shown that he had the power to put the champ on the trailer. However as the lights dropped, it was all Urist as he streaked down track to a record-eclipsing 7.31-second pass to take home the win.



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Diablo Sport EFI Renegade was one of the most hotly contested classes coming into Bowling Green, with four racers having a shot at the championship. At the end of qualifying, Larry Hourcle had the number one spot with the quickest pass in Renegade history – an 8.32 – which was part of what he needed to be able to win the championship.

In eliminations, the championship race was further shaken up when Dan Rawls, who sat number one in points coming into the race, lost to Alton Clements in the second round, opening up the door for Clements to take the title. The semifinals gave Clements a bye to the final, while Hourcle redlit against Bob Cook, ending his bid for the ring.

In the Cook-Clements final, Clements ran hard to the stripe, taking the win light and the 2009 Championship.



The BFGoodrich Tires Drag Radial class saw the quickest side-by-side drag race ever as Sean Lyon and Enzo Pecchini both lit the boards with seven-second elapsed times; 7.95 to 7.99, giving Lyon the number-one spot going into eliminations.

However, the championship battle came to a head in the second round where Jason Lee defeated Pecchini to lock up the points battle en route to the final round where he faced Lyon. The final round was an exciting one as the pair's ETs were only separated by .001 second at the stripe, 7.973 to 7.972, giving Lyon his first win of the season against the newly crowned class champion.

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In the Edelbrock Hot Street class, the naturally aspirated title was down to two racers – class rookie Don Bowles and defending class champion Robbie Blankenship. At the end of the day on Saturday, it was former champion Charlie Booze who was sitting in the top spot, with an 8.59-second qualifying effort.

In eliminations Booze eclipsed the standing record en route to the final round, while the championship was decided in the second round, when Blankenship lost to Max Gross and Bowles defeated Bangin' Bob Hanlon, giving him the bye into the final and the 2009 Hot Street Championship.

While the war may have ended, the battle was not yet over as Booze was waiting in the final. Bowles uncorked a stout 8.65-second pass, but it wasn't enough to defeat Booze's record-breaking 8.56-second blast.



Coming into Bowling Green, Tim Matherly already had the 2009 5.0 Magazine Real Street championship locked up mathematically. However, that didn't mean he was content to sit out the World Finals as he still hadn't beaten Bruce Hemminger yet this season. After qualifying number one, Matherly was on a mission to end the season the same way he started it, with a win. He worked his way to the finals, where he faced Paul Wiley, who really got his combination running strong for this last race.

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While Wiley cracked off an impressive 9.52 in the final, Matherly unleashed his quickest pass to date – a 9.432, which was only .001 off the quickest recorded pass in Real Street history – to take the win light and cap off a championship season.



Coming into the last race of the season, there were three racers who could walk away as the 2009 Eibach Springs Pure Street Champion. Mark Anderson took a step closer to the ring with a number-one qualifier at the end of Saturday, while Ryan Hecox had to pull his engine and Steve Gifford would still need to set a record. Hecox was up and running again in the morning and Gifford had the front half numbers to set the record but couldn't put together a full pass.

With his win over Gifford in the second round, Hecox solidified his place as the 2009 Pure Street World Champion. In the final round Hecox faced Anderson, where Anderson got a small consolation when he defeated Hecox and won the race.



In ACT Factory Stock, Tommy Godfrey came into the race with the championship wrapped up, but was still shooting to be the first Factory Stock racer to break into the 10-second zone. He came mighty close in eliminations running a string of 11-ohs, and resetting the record at 11.038 seconds en route to the finals, where he met Matt Amrine. While Amrine piloted his "Stealth Fighter" to an 11.20 pass, Godfrey ran an 11.12 to take his sixth win of the season and his third consecutive Factory Stock title.

In ROUSH Modular Muscle, there was a four-way points battle that was whittled down to one when Reggie Burnette Jr. defeated Gary Parker to clinch the race and the 2009 championship.

Steeda Open Comp saw Wesley Dalrymple lock up the class championship in the third round and go on to defeat Brent Blacker for the win.

In Detroit Locker Truck and Lightning, Gerry VanVeen defeated Mike Motycka in the finals which cost Motycka the championship.

JDM Engineering Super Stang was locked up going into the Bowling Green race, but new champion Chris Parisi was strangely absent from the final round, where Paul Gamino and Don Justus faced off. In a close race, Gamino took the win light.

Neiman finally breaks 10K hex

Words by Evan Jones

Photos courtesy Maple Grove Raceway

For Terry Neiman, getting to Victory Lane Saturday came after years of frustration.

Having his 1968 Nova as the last car standing at the Pro Eliminator Footbrake Nationals 10K at Maple Grove Raceway on Oct. 4 was especially satisfying for the veteran Pottstown racer, who had to get past some of the track's best drivers to get there.

And the \$10,000 first prize didn't hurt, either.

"I've been in other 10-grand finals, and lost all of them," said Neiman, who has been racing regularly at Atco, N.J., in 2009. "This is the icing on the cake. I've had this car for 35 years, since high school, and nothing else. It was tough. We had people from everywhere racing today. We were on."

In Sunday's 5K eliminations, Jeff Jewell (Bangor, Pa.) a regular at Old Bridge Raceway Park in New Jersey was the winner in his '67 Chevy, beating Maple Grove racer Paul Thimm Jr. (Mohnton, Pa.) in the final.



Jeff Jewell got the \$5,000 prize money.

Neiman beat regular Maple Grove contender Brock Moshier in the final. He made the pass in 10.58 seconds at 125.96 mph, beating Moshier (Lititz, Pa.). Moshier finished 9.292 at 132.15, but was automatically eliminated because his elapsed time was faster than his dial-in of 9.30.

With nearly 200 cars in the field, Neiman certainly had a long day of work. He had a tough competitor in Andy Anderson (York, Pa.) — who was coming off the Summit Northeast Division Pro championship the previous week — in Round 3 but used a .003 reaction time to help him get past that round. He had a double-breakout run against Matt Smith (West Chester, Pa.) in Round 4, but cut it closer to his dial-in by only .02. He then took care Thimm in the quarterfinals with another good reaction time of .019.

Another track regular, Dan Walleigh (Reading, Pa.) was waiting for him in the semifinals, but had a very good run of 10.593 at 125.99 to advance.

Moshier didn't come away empty-handed, as he took home a \$3,000 prize for being the runner-up. He advanced to the final by taking out another Maple Grove regular, Martin Flegal (Ephrata, Pa.), in the semifinals with a double-breakout run in which Moshier was closer to his dial-in.

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Terry Neiman was the Pro Eliminator champ.

In getting to the 5K final, Jewell was helped by the fact his quarter and semifinal opponents both had itchy trigger fingers. Bob Mullaney (Rockaway, N.J.) fouled out in the quarterfinals and George Walleigh (Spring City, Pa.) was out in the semis. However, Thimm, a veteran racer himself, was patient enough in the final. Jewell had a near perfect reaction time of .001, but Thimm, driving a '76 Vega, was right behind at .009. That made a difference as Jewell raced to the win in 10.077 at 129.77.

PRO ELIMINATOR FOOTBRAKE NATIONALS 10K

Quarterfinals

Brock Mosher, '71 Vega, .040 reaction time, 9.30 dial-in, 9.316 seconds, 129.82 mph; def. **Gary Wyler**, '77 Vega, -.027, 10.11, 10.062, 134.46.

Terry Neiman, '68 Nova, .019, 10.59, 10.604, 125.56; def. **Paul Thimm Jr.**, '76 Vega, .030, 9.20, 9.224, 134.34.

Dan Walleigh, Falcon wagon, .24, 10.45, 10.481, 117.09; def. **Brian Mullaney**, '83 Monte Carlo, .048, 11.84, 11.836, 111.41.

Martin Flegal, '98 S-10, .049, 9.16, 9.331, 120.44; def. **Bret Schlichtig**, '92 Camaro, -.008, 9.71, 12.832, 92.37.

Semifinals

Neiman, .018, 10.59, 10.593, 125.99; def. **Walleigh**, .061, 10.45, 10.460, 114.17.

Moshier, .020, 9.29, 9.325, 138.30; def. **Flegal**, .050, 9.17, 9.187, 139.66.

Final

Neiman, .025, 10.58, 10.578, 125.96; def. **Moshier**, .038, 9.30, 9.292, 132.15.

PRO ELIMINATOR FOOTBRAKE NATIONALS 5K

Quarterfinals

George Walleigh, Bel Air, .014, 10.14, 10.137, 122.74; single

Jeff Jewell, '67 Chevy, .003, 10.07, 10.224, 108.41; def. **Bob Mullaney**, '72 Nova, -.015, 9.68, 9.789, 119.45.

Mike Barber, '92 Mustang, .017, 10.73, 10.743, 116.24; def. **Jillian Dittbrenner**, .024, 9.16, 9.206, 146.38.

Paul Thimm Jr., '76 Vega, .033, 9.15, 9.182, 139.03; def. **Bob Mullaney**, '72 Nova, .068, 9.69, 9.699, 134.44.

Semifinals

Jewell, .048, 10.06, 10.223, 110.51; def. **Walleigh**, -.007, 10.14, 10.182, 122.17.

Thimm, .038, 9.15, 9.169, 135.47; def. **Barber**, .034, 10.73, 10.761, 115.33.

Final

Jewell, .001, 10.05, 10.077, 129.77; def. **Thimm**, .009, 9.14, 9.162, 140.61.

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National Finals

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The UK domestic season largely drew to a close with the National Finals at Santa Pod Raceway, with exhibition and RWYBs left on the calendar apart from a number of bike classes who see their season come to an end in a couple of weeks time. Another action packed race meeting under good late season conditions, and the UK racing fraternity will head off to their workshops over the winter with renewed vigour and enthusiasm for the future, an unusual situation given the rain dominated seasons of 2007 and 2008.



Matt Eley faces some work over the winter as the hard launching Risky Trip Ford Pop lost out to Dave Day in the first round of Super Comp after a mid track twitch saw Eley airborne, on his side and into the wall. Eley emerged shaken but otherwise uninjured, and hopes to have the car back out before too long.



James Wotton only made the Outlaw Flat Four field in his final qualifying attempt, a 10.64 coming in handy as it put him second on the qualifying sheets and nipped a tenth off his PB in doing so. Not content with this, Wotton then ripped off a 10.24/135 in the first round of eliminations and kept flying high throughout eliminations to take the National Finals win over Adele Woodbridge.



Given the thumbs up by son Tom, John Atkinson took the Super Pro bracket ending the season on a high having produced a 0.0013 on a 8.80 dial-in to top qualifying and then worked his way through the field and defeating outgoing national champion Rick Cooke in the final round of eliminations. John Everitt and the Alien altered had earlier earned the right to carry the Super Pro number one plate in 2010.

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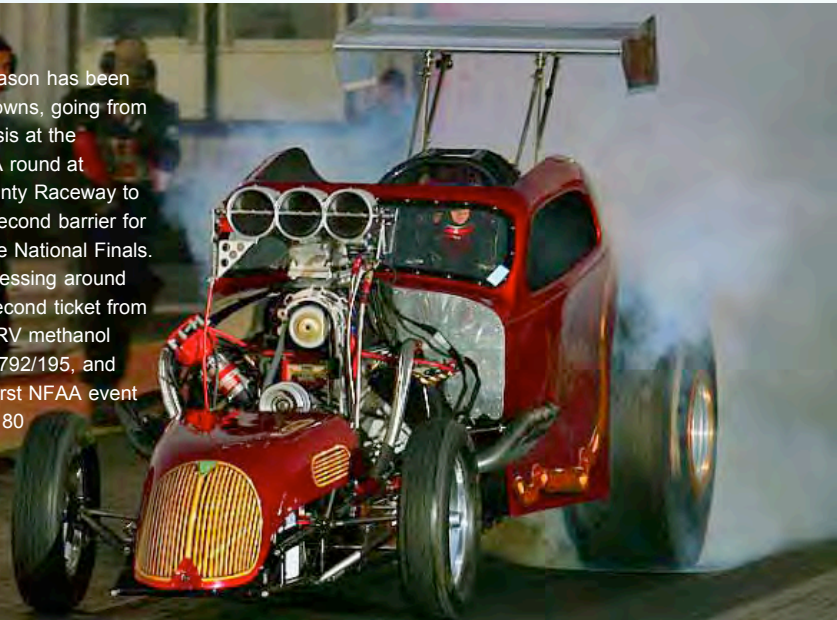


After the disappointment of missing out on the FIA Pro Modified title, Andy Robinson bounced back with a new PB of 6.054/235.19 in qualifying backed up with a 6.069/223 in the third session, but the latter came at the expense of a broken crankshaft resulting in a late night thrash to get the Robinson Race Cars Studebaker ready for eliminations. On the Sunday Robinson dropped off a couple of tenths of his qualifying pace, but defeated his two closest championship rivals Bert Englefield and Graham Ellis to take his second MSA British Drag Racing title in three years.

Kev Elliott and Bert Englefield were also on personal best form over the weekend. Englefield lowering his ET mark to a 6.489 in the occasionally errant 38 Ford Coupe, whilst Slyfield demolished his own marks off the trailer with a 6.699 being a real surprise having only broken into the sixes a couple of weeks earlier. A 6.528/212 proved it was no fluke from the mainly steel 41 Willys Sedan.

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Bob Glassup's season has been one of ups and downs, going from cracking his chassis at the penultimate NFAA round at Shakespeare County Raceway to cracking the six second barrier for the first time at the National Finals. Glassup wasn't messing around with his first six second ticket from the Xtreme Gold RV methanol Topolino with a 6.792/195, and then he took his first NFAA event win with a 6.874/180 overcoming Joe Bond's 7.080/184 by just over a car length.



NMCA



2009 SCHEDULE

7th Annual Kook's Custom Headers
NMCA Muscle Car Nationals
June 5-7, 2009 - Reading, Pennsylvania

4th Annual NMRA/NMCA Super
Bowl of Street Legal Drag Racing
July 16-19, 2009 - Joliet, Illinois

Inaugural NMRA Ford Nationals /
NMCA Hot Rod & Muscle Car
Nationals All Star Nationals
August 6-9, 2009 - Charlotte, North Carolina

3rd Annual JE Pistons NMCA
Muscle Car Nationals
August 28-30, 2009 - Milan, MI

8th Annual NMCA World Street
Finals
October 15-18, 2009 - Memphis, TN

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NMRA



2009 SCHEDULE

6th Annual Aeromotive NMRA
Ford Nationals
June 12-13, 2009 - Milan, Michigan

4th Annual NMRA/NMCA Super
Bowl of Street Legal Drag Racing
July 16-19, 2009 - Joliet, Illinois

Inaugural Nitto Tire NMRA / NMCA
All-Star Nationals
August 6-9, 2009 - Charlotte, North Carolina

31st Annual NMRA Ford Expo
September 4-6, 2009 - Columbus, OH

11th Annual Nitto Tire NMRA World
Finals
October 1-4, 2009 - Bowling Green, KY

[View Full Schedule](#)

TOP METHANOL



Qualifying for the small Top Methanol field had Dave Wilson and the Silverline Tools/Playstation 3 A/Fuel car recording a 5.425/258 to place him first of the three entries. A first round bye was completed with a 5.429/271.46 flashing up on the scoreboards, Wilson's third 270+ mph ticket of the season, and a 5.534 gave him the event win but he just missed out on the SPRC Top Methanol title to Derek Flynn.

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Derek Flynn and the Gold RV A/Fuel car had pulled together their remaining spares after a couple of months of attrition on the European tour to compete in their final event of the year on this side of the pond. Flynn's best return of 5.490 came in the first round of eliminations, but he was unable to make the call for the final having holed a block. Flynn isn't finished for the year as he'll be joining the European exodus to run at Las Vegas and Pomona in Larry Miersch's car at the final two NHRA events of the season.



ACU BIKE CLASSES



Whilst the rest of the ACU championships are to be decided at the Extreme Bike weekend in the middle of October, the National Finals were the final chance for the Top Fuel Bikes to flex their muscles in 2009. Although Steve Woollatt topped qualifying with a 6.490/212 and clinched this year's ACU title in doing so, it was Steve Carey that took the event win after Woollatt shattered a drive sprocket in their semifinal match-up and then Carey took the event win over Ian Turboville's nitro Harley entry.



The four other ACU bike categories saw the same riders on the top step of the podium as had been the case at the previous Santa Pod round at the Summernationals back in June. Thus Kev Charman was propelled by the Mistress Minx nitrous Suzuki to the event win over a broken Dave Holland in the final of ACU Funnybike. Holland had earlier qualified low with a 7.12 and set class low ET with a 7.081, but Charman was proving to be no slouch with a 7.196 PB in qualifying and a string of consistent low sevens that give him considerable momentum into the last event of the year, the win having put Charman ahead of Chris Hall and Gary Jones in the points chase.

Whilst the Funny Bike title will go down to the wire, it won't be in ACU Pro Stock Bike as Dave Beck swept the board again at domestic level, adding a new ACU PSB record at 7.154 as the icing on the cake and defeating Len Paget in the final in a 7.219/182 to 7.393/177 matchup. An eleventh domestic title is a good start for Beck's relationship with new sponsors TVR Power.

Making his fourth final round appearance of the season, Ivan Birch has, according to our back of a bar receipt calculations, now wrapped up the ACU Comp Bike title with one event to go. Running low ET of each qualifying session, culminating in a 7.226/185, and then low ET of each round of eliminations ending with a 7.339/177 victory over nearest championship rival Stu Crane, who broke off the line, was a pretty emphatic way to get the job done.

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The ACU Superstreet Bike points chase is one that will go down to the wire as Steve Venables (near lane) is trying the chase down the lead that Richard Stubbins (far lane) has held from the mid point of the year. Venables spent the weekend testing out the Michelin Pro One rubber that has been getting a lot of attention in no-bar racing worldwide and managed to get the setup right in the final of eliminations with a 7.382/193 to defeat Stubbins and keep the season long rivalry alive until the final meeting of the year, and we wouldn't mind wagering that the two will be in the final with the title on the line.

CAR BRACKETS



Pro ET bracket is the largest of the sportsman classes in the UK and always a tough class to win, this time Keith Herbert put his 64 Plymouth Sport Fury into the winner's circle with consistent high tens and low elevens eventually defeating low qualifier Gino Bernadine and his low nine second Ford Escort. Mick Howling ended up as National Champion in the bracket despite a second round exit.

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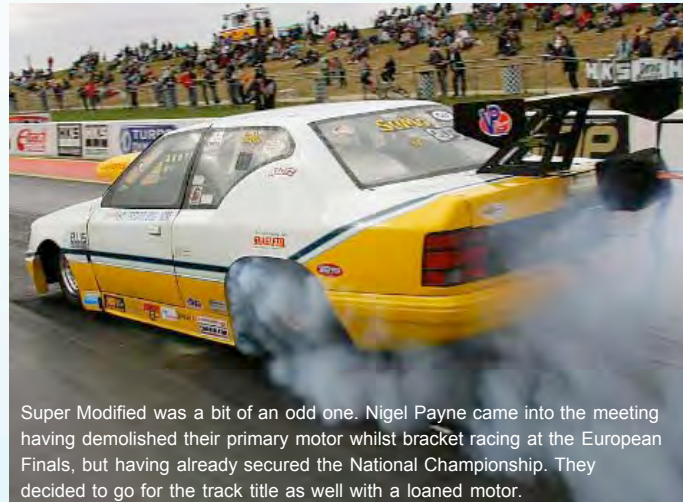
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Super Modified was a bit of an odd one. Nigel Payne came into the meeting having demolished their primary motor whilst bracket racing at the European Finals, but having already secured the National Championship. They decided to go for the track title as well with a loaned motor.

That provided just enough go to give them the requisite points when Belinda Bull lost out in the first round. Meanwhile Andy 'Fred' Hone was en route to the event win with victory over the ailing Payne earning a semi-final bye and then a stunning 7.423/180.65 defeating Tim Muirgridge to show the chassis upgrades had worked for the Sierra that was previously tagged to 7.50 and had been DNQ'd from some earlier meetings for outrunning this number.



The preceding European Finals was one of extreme contrasts for Super Comp and Super Gas competitor Jon Morton, winning the meeting in the 9.90 bracket with a borrowed motor having struggled to get to the event with an ailing motorhome. The National Finals was a very different story, but with the same outcome, Mort winning Super Gas over a breaking out Stuart Morrice and in doing so taking the UK championship.



Fifteen minutes before brother Stuart had broken out against Jon Morton in the Super Gas final, Collin, the other half of the Morrice Boys racing team, had wheeled the family Camaro to the event win in Super Comp with a 8.906/140 keeping him ahead of Pete Creswell's 8.906/152 by a couple of feet, Creswell having defeated points champ Brian Pateman in the opening round of elims.



Alex McIntosh finished off the year with his first win in the B&H Automotive/LA Racing Parts Street Eliminator class which looked as if it would be a big ask from the outset as qualifying had put him alongside the 2009 champion Colin Lazenby fresh from a consistent seven second performance at the European Finals. However, Lazenby's motor was not in the best of fettle hence the fourth qualifying spot and McIntosh defeated him, Mats Andersson and David Murdoch, the latter with a pair of 9.1s.



The nine second Ramraider methanol injected small block Chevy slingshot has carried Ed Yates and the rest of the Dog's Boll***s team to the first clean sweep of the five championships that are contested as part of the mix and match Wild Bunch nostalgia series' year. Yates took the National Finals event win after Chris Hartnell was a no show, caused by a dropped valve and costing Hartnell the chance of winning the Wild Bunch Series.

PHOTO GALLERY DRO

National Finals, Santa Pod Raceway, England
from racingnetsource on Flickr

Play again Share

PRESERVING MEMORIES IN CARDBOARD

by Darr Hawthorne

The first lesson of Marketing 101 is to get the word out and drag racing promoters have used a wide variety of radio and TV approaches to grab the attention of drag fans.

Seemingly a lost art today is the single sheet of printer's card stock poster heralding the weekend show of Top Fuelers, Funny Cars, Jets, World Records, East -vs- West or the latest fast interloper from another part of the country towing in to take on the local hot shoes.

Collecting these posters is a passion for a few, but over the years a lot of racers simply stapled event posters to the walls of their shops and garages as a remnant of past accomplishments. Collecting fragile drag racing paper remnants like posters, weekly drag newspapers and handouts takes some effort to preserve these delicate artifacts of our history.

Recently, Funny Car pilot Cory Lee and nitro tuner Donnie Couch gave us a chance to view and shoot some of their priceless collection of this mostly forgotten part of race promotion; the drag event poster.

Click a poster to enlarge it!



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NSRA Hot Rod Drags, Shakespeare County Raceway, England

Words and pictures by Ivan Sansom & Rose Hughes

After a failed attempt to pop down the road to catch Wendy Baker and Paul Stubbings getting down track with their Mustang 'Time Warp' Nostalgia funny car back in June, we decided to do the same at the Hot Rod Drags. And the same we did, missing Baker running her PB on the Sunday, but we'll get there one day soon. However, the Hot Rod Drags saw the bizarre and unexpected menagerie of machinery that is typical of the twice a year NSRA RWYB events at the Stratford track so we thought we'd bring you a brief flavour of some of the action that took place during the afternoon we were able to view.

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Neil Townson's Northern Spirit altered is one that always catches the eye, especially when the sun is shining and the slicks are boiling.



The Gasser Cave of Tim Bowman is producing some real period perfect Tri-Chevy gassers at the moment, Bowman's own '55 looks mighty fine in primer and without the glass.

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Strange



Another 55 with a nose high stance is the Gas Chamber ride of Lee Pointer, the Stateside import arriving at Shakespeare County Raceway pretty much straight out of the shipping container.



It was also good to see the immaculate Goldrush 41 Ford of Terry Howarth, the founder of the UK Gasser Circus, back on track after a period away.



The Identity Crisis FX Dodge is another recent import that will be familiar to those that attended the SEMA show last year and is a former cover car from Hot Rod Deluxe magazine earlier in the year.



The Wobble Plymouth 5 window Supercharged Outlaw of Steve Goode is one of the eye-openers that appears at the non-MSA events in the UK. Runs mid sevens, has a tendency to go for a wander at the top end, and has won Goode the Supercharged Outlaws title this season.



Eye-openers are actually fairly common when one wanders away from the mainstream championship events in the UK and the Taz Racing Fiat of Chris Skinner always brings a smile to the face. What is making it boil the hides? Well a small block Chevy lurks somewhere behind the tinted windows.



And if Skinner's Fiat didn't crack the visage we're pretty sure a 300 hp Bond Bug three wheeler will do. This one has a turbocharged Suzuki Hayabusa under the fiberglass wedge that has propelled it into the ten second zone.



Neil Fretwell took the win in the Flathead Meltdown four banger challenge with a 18.8 second pass, which must seem like warpspeed for the Sport Coupe as it also proudly holds the slowest ET slip amongst the Flathead Meltdown group with a 31 second ticket.



Runner up to Fretwell in the four banger challenge was Tony Devey with his consistent 21 second Coupe.



More normally seen at VSCC Hillclimbs, Neil Bennett and his ancient Batten Special had a blast at his first drag racing meeting getting into the mid 15s with more to come if the top end fuel starvation problems are overcome.



Lee Harris was runner-up in the main Flathead Meltdown eliminator, although the debutant wasn't able to get to run in the final round due to a problem in the rear suspension.

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Flathead Meltdown winner was Mike Couch whose blown '32 roadster had been tipped to break Jim Turnbull's class record, and he duly did at the Hot Rod Drags with a 12.63/104 on crossplys rather than the usual slicks, and backed up by a 12.7/102 in the final round solo.



Shorty's Hot Rod is the wheelstanding Pop of Ray Guy that competes in the Outlaw Anglia series and has a long history in the class, running mid nines when on form.

The Hot Rod Drags saw the first outing of the season for the Anglia of Mick

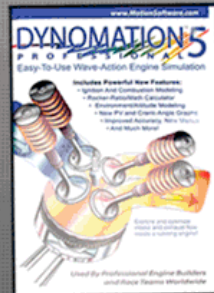
Donohue in Outlaw Anglia competition, the all steel street sleeper is powered by a small block Chevy with nitrous to ten second time tickets.

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The Surrey Muscle club has a strong presence at many RWYBs in the UK and stalwart Roger Luty's 442 Olds cracked the nine second barrier for the first time at the Hot Rod Drags.

Having retired the Havoc Bantam Altered at the end of last year to concentrate on the build-up of a couple of Nostalgia Nitro Funny Cars that are due to debut next season, the ICE Automotive duo of Rob Loaring and Nick Davies turned up with this 55 Chevy to play around with. "We're planning on a new car a meeting" beamed Loaring as he guided Davies into the bleachbox, and we know they are also collecting parts for at least one more nostalgia themed car back at their Silverstone base.



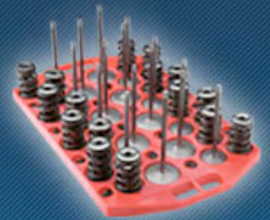
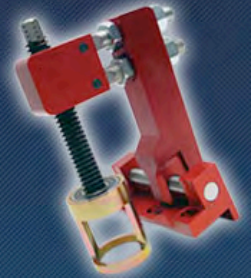
Andy Solley made one of his far too infrequent appearances in the Repeat Offender altered and caught some nice air with the front end at launch.

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Along with Solley, Keith Crampton is another Wild Bunch Nostalgia Series member with the Wiz Racing 'Soul Town Shaker' slingshot getting the go forward from a 425ci Buick Nailhead.



We managed to say that Bevis Allen's Impala was a softtop in the report from the Nostalgia Nationals back in June, but it most definitely is a hardtop. What hasn't changed is the propensity to boil the hides.



We'll bring this photo essay to a close with the fastest car over the course of the weekend, Roger Goring's Firestorm jet funny car that blasted out low six second passes preceded by the always impressive flame show, in this instance with what appears to a team member practicing some yoga. [DRO](#)

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MORE HORSES

by Jay Roeder

Hi,

I want to use a Comp Cams Blower Mechanical Roller Camshaft Part# 12-704-8 in my sbc 388 cu with a Weiland 177 blower. What do you think about using the beehive springs for this cam part # 26055-16. Thank you in advance for your reply.

Hasso Rothenbacher
Salol, MN

Hasso,

The 26055-16 spring should work well for your application. What may seem a little odd at first glance is the seat and open pressures compared to a conventional dual spring. However, this is the benefit of the conical beehive style springs. They require less mass and pressure to achieve valve control. If this was a high rpm Drag Race only application I may lean more towards the conventional dual springs.

Hope this helps.

Jay

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ASK THE EXPERTS

TECH Q&A**Tranny Tech**

by Mike Stewart

Hello Mike,

I have a TH400 with what I was told is a Hipster Transbrake. I'm pretty new at working on transmissions other than removing the pan and changing the gasket and filter. Any way, the transbrake is leaking. The actual leak is coming from where the rod slides in and out (in between the two pieces). It appears that it screws into the top of the transmission and the center piece slides out, away from the transmission. I'm only assuming that this is the coil with some sort of iron rod when energized it pulls the rod into the coil. It's a pretty small leak but over time makes a mess. I have tested the transbrake and it functions correctly. I hope that just a simple o-ring replacement will cure the problem, but I'm not sure. How do I remove it from the transmission? Can it be done without lowering the pan? I have looked for an exploded view to understand how it was put together but found nothing big enough that I could actually see how to take it apart. Please help!

Thank you,

Sean Kennedy
Oregon

Sean, with the TH400 solenoid, if it's leaking through the solenoid it's best to just replace it completely. They can be taken apart, however it's not worth the trouble of making the special tooling, especially when a new solenoid is only \$95.00 or so here at Mike's. Just call us.

Mike

I have a trans fluid question. I have a powerglide - 460 BBC - 2100lb car, not trying to rotate the earth. Just rebuilt by another trans shop (sorry it was not you) - I was told to run standard type F. I know you have your own special fluid - Why would you recommend I run that over off the shelf stuff? Thanks.

Earl
Salt Lake City

Earl,


Would you put cheap oil; in your race motor? Well Type F is about as low as it gets. None of those expensive parts are getting the lube they need. In the early '90s, we started working on our own fluid, something that would have film strength and cling to the parts and take care of our transmissions. Soon after we started using it, we realized the cars were running two to four mph faster. The heavier fluid actually coupled the converter better. That said, for the most part our Mike's Transmission Fluid (MTF) is meant to prolong your transmission's life.

Thanks, Mike

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ASK THE EXPERTS

TECH Q&A

Check Out That Chassis

By Scott Woney of S & W Racecars

Q I have a '76 Chevy truck set up on ladder bars and coil over and when I leave line the truck hooks up then bounces the rear tire on the ground. I tried 7 to 20 pds of air pressure in tires, I tried to stiffen and soften on the rear shocks with no results. My pinion angle is set at 5 degrees upward, what do you recommend on pinion angle?

Brandon
Port Arthur, TX

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A Brandon,

I would try pushing the pinion down to 0 or even 1 degree down, this will help apply load and I would also try moving the front of the ladder bars down some this will take some of the hit out of the bars. Then you can control the hit with the shock valving.

Scott Woney
President, S & W Race Cars
610-948-7303X111

Ask an expert a tech question:

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EngineQuest, a leading supplier of new stock and performance cylinder heads, now offers its small block Chevy performance cylinder head with a new modified combustion chamber. The new combustion chamber is designed to accept either a flat top or dome configured piston, allowing oval track and drag race engine builders even greater options in their quest for speed.

Developed for maximum power with minimum effort, the new [EQ cylinder heads](#) are available with 180cc, 200cc, 220cc and 235cc intake runners, all with a 64cc combustion chamber and angle plug. With this wide range of intake runner sizes, EQ has the perfect cylinder head for any small block Chevy engine, from 327 to 400+ cid. All EQ 23 degree performance heads are also available in the smaller 50cc combustion chamber size to provide even more options for every engine builder and racer.

These Australian manufactured heads feature a thicker .4375 deck for greater strength, hardened DuraBond exhaust seats for improved durability and Phospor bronze guides. With EQ's Australian Advantage, the EQ 23 degree heads are unparalleled in the industry in quality and performance.

For more information about EQ's small block Chevy performance cylinder head with the modified combustion chamber, call 800-426-8771, or go to www.enginequest.com.



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With the current government regulations, today's oils are missing many of the critical ingredients needed for engine protection. Engine builders and performance hobbyists are being forced to add in extra protection additives in order to maintain engine safety and performance – but not anymore. Engineers at COMP Cams and Endure Performance Lubricants have been working hand-in-hand to develop a full line of automotive lubricants, the first being the ZDDP-enhanced Engine Break-In Oil that provides maximum protection during initial engine break-in.

Heavily tested and proven by the COMP Cams R&D team, this advanced lubricant provides maximum engine life while also allowing it to reach its full performance potential. It does so by improving the surface mating of valve train components (especially flat tappets), rotating assembly, rod journals, piston rings, valve guides and other vital areas of the engine. This proprietary formula includes the optimum amount of critical additives ZDDP (Zinc & Phosphorus), Molybdenum, detergents and high grade base oil.

The multi-viscosity, mineral-based COMP Cams Engine Break-In Oil is fully-formulated and requires no additives or supplements. In addition, this product from the most trusted name in valve train technology is fully compatible with gasoline, methanol and high octane racing fuels.

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These headers are built with 3/8" thick flanges at the cylinder head and 3 bolt outlet flanges. The 4 tube under chassis exit design is made from 16 gauge tubing for durability with large 2" primaries and 3 1/2" collectors for increased horsepower and torque across the powerband. The design accommodates both automatic and manual transmission cars with or without power brakes

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We've Got Mail

BRING IN THE CLOWNS

Is the Feld Entertainment Group just TRYING to kill the IHRA? The recent note in Agent 1320 pretty much reads that way. Sounds almost like the corporate raids of the '80s. Buy it, suck out all the assets, and shut it down. Are the clowns running things over there? Oh yeah, that's right, they run a circus!

Michael Lovell

BOOK 'EM!

IHRA's projected future reminds me of how UDRA put together a fan-friendly package in the mid '80s. If the "circus" is going to make TS and TD the only major open eliminators promoters can count upon, they should be bright enough to get schooled from (Ron) Colson and the folks who actually booked in UDRA National Event creature features such as the Chi-Town Hustler, Jets....

Jets vs. Chi-Town....

Philip Bradford
Puget Sound

PUTTING THE FUN BACK IN DRAG RACING

Jok's Dead On article about track experience nailed it 100%. Several years ago we went to KCIR, the facility was run down, and we found many people were rude, and had attitudes since we were not locals.

We went to US 36 raceway in Osbourne, MO, and had the best track experience ever. The staff came over and welcomed us to the track, as did many of the local racers. Every one was treated fair. The race was run as it was stated on the schedule.

Result is that I look forward to going to US 36, I rarely go to KCIR. First impressions make a difference.

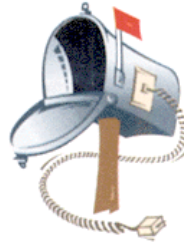
Darr, my guilty pleasure is "Pass-Time" I have only watched one NHRA race on the TV this year, but I watch "Pass-Time" almost every night. I can relate to "Pass-Time" because the cars are mostly bracket racers like me and I can play along. I even have a friend who is not into drag racing watching it and playing along.

Shawn
Omaha, Nebraska

MILLICAN TEAM MANAGEMENT NOTES

Note to Mark Pickens: Reunite Clay with Mike Kloeber: if you want to get past tenth or even make the 'playoffs' next year, this is a very good start. They were awesome in the minors, and with the right funding and quality crew members I think they could return to the top. Heck, I would even work for them if asked!

Murray Glauser
Fort Sask, Alberta



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NOT A GOOD DEAL WITH ESPN

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When NHRA signed up with ESPN how drunk were they? They had to be drunk to sign on to a "Stick and ball" network. It seems like all summer it's "guess the programming change." If the dribble and filler they used to fill time isn't bad enough, I can put up with interviews with everyone in the Force camp, I can put up with Paul Page mispronouncing every name in the book, I can put up with interviewing the Pedregons and listening to them bitching about how Force "threw the race," but what I can't put up with is setting the TiVo to record qualifying at some idiotic hour and then getting up to watch it only to see 45 minutes of some little league quailing rounds for Saigon vs. Beirut, or some college game that is a 72-0 blowout with two minutes left on the clock and still watching the same game 25 minutes later as they take numerous times outs, commercial breaks, etc. Not that these sport aren't great and they have their place, but again how drunk was NHRA when they signed up on this network?

I did not renew my membership this year in September for the first time since 1968. I just got tired of reading limited coverage in *National Dragster* and flipping page after page of ads, I may as well save the money and quit reading the new "Penny Saver" of drag racing. What happened to the great paper that it used to be? I know that ads pay the bills, but I thought that my dues helped fund this.

I used to go to several races every year; sometimes we would arrive on Thursday to watch everything from X Stock to Top Fuel and go home sunburned and happy on Sunday. Then we began to just go on Saturday and Sundays, then just Sunday. Now the few times I go it is mostly on Friday. Why Friday? Because that's when I would see the most drag racing. It seems like everyone tries to make into the show on Friday. But then again the "Drunken Masters" have decided to have a "Countdown to One" and now the teams that don't have the big bucks or aren't in the hunt fail to show or just drop out.

We can all argue that drag racing has changed, it's all about big business, but NHRA could do us all a favor and maybe show a little of the "other guys." Example: The Greek. Jesus, this guy is so old that he calls Don Garlits "son," but he still climbs into the car and runs low 5s or an occasional high 4 at over 300 mph. With that snow white mane of hair he looks like a Greek god, and to a lot of us he's what we want to be when we get to be his age. How about the Bobby Lagana Jr.? Anyone that, until recently, used a roll back truck to travel around with a 300-inch dragster hanging off the top, what a story that would make. But do we get that? Nope, instead we see the inside of Cory Mac's million dollar motor home or Ashley's cat, or something we have seen a hundred times before.

So here it is, 12:30 at night, I'm mad and frustrated that the alleged voice of the organization seems so callous about the paper we couldn't wait to read as to let that go down the tubes, sparse and haphazard TV coverage at all hours of the night pre-empted by any kind of other programming, so devoid of content and any real drama (Whit Bazemore, please come home, all is forgiven). I think I'll dust off some of those old Diamond P VCR tapes and watch those instead. As for NHRA, I suggest a few Bloody Marys. They are supposed to help with the hangovers.

Tell NHRA to stop prepping the track so much. How about the tune up matching the track rather than matching the track to the tune up? Better side-by-side racing may take place.

Steve Mc Donald

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Nationals All Star Nationals
August 6-9, 2009 - Charlotte, North Carolina

3rd Annual JE Pistons NMCA
Muscle Car Nationals
August 28-30, 2009 - Milan, MI

8th Annual NMCA World Street
Finals
October 15-18, 2009 - Memphis, TN

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NMRA



2009 SCHEDULE

6th Annual Aeromotive NMRA
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June 12-13, 2009 - Milan, Michigan

4th Annual NMRA/NMCA Super
Bowl of Street Legal Drag Racing
July 16-19, 2009 - Joliet, Illinois

Inaugural Nitto Tire NMRA / NMCA
All-Star Nationals
August 6-9, 2009 - Charlotte, North Carolina

31st Annual NMRA Ford Expo
September 4-6, 2009 - Columbus, OH

11th Annual Nitto Tire NMRA World
Finals
October 1-4, 2009 - Bowling Green, KY

[View Full Schedule](#)

QUIETING THE FLAMES

RE: 20lb Fire Systems for Blown Cars. Where do they expect us to put them? I know where I would like to put them.

This is a ridiculous rule change. It affects EVERY car with a blower. Read your big NHRA rulebook page 277 section 9.3.

NHRA shot themselves in the foot on this one. Cars are being parked right and left, and also not being finished!

We don't want to have Cacklefest cars (no offense to the Cacklefest guys). We want to race!

Jim Steadman
United States

EQUAL TIME FOR A/FX

Nostalgia fuelers. Nostalgia funny cars. Nostalgia super stocks. What about promoting nostalgia A/FX cars, altered wheelbases, Hilborns-through-the-hoods and all?

Nick Davis
Lawrence, Kansas

SALT FLATS FAN

Good video of John Rains' Trans-Am at Bonneville. I've seen it run, it's a MACHINE! Out the end at over 300 with a V-6. Awesome! Thanks for the coverage, go John!

Steve Pitt
Seattle, Washington

HAVE YOU TRIED AMAZON.COM?

This may not be the place to ask but I'm looking for a copy of Right on Track because I think one of the junior dragsters from Calgary was in it. I would like a copy for my nephews who raced against her there in the first year and now she is one of Canada's top alcohol fuel racers, Ashley Bart. I wanted to know if she was one of the extras in the movie. Thanks.

Marnee Bene
Canada **DRO**

We've Got Mail

HIT REFRESH AND DUMP YOUR CACHE!

Is this site dying? Burk, your last update was 9/21/09 – Heck man, it is now October. You are too good a race reporter to just give us a taste every few weeks. Dead on – last update 9/16/09 – Getting Nostalgic last update 8/12/09 – on and on.... Sup here?

Earl Helm
Salt Lake City, Utah

Jeez Louise. We work our little fingers to the bone to get new information up at least five days per week, but you have to do your part and keep your computer working at peak condition. New columns are done once a month (except Burk's Blast, which is updated whenever he has something to get off his chest), so you will have to wait for the new issue. Unfortunately, Jeff Utterback has left the magazine and that will be the final edition of Getting Nostalgic.

FORMULA FOR DISASTER?

Please give me a break. One car per team? How happy will the fans be when only eight or ten cars show up for an event? No Cory Mac, no Shawn Langdon, no Matt Hagan, no Hight, no Force Hood, no Neff, no Line, no Kurt Johnson.

You want our sport to be like Formula One. McLaren-Mercedes was fined the huge amount because they were caught with stolen technical data, not anything to do with competition. Their sport is one with just a handful of drivers that have a chance to win and is highly political in the decision process; a team's engine combination can be rendered obsolete with the wave of a pen. They are the originators of "team orders".

Malcolm Tuck
Bowling Green, Kentucky

TRYING TO HOLD IT TOGETHER

I can't even look at Hight since John let him win and get in the Countdown. Then Ashley smokes the tires! If he takes the championship I'll explode. It all stinks!

Tony Brand
Vancouver, Canada

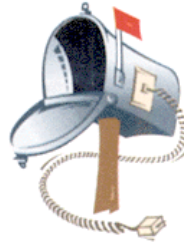
LIGHTER THAN AIR?

How does NHRA justify Tony P winning the round when his body flew in the air? Don't they have to weigh after the run? It was off before he went to 1000'!

Ashley Force was 25 lbs light and was disqualified previously.

JUST WONDERING???

Don Sherwin
Canada



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...DRUIDS?

Guess what. The druids (NHRA) are still doing their same crap since the '60s. They will never change. The drivers are always praising the druids (NHRA) in front of the camera, but in reality they hate them and the way they run their so-called drag racing. The only reason they stick around is because they have nowhere else to race. The druids sucked up all the drag strips around. We need another Jim Tice to run an association that would be real drag racing.

Another thing I would like to say is this: how come the other drivers, car owners and crew chiefs don't have the guts to say something to King John Force taking the dive for Robert Hight? That is wrong and you all know it; as for you Robert Hight, how can you honestly go in front of the TV and feel so proud of being in the top ten? I would be embarrassed. Force also took a dive for Ashley so she would be the first funny car female champion. It not only hurts the opponent, but the other drivers too. This had ruined drag racing forever; this circus should be called King John Force and the Druids NHRA show. Oh, and to put the icing on the cake, Force I will give you an idea (its not like you're not thinking about it): why don't you buy twelve more funny cars to have a sure win every time!?

For you funny car and top fuel owners, now is the time to get together and form a professional drag racing association (PDRA) if you have the guts to form your own rules. The ball is in your court.

And to Burk, you're the man! Long live nostalgic drag racing.

Sammy Johnson

FROM 4 TO 1

NHRA made history again. They went from running on 4 lanes to running 7 days later on 1 lane.

What a joke.

Rich Venza
Suwanee, Georgia

QUESTIONS DALLAS TRACK PREP

Here we go in two weeks from the unbelievable four wide racing in Charlotte to the "one" wide racing of Dallas, how is this possible? Poor track prep, lack of response from the safety safari equaled poor racing. Having one round with this issue is understandable, not the whole race, the only hope you had in the right lane was a red light or mechanical failure. NHRA should give the Dallas fans a refund for not fixing the problem.

ESPN, enough of Team Force, most fans do not support racing determined by team orders, if the outcome is going to be determined by sponsors, why don't we race virtually and save the money?

Mike McHugh
Spring Hill, Florida

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THE EXCEPTION PROVES THE RULE?

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Did the "one lane" race annoy anyone else out there? I'm glad the racers weren't crying on TV about the poor condition of the right lane in Texas. My complaint is that once you knew who was in the left lane for the Nitro cars, you basically knew who would win. The only exception being the final round, and that didn't even help me since I was routing for Dixon. That's racing I guess.

Regarding Frank Manzo's performance in Charlotte: Abso-freekin-lutely AMAZING.

Joe Morrison
Flemington, New Jersey

MIX IT UP!

NASCAR has short track, long track and super speedway racing. Why can't NHRA do the same? Thousand foot racing where that is the safest and 1320 at the rest of the tracks. That would put the crew chiefs on their toes!

John Rueckert
Richland, Washington

MAYBE THE COST?

Why doesn't the NHRA race 1320 ft at the venues that are safe and 1000 ft at the others? This might bring some interest to the sport like NASCAR racing a few road courses. How about a column on the idea? 1000-ft racing sucks!!!

J.D. Culbertson
La Mirada, California

ADRL HAS THE RIGHT IDEA

The NHRA needs to look at how the ADRL is drawing in the spectators. I was at the Richmond and Rockingham races (ADRL), plus two ADRL races last year. These places were packed to the max. Free entry and \$10 parking. Pretty good deal for one who is unemployed and living on a pension. I can't afford to go to an NHRA race myself, but I will go to an ADRL race.

I think the higher ups at the NHRA need to give it a try. Something needs to be done. Look at IHRA, I don't know if they can survive much longer. I hope they can. Only time will tell.

I read that the AHRA is trying to make a comeback. I used to race with AHRA back in the day when I lived in Tucson, AZ. Had a great time.

Tom Lopez
Jacksonville, North Carolina

ADRL ALMOST HAS THE RIGHT IDEA

Observation? I watch a lot of high-level drag racing and know pretty much when something odd is going on. You can correlate the times (e.t., 60-ft, etc.) with mph and it's obvious to know if something doesn't look right. A friend pointed something out to me; he noted that after several runs in ADRL Extreme 10.5 that if you look at certain race teams' rear wheels (brake dust), it's obvious they are dragging the rear brakes to get the car down the track. Not to mention how the rpms seem to go to a lull a times. That would clearly tell me that that team is overpowering their combo quite a bit or they would probably go up in smoke on every pass.

As the ADRL concentrates on weight, why not get rid of the traction control and other obvious things that enable a driver or team to blatantly spend money just to win? I'm a Chevy person and not afraid to admit it, but let me explain this. If it takes a 120K+ car and a 50K+ motor combo to beat a small block Ford, then you should be embarrassed!

Doug Pergerson
Cambridge, Maryland

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OUCH, THAT HURT

I nominate Rick Stewart for "who's the tool" award. What a boner for claiming the crew chief for Mike Edwards touched him and cried like a Pedregon. I cannot bear to watch a full race on TV much less attend an event. The NHRA is out the door folks, hello ADRL, no crying allowed.

Darrell Allison
Rogers, Arkansas

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Just where are all of the women drag racers at these days? It really amazes me how all the men get all the sponsorships and the women get nothing. There is lots of wasted talent with the women now that have been sitting on the outside looking in. It's not fair to the ladies because they are just as good, if not better, than the male racers!

Women in the sport are needed, because we the spectators enjoy the women racers and it also gets the fans all fired up cause it's something altogether different! For instance, look at the attention that Ashley Force Hood gets! It's really cool and the fans just love it, and also it tends to bring in more fans just to see her in an F/C! I hope that things will turn around a little bit, cause I'm all for the women of drag racing and I'm sure that a lot of fans feel the same way that I do....

Kathy Rizzo
Miller Beach, Indiana

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WE THOUGHT THERE WERE ALREADY LOTS OF GEEZERS IN ARIZONA

RE: Geezers race
Way cool, we need an event out here in Arizona!

Jack W. Smith
Phoenix, Arizona

GET OUT YOUR BRUSHES, NHRA

RE: "Camouflage, or We don't see no empty seats"

The seats around the oval at Las Vegas Motor Speedway have been painted that way since the track opened. Maybe NHRA needs to start doing that at major tracks with LOTS of empty seats... like Indy & Pomona.

Joel Gelfand
The vastness of Space

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AND IT'S ARTISTIC TOO

re: "Camo" at zMax: Bruton has been using that pattern for several years at the LVMS NASCAR oval. It does make it hard to 'guesstimate' attendance, but on the flip side, it also provides a more interesting background for photos, versus empty grandstands.

Dale Tuley
Hartford City, Indiana

MAD ABOUT MADNESS

I hope something positive comes from the management change at Gateway. I would like to race there again, if I thought they actually gave a hoot. Come on folks. A season championship on five races? But there is time for seven Midnight Madnesses? For now we'll keep spending our entertainment dollars elsewhere. Last night we raced at Sikeston (MO). Two classes and had a blast. The place was packed and there is no doubt they were glad to have us there. We'll see what happens.

And, no, Midnight Madness is not racing. It's more like a beer party with cars.

Tom Heaney
Imperial, Missouri

AutoWeek Racing News

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BUT, RICK... IT'S IN BAKERSFIELD

Just a question! Auto Club is a major presence at three California tracks. My question is why not close Pomona and focus on making Bakersfield a first class facility? Fontana could remain, but it seems like Bakersfield has the most potential. Pomona only has historic relevance, with only a couple major drag race dates, seems like NHRA and Auto Club's money could be better spent on a facility with a future.

Rick Johnson
California

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STILL CRAZY AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

Morning: just want to say that "if" (and it's going to be a big if), they get to build that drag strip in Santa Maria, it's going to be really fast. They are only about 100 feet off the deck and the air comes right of the Pacific Ocean. And you can run there just about any time of the year. I used to go to the old strip when I was a kid and it was some of the best racing I have ever been to. Shitloads of crazy people, it was right up my alley.

Take it easy.

Bry Schmidt,
Fresno, California

IT'S THE ECONOMY STUPID

Tickets too high, six-dollar dogs and burgers, three- to four-dollar water ... families can't afford that, especially now in this economy.

Jack Harris
Parkersburg, West Virginia

CAN'T WAIT!

When will the Pro Mod 2010 schedule be announced?

David Fabi
Yonkers, New York

David, the ADRL schedule has already been announced. You can find it [here](#). There are several other Pro Mod series that are still talking with tracks for 2010 dates. The entire IHRA program seems to be undergoing considerable change and we're not sure if Pro Mods will be a part of the 2010 schedule. If you are referring to the NHRA exhibition series, our guess is whenever Roger Burgess decides to pony up the sponsorship money again.

WARM UP YOUR MP3-PLAYER

Three Weeks in March

By Mickey Bryant

Three weeks in March of 1959 in Bakersfield, California, were the beginning of modern "National event" drag racing. Don Garlits arrived from Florida for the March Meet and the sport ...

[READ MORE](#)

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Hey guys, the heavy metal band Megadeth has a new album out called Endgame. On it is a song called 1320, an ode to drag racing. They even got Full Throttle in there. Also has some great top fuel or funny car runs at the beginning and end of the song. Sounds great with a big surround sound system. Seems to me I remember seeing lead singer Dave Mustaine at one of the NHRA events this year. Not sure which one though.

Enjoy.

Bob Hansen
Roanoke, Texas

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ALL THE PACERS INFORMATION YOU COULD POSSIBLY WANT

To un-confuse anyone as to the Pacers Tasmanian Devil AA/FA and correct some of the info, here you go: George Snizek started the Valley Stream Pacers Hot Rod Club in 1955. After George Snizek and late great partner "Charlie Dodge" Hagenmayer joined forces at Westhampton, LI, and began to race a B dragster and a '30 Ford Roadster, they evolved the V.S. Pacers into The Snizek & Dodge Racing Team aka "The Pacers". Building upon their success, they incorporated Pacers Auto and ran automotive shops in Hewlett & later in Oceanside, NY. The team from Pacers Auto became one of the best known self-sponsored, racing teams on the East Coast for their tire-smoking performances, consistency, ingenuity, ability and professionalism.

The Pacers ran their popular "Tasmanian Devil" first with a AA/A Bantam body, and later with the better known 23T body which ran in AA/A, A/FD, CC/FD, and AA/FA classes. They also ran as The Pacers and CARS Magazine Racing Teams with their AA Fuel Dragsters. In addition, they were the road test consultants for both CARS and Speed & Custom Magazines and could be seen in numerous auto related articles in the 60's. The Pacers set the NHRA National AA/A record in 1963 and again in 1964 when they set both ends of the National record at the US Nationals. They were North East Division I points leader in Supercharged Eliminator with the altered and were always among the leaders in Top Fuel Eliminator with their dragsters. In 1966, they also set the NHRA National CC/FD class record plus took home a "double up" title for sweeping both Super Eliminator and Top Eliminator classes on the same day at York US-30 Dragway. When they retired from competition in 1968, they went on to operate Pacers Automotive, Inc. for another 20 years. In 2008, Pacers Auto's George Snizek, "Charlie Dodge" Hagenmayer (posthumous), Otto Qualliotine and "K.B" Braun were inducted as a team into the East Coast Drag Times Hall of Fame. In 2009, George and Charlie also received a Legion of Honor award from the National Nostalgia Drag Racing Association for their many contributions to the automotive performance industry.

To clarify further, the original does exist-albeit many changes were made to it many years ago by the current owner so he could continue racing it. So while it was the original, it is technically debatable that it still can be called as such because has been modified. While it is understood that those changes were necessary for passing tech in the 70's, i.e. chassis mods, new fuel tank, etc., the modifications cause the car to be put into a "once was such and such racecar" category. The body, seat, engine and rims basically remain the same and it retains the general appearance, but it is not what it once was. It is like having a painting that once was painted by Picasso but the new owner who knew Picasso painted on top of and it still calling it a Picasso. It simply is not. The owner does make rare car show appearances with it, but has stated he will never run it again. It sits tucked away in an old garage, his own personal reminder of his memories of The Pacers. Last year, it was supposed to make an appearance at the Long Island Hot Rods & Racecars car show which would have been the Long Island homecoming of both cars. They were set to be side-by-side (indoors) as the advertised main attraction. Instead, the owner backed out after advertising was out which caused much disappointment to the show's organizers and the hundreds of people who attended the show. While the owner is the car's 2nd owner and has kept the car "that once was" in relatively decent shape over the years, he unfortunately chose to not have any active part with the original Pacers.

Taz II, the tribute car, was recreated by Arizona's Jerry Joaquin in order to bring back memories of the original Pacers team of George Snizek and "Charlie Dodge" Hagenmayer and to remind hot rodders and racers to NEVER FORGET the many Firefighters, Policemen, EMS, & Civilians who we tragically lost on September 11, 2001. Being a high school friend and fan of The Pacers as well as being both a retired cop and retired firefighter, the only thing that came to mind when he wanted to build something that would respectfully honor both his fallen brothers killed in action and The Pacers team was a racecar. That is why the car was chosen and why it wears both The Pacers signature markings as well as 343 and Maltese cross logos. The Taz II recreation idea was fully backed by George Snizek and then the project was painstakingly built under his guidance to the specs of the original Pacers car, while also adhering to NHRA's 6.0 tech certification specs. It was built so that it could pass tech and run on ANY drag strip today while keeping the same nostalgia look which required a special fabrication skill set that Jerry Joaquin found at Southwest Custom Trucks in Apache Junction, AZ. After a long fabrication period, Taz II was finally debuted during the 2007 East Coast Drag Times Hall of Fame Weekend in Henderson, North Carolina and was featured on Inside Drag Racing with Bret Kepner. The following year, Taz II's inaugural runs were made at the 2008 NHRA Hot Rod Reunion in Bowling Green with Jerry at the wheel. He has since passed on driving duties to his nephew, Ken Rooney. The Taz II project has been an overwhelming success and has renewed the involvement and racing friendships of the original Pacers. It continues to create many others.

While I am clarifying, my father and I also recreated the popular Pacers '57 Chevy Pickup /Push truck. It was created by one of the original Pacers as a recreation and a tribute to the original tuck. Got it? Pacers Auto, Inc., is currently owned by George Snizek and Scott Snizek and Pacers Auto, Inc.® is a registered trademark of theirs. We actively serve as crew with the Taz II team whenever it is possible due to the distances involved.

While much confusion was caused by the Kingman Street Drags crash publicity, and many mistakenly thought it was the original car or team, Taz II, has always has been known as a tribute car since its creation and was never passed as the original-by anyone. Neither my family, Charlie's family, or people who knew the original Pacers would allow that. There might have been confusion because the cars look similar and because there is a blend of both the old members and new members surrounding the car, but the teams were never confused. People just remember what they choose to remember.

Taz II, is, and has always been an active racecar of the Pacers Tasmanian Devil Racing Team. As such, it will be rebuilt to race again. Please support the Taz II Team as they are doing their best to always keep The Pacers remembered. If anyone has questions in regard to anything regarding Pacers Auto, contact me at pacersauto@gmail.com. Thank you all for writing in with your comments and concern.

Scott Snizek

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"Earl Scheib "Tape wrap Grafix"! \$29.99!!!!"


GETTING HONORABLE MENTIONS ARE:

"They told me there would be a lot of RED tape to enter an NHRA event, but I didn't expect this!!!!"-- Tim Rinkerman, NE

"WOW! I remember when sex was safe and drag racing was dangerous!!!! THE NEW DUREX CAR CONDOMS." -- Phillip Wigington, Canton, GA

"Immediately after protecting his race car from potential thieves, Kilroy placed aluminum foil over his head and climbed in his bath tub to ward off any pesky space aliens in the area." -- Mike Walker, Cabot, AR

"Billy & Bob are sure serious about not letting anyone see their intake manifold."-- Jeff Correll, Knox, IN

"I've heard of failing tech, but this has gone too far." -- Russ Ganz, Pompton Lakes, NJ 



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