

# AMERICAN AUTOPARTS

## **Insight** *News and chewing gum for the eyes*

December 2014

Compiled by Mike Lintern, with graphics and tech work by Wojtek Samoszuk

Race reports and **Still Ramblin'** - words and pix from Mike Collins, including personal views that are not necessarily those of the company... but are a must read!

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### **Dodge kicks back to the past but dumps motorsport support**

Dodge is celebrating its centenary year ("Kicking asphalt for 100 years!") by promoting its performance image, with the latest Challengers and Chargers offering touches of retro styling, although the factory-backed SRT (Street Racing Technology) Racing programme is being scrapped at the end of this year. Chrysler say the Dodge brand is being reinforced by being "consolidated" with its SRT hi-performance division.

Chrysler has already dumped the Dodge nameplate from the long-established truck division in a "purification" move that has meant all trucks and vans are now Rams. Meanwhile, the latest generation of Ram panel vans and mini-vans are Fiats under the skin. Sales of Ram pickups and vans in August were a mighty 24 per cent up on last year, at 46,594 units compared with 33,587 in 2012... so something is working out right.

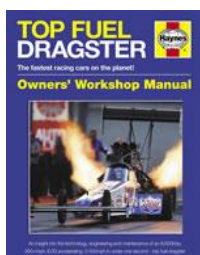
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### **Next-gen Wrangler to be alloy bodied and turbocharged?**

Fiat Chrysler boss Sergio Marchionne announced at the Paris Motor Show early October that the next-generation Jeep Wrangler may be built on a unibody platform, feature smaller and turbocharged engines and switch over to an aluminum body. The Wrangler, which traces its heritage back to the wartime MB, has to lose weight and be powered by smaller engines than the current 3.6-litre V6 in order to help meet stricter US fuel economy regulations.

The change to alloy bodywork would mean production of Jeep's big-selling CJ replacement leaving its historic manufacturing site in Toledo, Ohio, which is set up for "body-on-tub" construction only, said Marchionne.

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### **HAYNES PUBLISH THEIR TOP FUEL MANUAL**

Just released by Haynes Publishing is an owners' manual for Top Fuel Dragsters – the latest in their series of "novelty" workshop titles that has covered everything from washing machines to Lancaster bombers and Concorde! But this is quite a serious attempt to educate and will make an ideal Christmas present for real drag fans. Published at £21.99, but available much cheaper on the web. Expect a Mike Collins review next time!

# BARRY HILLING

With great sadness, we have to report the death on October 5 of a fine friend and long-term customer of American Autoparts, Barry Hilling, of Kingswood, Surrey. Barry died, aged 74, at the Princess Alice Hospice, Esher, after an illness of several months duration. A plasterer and builder by trade, Barry loved his American pickups, which served him well in his trade and also on Continental trips with his wife, Maureen, when they would stock-up on their favourite wines as well as import materials such as marble for the business.

We offer our sincere condolences to his widow and son Anthony.

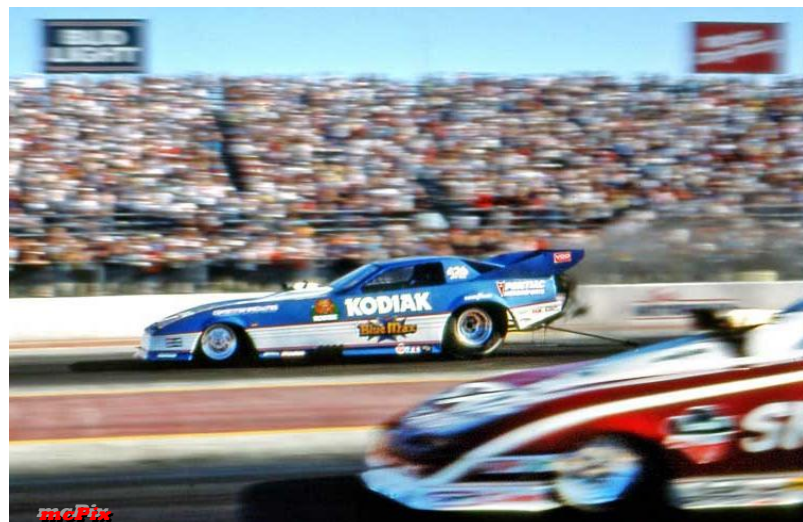
# RAYMOND BEADLE

With his Blue Max fuel coupes Beadle came as high as 4<sup>th</sup> in the opening years of the NHRA Winston Funny Car points race which was dominated by Don Prudhomme since its inception in 1975. That all changed in 1979 when Beadle ended the "Snake's" string of wins with the first of his three straight titles. Beadle also bought his special blend of fuel coupe thunder to the UK, and who can ever forget the first time they saw Beadle make a slow tyre-churning burnout using low rpm in the Blue Max, unlike our cars which snapped up onto the tyres at high rpm.

His throttle control was superb, and so was his marketing ability, and the soft spoken Texan is recognised as the creator of the now-huge drag racing collectibles business through his Blue Max Racing which sold halters for the babes and tee shirt for the dudes to such an extent that the NHRA eventually put the kibosh on trailer sales at races and took over to gain some of the revenue for themselves! He thrilled fans at Santa Pod during a series of races in the late seventies, and is captured above making an old school "dry hop" prior to another thunder run in his NHRA Championship winning fuel coupe

Beadle won 13 NHRA races and also three IHRA funny car championships and a NASCAR Winston Cup series with Rusty Wallace at the wheel. He also ran a winning World of Outlaws sprint car driven by Sammy Swindell and owned the Chaparral Trailer Co. In 1985 he won the US Nationals as a car owner with John Lombardo driving, an event he'd won in 1975. It was his first year driving the Blue Max; he set a new NHRA record in beating the "Snake" who'd won the last five US Nats! The Blue Max was one of the most iconic fuel coupes ever, and one of my big thrills was meeting him again and capturing his holshot win over the "Snake" at the Texas Motorplex in 1987, the year he retired. RIP Mr Beadle, you'll always be remembered for being a cool dude, one of the all-time great funny cars drivers, and one of the most likeable too

Legendary funny car driver Raymond Beadle passed away on October 20



# Bitsa News

GM has another recall problem on its hands. Parking brakes on 2013-14 Cadillac XTS and 2014-15 Chevy Impala models have a defect that could cause a fire, so a total of 221,558 cars are being called back. Nearly 15 million vehicles worldwide have this year been recalled by GM over a problem with switches

# Still Ramblin'

Words & photos Mike Collins

extreme  
crop mix



## flames an' nitro funder!

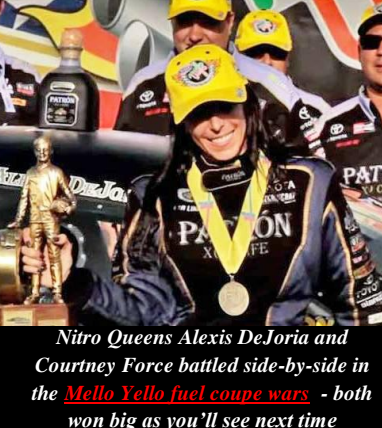
...on the cleanest '99 El Camino you've never seen - and won't until next time!

...but we still have an in-depth look at a fiery Top Fuel final with three lead changes!



mcSnip courtesy NHRA YouTube

## Plus gals - an' pals...



Nitro Queens Alexis DeJoria and Courtney Force battled side-by-side in the Mello Yello fuel coupe wars - both won big as you'll see next time



Due to circumstances beyond my control and hi-tech gremlins, this edition of Still Ramblin' is not only w-a-y late, it's been truncated. We'll now be running a full wrap-up of the 2014 NHRA Countdown all the way to Pomona next time, along with a special image or two from my ol' pal Andy Willsheer who visited the US for their final races.



WojtekPix



Ol' Nitro Nostrils is seen here doing his thing, shootin' fuel coupes at Podington's famed Pig Farm International Raceway, where they kicked off their annual

September showdown with the first Friday night Top Fuel qualifying session shown LIVE on SantaPodTV! Wojtek took his big gun to the Pod on race day, hunting for cool action shots from yet another VIP perch, while yours truly shot from the stands! He's just celebrated 10 fun-filled years as AAP's main man, yet instead of chillin' out on a Saturday afternoon, he's directing traffic! He also grabbed this ground-pounding shot on race day - part of our in-depth coverage of the FIA Finals



Photo courtesy TJenx6 YouTube

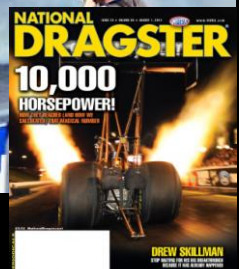


What about my truck pic?



### Speedway babes do it in the dirt!

Speedway Grand Prix racing was great this year, the bodacious babes struttin' their stuff before each heat adding to our viewing pleasure!



But first some real NitroThunder! And at 10,000 horsepower per, even on the short track, NHRA's Mello Yello blown an' injected fuel racing is just that - even in a Pedal Fest, as you'll see next...



# Nitro Fever!

Mello Yello DRS photos courtesy [nhra.com](http://nhra.com) mcPix courtesy ESPN



The quality and quantity of nitro thunder from the NHRA's Mello Yello racers this past summer was AA

amazing, ending with a couple of intense events as racers battled to make the elite Countdown field

No doubt they all enjoyed a week's break after such a gruelling tour, but for me, a weekend without racing was a bit of a bummer, so by the time I sat down to watch qualifying for the penultimate race of the regular season, Brainerd's Lucas Oil Nats I was craving for nitro action. And they didn't let me down, starting with their race logo and that NitroFire dancin' on the header pipes...

Fuel coupe qualifying at Brainerd was led by John Force Racing. Courtney took the first pole with a 4.15 at 306.40 in her Traxxas Mustang and Robert Hight took the next with a 4.08 at 313.29 in his Auto Club Mustang. Most cars went up in smoke during Saturday's first Q session, and then only three pairs of fuel coupes (led by Del Worsham's 4.11 at 307.44), made it down track in the final session before the heavens opened, with the teams taking their cars back to their pits, where they sat for about an hour. The best thing about watching delayed TV coverage is that all we suffered was a quick commercial break and the rain had stopped! DSR's TJ and his Make-a-Wish Dodge led the way with a 4.078 at 309.27, a tick ahead of Alexis DeJoria's 4.082, 306.12 in her Patrón Toyota.

But then DSR team mate Ron Capps thundered to a 4.064, 314.17 alongside Tim Wilkerson's 4.154, 302.89, a three thou' improvement for the likeable owner driver. Jack Beckman's 4.115 at 309.70 looked good alongside Bob Tasca's 4.154, then it was Matt Hagan's turn to thunder, his 4.068 at 311.99 moving the DSR Rocky Boots Charger to second as Courtney Force clicked off her Traxxas Mustang after bad tyre shake. The best race of the day was all Force Power, with 11-time Brainerd winner John Force's 4.060 snatching his 151st pole at 315mph in a booming side-by-side race, with team mate Robert Hight's 4.081 only good enough for fifth! It was Force's third pole in four races - not bad for an 'ol' truck driver! It was also Castrol GTX Mustang crew chief Jimmy Prock's 96th pole - talk about a winning combination. Round one on Sunday saw DSR's Matt Hagan step up to the plate and hit one out of the park with a blistering 4.01 at 318.99 in his Rocky Boots Charger to run away from Chad Head's 4.088 315.93 in his Head Racing Camry. Following a short rain delay, Alexis DeJoria thundered around an up-in-smoke Courtney Force, re-setting Hagan's track record ET with a blistering 4.010 at 317.64



Mark Gewertz photo courtesy [nhra.com](http://nhra.com)



mcPix courtesy ESPN



The big race in the next round was a "Countdown critical" match between a pair of DSR Charger's, Ron Capps NAPA car and Jack Beckman's Valvoline backed machine. Capps hit a 0.090 light to holeshoot Beckman's 0.096, but "Fast Jack" moved past as the pair thundered side-by-side. It was still anyone's race in the lights, but Capps' NAPA car inched ahead in the final couple of feet, taking the win with a 4.049 at 317.79 to Beckman's 4.046 at 317.57 - wow! In losing that close battle (MOV 0.0039seconds!), Beckman remained one round out of the Countdown race - talk about straight-shooting! It also meant Courtney Force clinched her Countdown spot as did Alexis DeJoria, and Matt Hagan, that pair giving fans a great race next. Hagan put his DSR Rocky Boots Charger ahead at the green, but Alexis got up and thundered by, giving Brainerd fans their first three second race, her 3.998 at 315.93 eating Hagan's 4.056 at 318.77mph. Courtney and Brittany Force looked on nonchalantly as Alexis staged, but reacted when she ran the numbers, especially Brittany (no doubt given a "cool it girl!" nudge from her older sister as the "wow" expression vanished almost immediately!

MARGIN OF VICTORY: 0.0039 sec.			
BECKMAN	RT	DE JORIA	WIDESHOT WIN
.096		.090	
4.046	ET	4.049	
317.57	MPH	317.79	

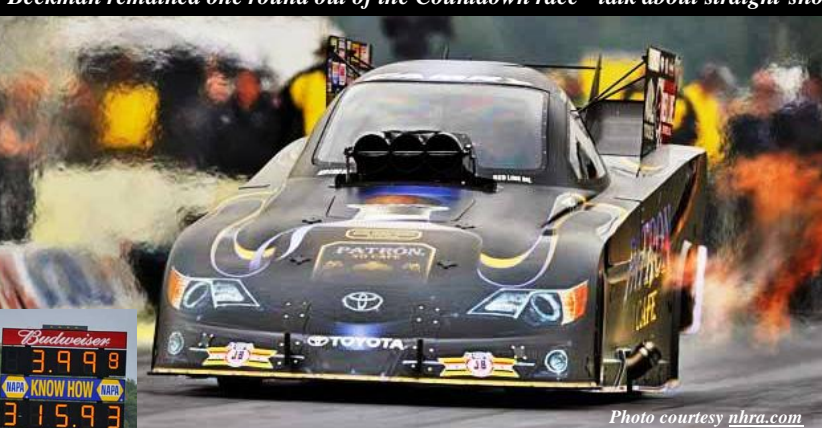


Photo courtesy [nhra.com](http://nhra.com)



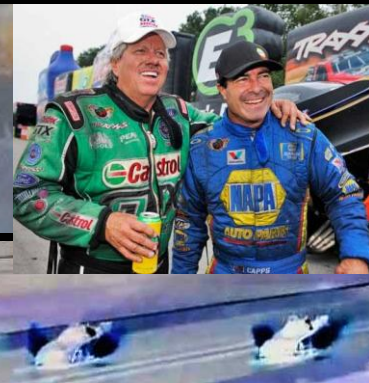
when she ran the numbers, especially Brittany (no doubt given a "cool it girl!" nudge from her older sister as the "wow" expression vanished almost immediately!



The semi-finals saw John Force's 4.021 at 319.52 (far left), drive around Tommy Johnson Jr who hit trouble and slowed to a 4.20 at 241



Alexis DeJoria powered ahead of Ron Capps, but had to pedal the car, giving Capps an easy win, his 4.073 at 317.87 giving Force lane choice in the finals - but then it rained! However, because the Top Fuel cars raced all the way to far more dramatic finals, I saved them 'til now, leaving John Force and Ron Capps all smiles - even though they had to wait until Indy to race their final round



Doug Kalitta's Mac Tools car set Friday's low ET, a 3.812 at 322.96mph ahead of nine cars in the .80's, book ended by Morgan Lucas. He quit racing last year to learn the family business, but returned in a special 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary Lucas Oil car and ran 3.88. Eight cars improved in Saturday's final Q session, yet only three ran .80's and moved up - Leah Pritchett's 3.87 took her Gumout car from outside to 11<sup>th</sup> along with DSR team mates Spencer Massey (seventh with a 3.83, 320.28), and Antron Brown, whose Matco Tools car took pole with a 3.810 at 318.77. Chris Karamesines thrilled his legions of fans by driving his ex-DSR streamliner (in Lucas Oil colours) to 15<sup>th</sup> with a 3.945, 305.98 - enough for the famed octogenarian to win pole at the Pod's FIA Finals! Race day was a whole new ball game as cars thundered into the .70's - Doug Kalitta's 3.775 at 324.51 (took out the Greek) and Morgan Lucas' holeshot win with a 3.78 at 317.94 over Bob Vandergriff's C&J Energy car's best pass of the race and new track ET record of 3.760 ! All four winners in round two ran .70's, including Doug Kalitta who re-set the track to 3.722 at 326mph (below), driving around Massey's quickest pass of the race, a 3.758, 327.51 by just 0.0134 seconds!

In the semi finals Antron Brown's Matco Tools car left first, but Lucas re-took the lead early to win with a 3.729 at 323.66 over Brown's 3.770 at 319.82. Then Doug Kalitta got a holeshot, his 3.752 at 324.67 eclipsing Tony Schumacher's 3.743 at 327.51 in his US Army Dragster by just 0.0053seconds! This led to one of the most amazing Top Fuel finals ever between Mac Tools and Lucas Oil, the point's leader vs the comeback kid! Doug Kalitta cut a 0.063 light to Morgan Lucas 0.077, but had to pedal it almost instantly - and then the fun began...



Photo courtesy nhra.com

MARGIN OF VICTORY: 0.0053 sec.			
SCHUMACHER	ET	KALITTA	HOLESHOT WIN
3.743	327.51	3.752	324.67

Thanks to the magic of NHRA's super-doooper hi-tech camera you can see just how short the track is today. I've watched [amazing Top Fuel final at BIR](#) a gazillion times and seeing these two nitro pilots duking it out, sideways, on and off the pedal like there's no tomorrow is pure magic. These pix from NHRA's YouTube video show how lucky we are to have technology that lets us enjoy a visual experience showing far more than our eyes could ever see trackside. Mind you I'd rather feel the noise and smell the NitroThunder first!



Top Fuel final mcSnips courtesy NHRA YouTube



Told you it was an amazing final! Morgan Lucas took his third Top Fuel win at the Lucas Oil NHRA Nationals, sideways in a ball of fire (his Top Fuel debut was 10 years ago here!), with a 4.88 at 229.55 over Kalitta's 4.98, 256.16



After this race, Forrest Lucas (at right), and the gang had every reason to celebrate

Wild ride right! Yet for his mum Charlotte at the top end waiting to present the winner's trophy, watching the cars coming at her and the absolute violence of that explosion! And with instant replays it must've been a tad tough, all the while wondering if her son was okay! Wow – who said drag racing was easy! This eXtreme crop of Mark J. Rebilas' great shot for USA Today from MRL's Facebook page says it all – his Mum couldn't have got any closer to him if she tried!



Top Fuel final  
mcSnips courtesy  
[NHL 3 YouTube](#)

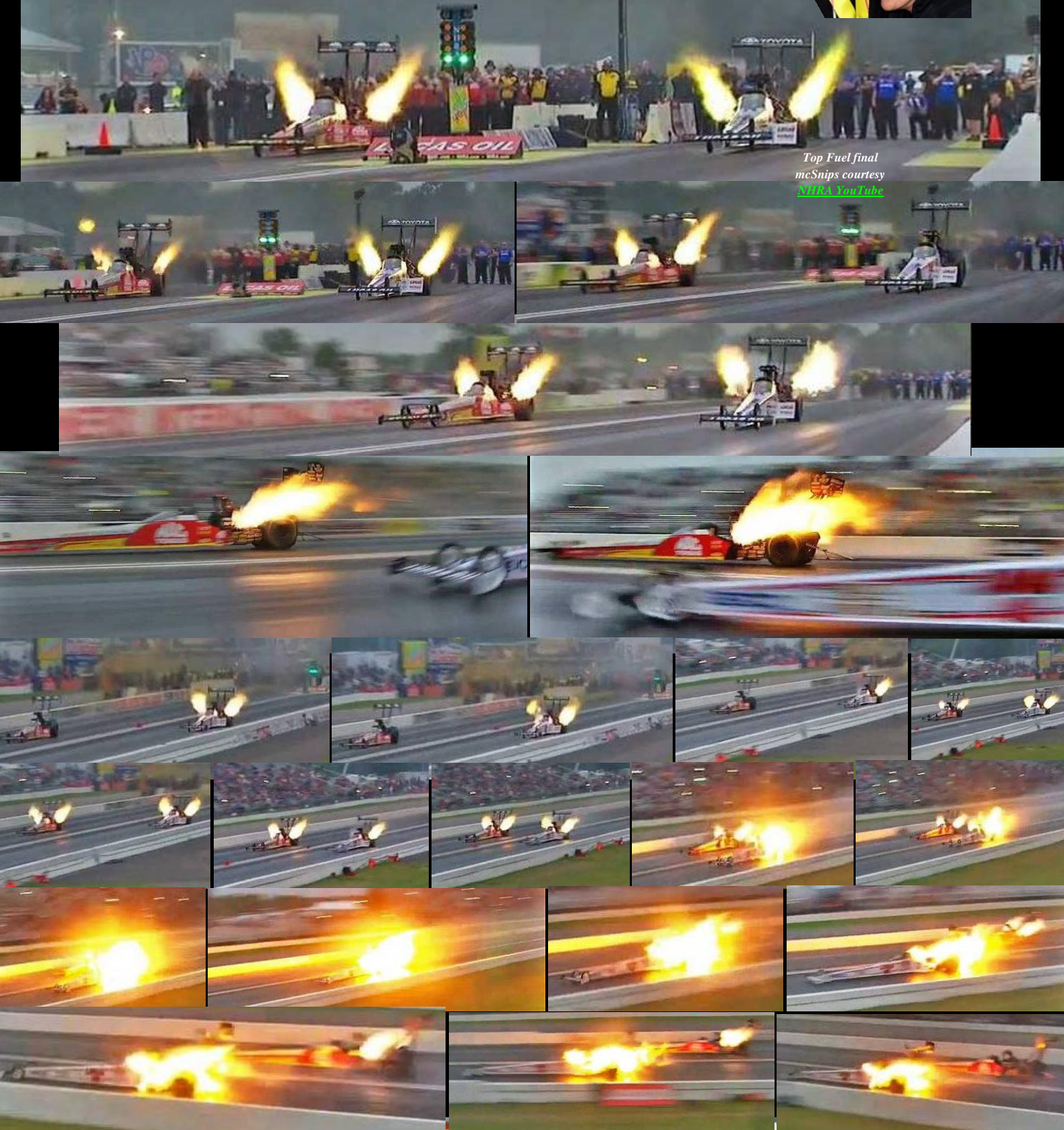


Photo courtesy  
MLR Facebook  
Mark J. Rebilas  
USA TODAY

Wow, what a race! Click the link to feel the force of these images in less than 40 AA awesome seconds! Although won with a 4.88 at 229.55 over a 4.98 at 256.16, it was definitely a Top Fuel final to remember - especially for Morgan's Mum, Charlotte Lucas

# September showdown 2014 FIA Finals

The announcement from the Pod that they'd be running 10 nitro cars in Friday night qualifying seemed optimistic, but added a touch of excitement to our conversation - unlike the thought of paying forty odd quid to hang around for seven hours waiting for the next NitroFix after the morning session! Especially with the knowledge that only seven top fuel cars out of 20 ran quicker than 4.05 seconds in the first Q session at the US Nats the previous weekend - and that had been after only four weekends off during a 12 race-long summer-streak on the NHRA Mello Yello tour! Thanks to wicked weather and "marginal tracks," most of our top fuelers hadn't made a dozen full pulls all season, and my reasoning was justified when only one fuel car made it down track under power in Q1 at the Pod on the Friday morning!



At home, I'd tuned into Eurodragster and saw Stig Neergard and Thomas Nataas do their thing – with Batman smoking the tyres a tad earlier than Stig!

At least fans that were there got to feel some NitroThunder, albeit briefly when the fuelers launched! But Duncan Micallef, the Maltese Lion, roared all the way, giving fans what they came for, thundering down track to 306.95mph with a stout 4.06 elapsed time to take first pole. Then came a long wait on a none-too warm day, although fans did have a bunch of racing to watch in the fresh air of the legendary Podington Pig Farm...

Crowd strip courtesy [Taco Merkunt YouTube](#)



During the afternoon, fans had seen a 6.55 at 213.00 to put Jimmy Ålund on Pro Stock pole, a 5.89 at 242.90 to put Micke Gullqvist on top in Pro Mod (ahead of Marc Meihuizen's 5.98 at a booming 242.88) and a 5.51 at 258 for Johan Limberg in Alcohol funny car, along with a whole host of other racers going for it, so I guess you had to say that they'd been entertained...

...on tuning in at seven fifteen, the by-now kind've chilly fans were still being entertained, this time by the Pod's own troupe of not-so long-legged dancers and their version of the broom dance!



While the team were cleaning up the track so the big boys could come out to play safely with their Awfully Awesome, ground pounding, blown an' injected nitro burning fuelers, we were treated to some in-depth interviews with the Pod's own DC Bradford. He spoke with Per Andersen, who along with his partner Karsten heads the Batman team for star driver Thomas Nataas – not just the quickest and fastest, but THE class act in Top Fuel outside of the USA



Then came Stig Neergard, the first European to have run a three and, with Anita Mäkelä's having stayed home to take care of business on the chicken farm, was running strong enough to have a shot at the title. As you can see, they both had uninspiring backdrops, but with Rookie Top Fuel pilot Noah Stutz, off to live the dream of joining the NHRA Mello Yello tour at Las Vegas, viewers got to see the wall of fans lining the banks! Mind you, in close-up we wouldn't have been many smiles as, apart from those watching on I-Phones, they were probably getting a tad cheesed off 'cos the Pod has no big screens! Maybe next year, maybe! Then came the Kaiser – with an empty VIP stand as back drop for his interview, but both were obviously enjoying their debut LIVE of SantaPodTV. Luckily for the Kaiser, his all-new, bells and whistles show on SantaPodTV

was home-grown for computers. Had it been for real, the cost of the hour's delay on live television would've swallowed all the funds generated by the thousands of fans lining the banks! Oh well, maybe it was an hour late, but finally they were ready to fire the first pair...

LIVE

# For the first time ever Nitrofire at the Pig Farm

## ATMOS FEAR LIVE on SantaPodTV



Unless noted all Friday night mcSnips courtesy SantaPodTV LIVE

Talk about wall-to-wall punters – the stands were jammed and the banking was heaving as defending event champ Chris Andrews backed-up alongside the 2012 FIA champion Urs Erbacher, who sadly didn't really make a burnout. Worse, Urs left before the lights ran and was instantly disqualified, which was kinda sad 'cos you can see that he'd hooked up and was really thundering, leaving behind a red glow alongside Chris Andrews' green light...



... Chris launched hard, driving the Lucas Oil car into the history books with his and Rune Fjeld Motorsports first sub-four-second run, a 3.97 and a great way to start the show.

Sadly it was clicked off to 290mph because, Chris told me, "the car made a move," and in the dark that's all you need! Love the face-full of NitroFire and rear-view with Chris still blazing down track, a Snip from one of many [SantaPodTV](#) replays thanks to Microsoft

Following a short break while the track was cleared after Urs car had stopped, dead in the water, Micke Kågered and Stig Neergard were fired up and rolled onto the track

Both cars left really hard, but Micke K was off the power almost at once while Stig thundered – until a head gasket began to go, lifting early for a 4.10 at only 254 (having run 262mph at the eighth mile), and trailing some fire in the shut-off area

The final pair of the night were defending FIA champion and record holder Thomas Nataas in the Andersen racing car and Duncan Micallef at the helm of another of Rune Fjeld's machines. What a way to end the session, Batman vs the Maltese Lion!



LIVE They didn't let us down and these images made it for me - there's Batman thundering down track and filling the air with NitroFire to record the fastest short track speed outside the USA at 315.51mph! And the atmospheric right hand Snip captures the difference between Batman's full-power NitroFire and the angry orange as the Maltese Lion ingests something more than G-Max nitro! Wow, what a race, Batman's strong 4.03 moved him to second place ahead of the Lion who stayed third with his earlier 4.06 at 306.95



"Would've, could've and should've" has long been the drag racers lament - but it was certainly true on this run



mcSnip strip courtesy No1Santapodshooter

As you can see from the second Snip, Batman had to pedal it, the brief lose of power and momentum sufficient enough to help lose a three perhaps! And for the Maltese Lion to play catch up - until his engine began eating itself, the car slowing to a 4.11 at 279.45 mcSnip strip courtesy No1Santapodshooter





The Kaiser's always telling us that drag racing doesn't make any money, but judging from the strip above (shot earlier by Tao Merkunt) and my Snip at left taken shortly after Batman's thunder run, he should've been grinning from ear to ear as that banking is packed with folks, most of whom paid full retail to stand and wait such a long time for what in truth was an oh-so-brief taste of NitroNirvana



Sadly, the track was gone by now and when the fuel coupes came out a few minutes later, their power blasts were even briefer –but that's drag racing! Even so, ol' Nitro Nostrils told me they felt and tasted good! But the lucky trucker was shooting on the line as Kevin Kent's West Ten Mustang pounded the ground on a solo pass, had problems and clicked off early to coast through with an 8.68 at 79.39mph. Then fans got some smoky side-by-side AAFC action, with Jason Phelps' Mustang getting a huge holeshot over Gordon Smith's Dodge before both of 'em clicked off. But Jason stayed ahead to take pole in the first qualifying session for the European Funny Car Series' Finals with a blistering 7.76 at a huge 84.42 mph over the Mopar's close 7.98 at 81.83mph! Okay, so I'm taking the piss, but even at home on the computer, they were definitely pounding the ground, looking and sounding strong and fans got to see and feel some pretty wild NitroFire, albeit very briefly Wendy Baker's Time Warp Mustang II nostalgia fuel coupe, gave us more, thrilling fans with a couple of old school dry hops, nitro barking and cackling to the line before she left hard, lookin' good and haulin' the mail, lifting as the car made a serious move, and cacklin' down the track to end the nitro show



Grandstand Snip courtesy OliversAviationvideo



And talking of serious moves, you'd think by now that one on the Kaiser's many minions would have pointed out that the paying punters on the banking do not get to see the flame and thunder display put on by Martin Hill's Fireforce jet funny car as it's hidden from view by the hideous VIP suites, as you can see from the shot at right! Oh well, maybe next year

As fans waited for Fireforce to come out of hiding, it looks too chilly for ice cream, but no doubt Mr Whippy sold more than a few during the long day

Unless noted all Friday night Snips courtesy SantaPodTV



Just after eight thirty Fireforce moved into view, staged up and then stormed into the night trailing jet-fire as it sped to a 5.90 at 271.37



Fireforce Snips courtesy OliversAviationvideo



Well, the Pod had promised ten nitro cars, and with the addition of Time Warp they'd delivered for a change. Once again we'd seen just how tough it is to run the numbers in the mighty world of Top Fuel dragsters and Fuel Coupes. But Chris Andrew's 3.97 and Thomas Nataas' mind blowing 315.5Imp on a 4.03 were enough to keep most happy As ever, the teams did their best during an entertaining thirty minutes, giving fans some real NitroFire and ground-pounding thunder

This link [SantaPodTV](#) will take you to the Pod's video page where their 41-minute long Friday night show, sans interviews, but with all the runs LIVE as they happened– with replays! Unlike their highlights show which mentions it in passing as "spectacular" or their Motors TV show with 91 seconds of back-to-back, multi-camera, not-stop NitroFire replays making it seem as if there were far more than three pairs of fuel cars! But it sure looked good

With thoughts of some two-second, 300mph Top Fuel runs spurring me on, I'd left early, driven hard - then a wrong turn down a country lane found me lost (for the first time ever!) en route to the Pod! (The Kaiser was probably jamming your sat nav mate -- ML)



After driving in a huge circle for more than half-an-hour before getting back en route, I reached the gates only to be behind the slowest Corvette I'd ever seen. Seems it wasn't his fault though; apparently when all the credit cars machines are being used things go kinda slow, so it took longer getting through the gates than it did to walk from the start line to nitro ally. And that included stopping to stand on my toes and catch a glimpse of a watch a couple of Super Pro racers do their thing, and a TV man shooting the action. Once up amongst the fuel cars I found Urs Erbacher's crew just moving out, so I wasn't really late

Andersen Racing's power plant, ready to rumble and roar in search of more speed, quicker ETs and a second straight FIA title! F&A's Lucas Oil car was ready to roll, Chris Andrews all smiles, hand in his pockets, probably holding onto his 3.97 ticket and hoping for more! Thomas Nataas was chillin' out and looked pensive, but when I congratulated him on his 315mph pass, asking if we'd see more today, Batman's eyes lit up and his smile said it all. Sadly, one of the Andersen's ducked down and stole the Nikon's focus!

# the fast go faster

aka  
**Batman kicks butt!**

After driving in a huge circle for more than half-an-hour before getting back en route, I reached the gates only to be behind the slowest Corvette I'd ever seen. Seems it wasn't his fault though; apparently when all the credit cars machines are being used things go kinda slow, so it took longer getting through the gates than it did to walk from the start line to nitro ally. And that included stopping to stand on my toes and catch a glimpse of a watch a couple of Super Pro racers do their thing, and a TV man shooting the action. Once up amongst the fuel cars I found Urs Erbacher's crew just moving out, so I wasn't really late



This crew were still hard at it with a bunch of work to do, good enough reason to go see what was happening on track, happy to find a pair of alcohol funny cars ready to race...

...maybe there was no nitro, but they can still thunder - sometimes. Steph Milam ran her first five at the Main Event, a 5.98 at 235



Losing a couple of cylinders at the hit meant no five today, but when all eight came back she hiked the front end and was gone. Sadly her 6.041, 229.33 (alongside Danny Bellio's troubled 11.48), hurt her motor and she failed to answer the call on race day



The alky floppers were on good side-by-side charge, until they got some shake, with Leif Andréasson bouncing hard – and high, all four wheels off the track captured in this great shot from [ADImages](#)



This eXtreme crop of Leif's tracks sees a crew member checking just how far her driver flew the funny car between touchdowns!

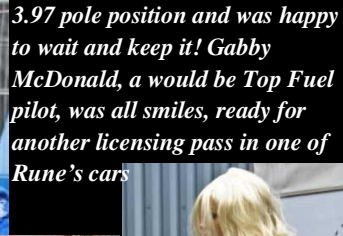


Courtesy UKDRN  
[ADImages](#)

Johan Lindberg drove to a 5.52 at 257.54, kissin' close to his earlier 5.51 at 258.16 pole numbers, with Leif slowing to a 5.87 at 199 behind his previous second place 5.63, 253.82. The first Pro Mod car dumped oil; the next pair was shut-off so I took a stroll. Some folks were smilin' and some not. But waiting over an hour alongside any race car is never fun when stood alone. Especially if you've yet to get down track under power like Top Fuel pilots Urs and Micke K! But they look relaxed – as did the Viking, sort of! He was waiting to tow Mattias Wulcan's drop dead gorgeous Firebird Pro Mod



Stig always seems to smile, much like Batman and his gang, while Chris Andrews had his 3.97 pole position and was happy to wait and keep it! Gabby McDonald, a would be Top Fuel pilot, was all smiles, ready for another licensing pass in one of Rune's cars



Seems I missed the Pro Mod Q session, but did get to see the final pair. Micke Gullqvist was well late leaving while Marc Meihuizen sped to a 6.093 at 234.70, well short of his 5.893, 242.90 pole position run from Friday. Micke Gullqvist followed, his 6.047, 222.53 run also shy of his second place 5.983 at 242.88



A glance over my shoulder showed the top fuel teams still waiting -- just like us fans



The Pro Stock cars came out and only two of the five car

field made it down track! Simon Gustafsson (left) launched hard but quit early. Thomas Lindström ran low ET of the day, 6.63 at 207.22 on a bye and moved up a position while Michael Malmgren shut off. Magnus Pettersson's failed to improve with a 6.66 at 207 alongside pole sitter Jimmy Ålund (6.55 at 213), who shook and clicked it off well early. Happily, when I looked over my shoulder, the Top Fuel cars were moving onto the track, turning to find Andy Willsheer mingling with punters in the stands!



Nikon time  
13:37:14



Thought it was weird, until ol' Nitro Nostrils explained he'd been visiting with nitro neophyte Gabby McDonald's mum, before walking on by and heading for the start line

Looking at my watch, I saw it was 37 minutes past one, the nitro cars were running well late - and so was Andy!



Andy had still not made it back to the line when, one minute later, Urs Erbacher made a burnout ahead of a much stronger one from Duncan Micallef in his Rune Fjeld Motorsports car

But he was there to get a faceful of nitro when both cars launched hard. Sadly Urs was soon in trouble and it turned into a one car thunder run



*The Maltese Lion continued to roar, marching on down the track in fine style*



*This could be when the Maltese Lion's car began to lose a three-second ET, the tyre starting to bulge as it went into shake mode – but Duncan drove it hard to a 4.02 at 303mph, yet another consistent pass for his Rune Fjeld Motorsports car. Meanwhile sever shake, pedalling' and smokin' the tyres eventually activated Urs' safety cut-out and deployed his chutes, the car cruising through the traps to a 6.12 at 131.38 with its chutes flapping in the breeze*



*Some in y'face portrait work by ol' Nostrils for long-time commentator John Price and a couple of VIP's as Santa Pod's CEO KB feels the power of my prying paparazzi eyes and turns from his chat with the Andersen's and F&A racing's head honcho Vince Andrews. Walking over to JP, he puts the VIPs into a safe area to enjoy the magic of being between a pair of blown an' injected, nitro burning monsters and Rune Fjeld covers his ears when the next fueller fires up...*

...meanwhile, Vince Andrews gets snagged by the TV crew and sucks it in for the camera as the Kaiser tells John Price he's in my sniper scope before walking away...



...then Micke Kågered thunders by with John and his VIP guests all wishing they'd been a bit quicker in putting their ear defenders on properly!

As usual, any semblance of a smile vanishes from the Kaiser's face as he takes centre stage, and the VIPs go all girly, shutting their eyes tight to keep the sound and fury of NitroThunder out as Stig stands loud on his Eye of the Storm fueler, unleashing it on a ground pounding burnout



The car is soon up on the tyres and thundering out, much to the delight of the shutterbugs soaking it all up an hoping for a kinda different shot to each other



Both cars sounded strong as they left together



They both lost a couple of cylinders at about the same time too...

...but Stig lost a bunch, smoked 'em – then grabbed some traction, pulling away from Micke K as he poured on the power...



...whoops, too much power!



Yep, w-a-y too much!



Then the Eye of a Storm made a move and Stig lifted for a 6.71, 90.88mph cruise while Micke Kågered overcame his problems, making it down track under some semblance of power with his best numbers of the weekend, a 4.25 at 264.69. Sadly the huge crowd had yet to feel the thunder from side-by-side full pulls – but that's drag racing, especially with the nitro powered beasts!



*Then the ground shook as the quickest and fastest cars at the track roared into life*



*As the Andersen Racing fueller was backing up, I recalled that it'd been a new car at the Main Event, with Batman's 3.91 at 309.23 the first full pull it made! After a pair of "marginal tracks" the team unleashed Batman again at the Turtle Wax Internationals at Tierp*

*Fans at Tierp had seen a 3.957 at 311.84 and a quicker 3.955 at 310.97 to set new FIA records – now the team were looking for more!*





Most of the Top Fuel Q images are eXtreme crops, but the images of this race are eXtra eXtreme crops as you can see from the full frame below taken before the shots at right and above



The great shot of the two fuel cars staging at right is a Snip from SantaPodTV. Check out the world's quickest American Autoparts decal

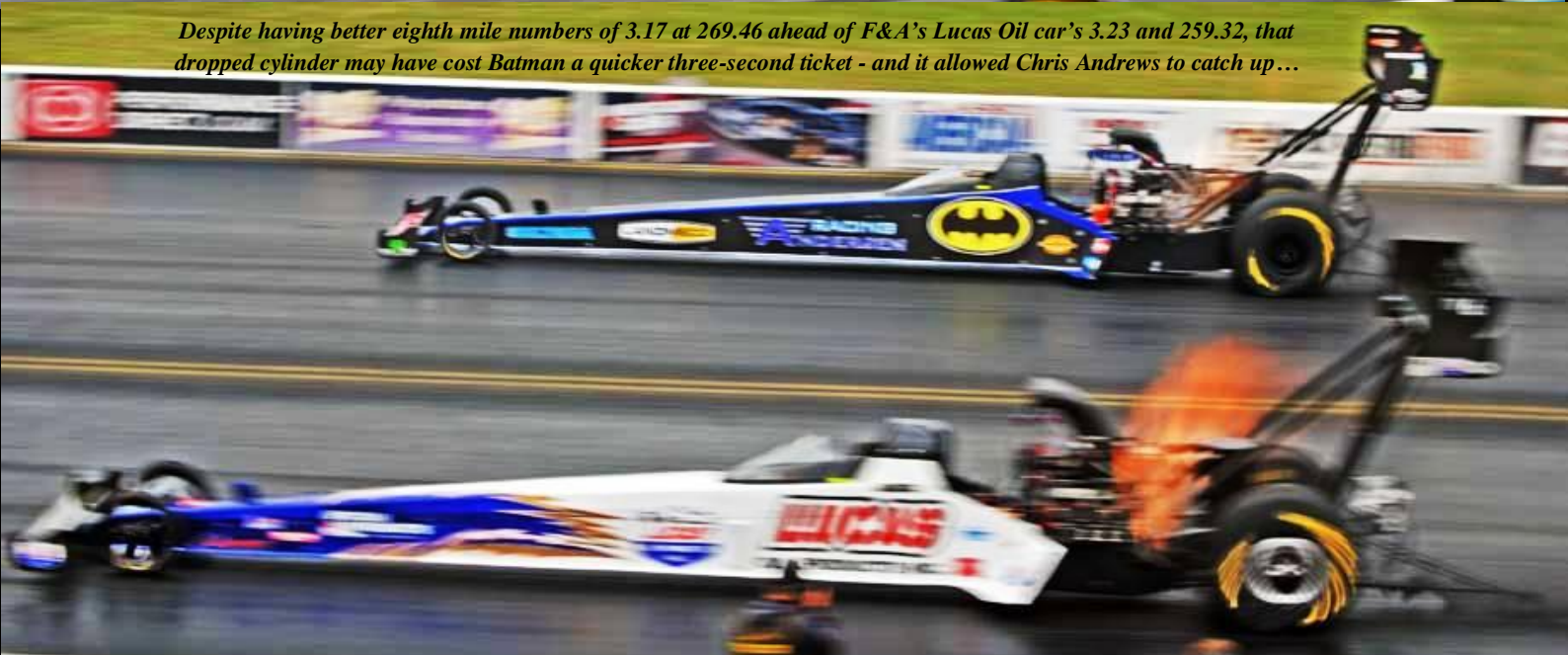


Both cars launched hard and strong, the sound and fury of Nitro Thunder filling the air, Batman's front end floating as he blasts off in pursuit of a new record Nikon time 13:47:58

*But Batman's car seems to have dropped a cylinder, yet his 0.8531 60 foot time is quicker than the 0.8907 from the Lucas Oil car which is belching NitroFire, giving ol' Nitro Nostrils a face full of eight trunks trumpeting before thundering by, the pair thrilling the wall of fans lining the banking*



*Despite having better eighth mile numbers of 3.17 at 269.46 ahead of F&A's Lucas Oil car's 3.23 and 259.32, that dropped cylinder may have cost Batman a quicker three-second ticket - and it allowed Chris Andrews to catch up...*



*...and then the Lucas Oil car began pulling away!*



*By the time the Andersen Racing car was hitting on all eight again the Lucas oil shield was definitely ahead of Batman's!*



Although my Nikon allows me to “empty a clip” at will on full auto, when the dude next door put his camera in my face (pointing the wrong way!), I raised my Nikon, forgetting all about Wojtek’s big gun which, sadly, threw my aim off and the next half-a-dozen shots were of the backs of spectator’s heads! But at least they were in focus as the (full frame) shot at right shows! Nikon time 13:48:04



Talk about a close race!

The Andersen Racing fueler thundered through the top end, with Thomas Nataas’ 3.949 (reflecting the dropped cylinder), taking pole position at a huge 316.40 mph, showing their car is the most powerful outside the USA. The Lucas car followed them home with a 4.045 at an improved speed of 297.03mph.

Fans went nuts as the numbers came up on the score boards and when, a few moments later, Karsten (left) and Per Andersen, trying hard to control their totally justified jubilation as they drove the “tow truck” down to pick up the car, were given a huge ovation from the fans packing both sides of the track.



Nikon time 13:48:48

**Santa Pod TV NEVER BELIEVE WHAT YOU READ ON THE BOX ((Especially not Santa Pod TV talk) PART ONE**

If you’d watched this on [SantaPodTV](#), you’d’ve been shown this shot of Stig Neergard’s car being covered as a soft voice said, “but sadly that was the last run before it started to rain...” - which was total bullsh\*t! As you’ve just read, Stig actually smoked his Eye of the Storm down track before Batman set his new FIA speed record at 13.48 approximately - click the link and check it out! Apart from anything else, a few moments later we heard a Top Fuel car fired up! It was a soft burnout, but as the folks in the VIP tower could attest, she launched hard, carrying the front wheel and thundering...



Nikon time 13:52:10



*It was a strong looking pass to begin, but Gabby had some problems, the car made a move and she kicked it off for a 5.47*



*Then they called for the fuel coupes – so much for rain stopping play, or racing ! Nikon time 13:54:02*



*Sadly, only one fuel coupe came out, giving fans and the happy snappers on the a line a great ground-ponding burnout*

*When Kevin Kent launched his West Ten Mustang, you knew he was off on the ride of his life. Nitro guru Bodie Smith had worked his magic and the car just got up and plain thundered, relatively speaking that is. Not to take anything away from the team who gave us the best they could with what they've got and we loved it!*



*We had wide open NitroFire all the way to the stripe, or rather orange marker poles! Either way, fans applauded when Kevin's numbers came up, his 4.4293 at 280.45mph the quickest and fastest in the first season of short track, fuel coupe racing.*



*We got a pair of fuel coupes next, with Jason Phelps once again making his burnout late, pounding the ground as Gordon Smith backed across the start line.*



*And then Jason's Team Rock Mustang left first yet- again!*





Fans thronging the banks went wild at the sights, sounds and smells of NitroThunder as the fuel coupes blasted by side-by-side with Jason just ahead. Shockwave gained an edge at the eighth - a 3.60 at 227.85 to Jason's Team Rock car, now losing ground with a 3.98 at 220.82



It ended early for both cars, Jason Phelps struggling to a 4.98 at 221.22 as Gordon Smith clicked it off to a 4.591 win at only 223.63, showing Shockwave III had power

With no nitro for awhile, it was time to seek some respite - the long-legged Auto Glym babes were a fun place to start. They also had wonderful smiles and we laughed a lot before parting. The young lady below is definitely not laughing, looking ready to lose her lunch!



My lunch at the Pit Stop café was really good, a baked potato and chilli con carne being just what I needed after a long, long morning!



Nikon time 13:43:29

Sharing a table with a family having a snack enhanced my break, thanks to Caitlin, an avid drag race fan who admired my Mongoose cap, told me she loved the nitro cars and how much she'd enjoyed the drive-in movie at Dragstalgia. My suggestion that she slept through it was not well received, but she did fall down as the left! No, she watched it all with eyes wide open, and told me she preferred Mongoose to the Snake! That's cool, as the moving finale almost made it a chick-flick! Only kidding folks, it was a great story about a pair of true legends who changed our sport forever



Couldn't believe that they're still touting the toilets as The UK's most action packed venue! Come on Pod people, get your sh\*t together, if you'll pardon the unintentional pun!



It was good to see a couple of Stig's crew able to take a break after their tough slog rebuilding the motor before the next FIA Q session. Also taking a break was old pal Björn Sundkvist, long-time commentator at Mantorp



Park, and more recently at the Pod during FIA sessions at their international meetings. While signing my Harlan Thompson magazine in which he's featured, Bjorn told me the origins of "Pig farm International," but I'll save that tale while hoping to get photographic proof. The story is a real doozy, but with an original image it'd be a forever top ten winner! We also recalled my visit to the track for one of Mantorp's famed Sko Uno Drag Fest's with Harlan's Budweiser fuel coupe team back in the day. They and Rune Fjeld's Motown team were relaxing in preparation for the final when a track official asked if they'd mind racing "right now" as, with bad weather moving in, they might not be able to run in at the scheduled time

## Harlan Thompson



Part III

# The Budweiser years

All the young dudes! Mantorp Park's Björn Sundkvist talks with Harlan and Rune Fjeld after a 6.05, 236.96 mph holeshot win over the Norwegian ace's 6.03 at 241 mph at Sweden's 1987 Sko Uno drag festival.

No problem was the instant replay, and shortly later fans were witness to one of the all-time great fuel coupe races with Harlan's holeshot (above) giving him a win with a 6.05 at 236.96mph while Rune thundered to low ET and top speed of the meeting with a blistering 6.03 at 241mph. Meanwhile back at the Pod, "Fine chance of that happening here," I'd said to Bjorn as we parted, little knowing how true that would be!



Back in the grandstand, Top Fuel cars were lined up ready to race, with the engine covered on Duncan Micallef's car to keep it warm, and in view of weather moving in from over there...

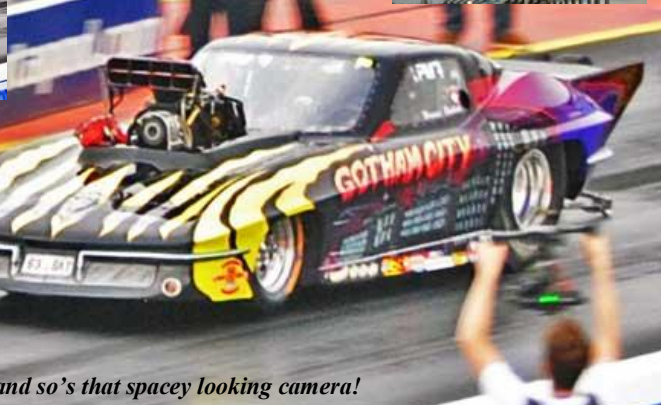


And the Pro Mods were running, having as many problems with full pulls as the fuelers! I missed Andy Robinson's 5.96 (first UK Pro Mod in the fives) at 239 alongside Freddy Fagerström, whose fabulous pick-up had problems with an 11.89 at 71.63! Same with the first pair I caught - Mattias Vulcan ran a strong 6.0 at 238.91 alongside a troubled 8.76 at 106. I was hoping for better things as the beautiful Gotham City Sting Ray made a good strong burnout...





...it left hard, but while Bruno Bader stormed to a 6.01 at 230.49, Tero Laukkanen hit bad tyre shake and slowed to an 8.22



The Sting Ray's paint-job is really wild, and so's that spacey looking camera!

And then we got a real Pro Mod brawl, side-by-side for the while quarter mile, sort of...



Marc Meihuizen Firebird got the advantage with a 0.0452 to 0.1012 light, but then Micke Gullqvist's Camaro began to thunder, hitting the eighth mile in 3.92 seconds at 190.24 to a 4.03 at 188.86 due to some sideways action from the Firebird



Wow! A race worth waiting for, with Micke G's 5.95 at a huge 242.45 just pipping Marc M's Firebird's 6.08 at 241.59 Marc Meihuizen really had to drive his car keeping it side-by-side all the way, much to fans delight







We really had been waiting as five classes had their ninth Q sessions! And the weather drew closer...

...and then Karsten Andersen was checking the track and suddenly here was Urs Erbacher's Midland Oil car on a smoky, ground-pounding burnout as the other fuelers lined up behind



Urs staged tight, NitroFire lit up the evening, with NitroThunder filling my ears as he unleashed his beast



The stands shook, bodies trembled and the car thundered as the photog's went for their shots...



...my eyes welcomed the feel of G-Max power, tears streaking my cheeks as Urs blasted past, but a haze of tyre smoke signalled the end, even though it was his quickest run of the weekend!



Sadly it was too little, too late, the racing put on hold for "sprinkles" - and that's when then put the covers over Stig's car Mr TV Talker! But they still hadn't called the race yet



Nikon time 19:44:18  
17:07:40



These three images cover about 20 seconds and they were absolutely awesome!

The last big buzz came from a nitro warm-up from the Lucas Oil car, and it was AA amazing

The day began with me getting lost and ended, almost, with me walking away from nitro for the first time - but I went straight back a milli second later, and continued to savour every eye watering second of Nitro Overload until the team hit the kill switch. Oh boy! Even ol' Nitro Nostrils had walked away early as, without a blower under the awning, we were stood deep in a cloud of the most powerful speed accessory in the world, G-Max Nitro! Thing is, it'd really hit me, and I decided to have a cigarette. If it made me cough, I'd got a problem, if not things were okay, and they were, which was cool! You can see how heavy the nitro was - far out!



### NEVER BELIEVE WHAT YOU READ ON THE BOX (Especially not Santa Pod TV talk) PART TWO

Despite what they said on Santa Pod's one hour highlights show on MotorsTV about the rain, as you've seen, we had a bunch of racing action afterwards, including Q sessions from all the other FIA classes after the Top Fuel Q session, the second round of Fuel Coupe qualifying. (There were also the NINTH Q sessions for cars including Junior Dragsters, which seems a tad too much give the fact that we were later told folks had been watching the weather radar for some time!) And then of course there were the bikes, but in truth, it didn't "rain" until much later, although racing was stopped due to "sprinkles" shortly after 5pm following Urs Erbacher's up-in-smoke cruise through with a 5.24 at 142.51mph. It was his best run of the weekend, made more than three hours after Batman's awesome thunder run! And racing wasn't called off for another three hours! Just after the "rain stopped play" announcement on the TV show we heard "When it rains on the track, how do you adjust your driving?" The question asked of Thomas Nataas by Santa Pod's new TV announcer Louise after she'd just seen him run a 3.94, setting a new European speed record of 316.40mph! Maybe someone forgot to tell her that blown an' injected nitro burning monsters only do it in the dry! Whatever, much like the bullsh\*t which we've heard over the short track era from DC Br\*\*\*\*rd concerning "3.80's" it still continues with the all new beels and whistles "future of drag racing" LIVE TV shows. Actually, with all the well placed cameras, the show did look quite good and even sounded okay, apart from much of the commentary - in short, Santa Pod TV Talk sucks...

**Santa Pod TV talk eXtra...** "Urs started out the season with a two car team with Noah Stutz, Noah's now gone to race in the States, but Urs stuck it out with us guys here in Europe..." Mr TV Talker had told us before the final. Yeah right, then how come I standing hear smoking one of his Marlboro after F&A's end of day nitro warm-up! As Sgt Joe Friday used to say, "Just the facts ma'am" - please! Meanwhile, thanks to the TV team for trying, and providing the most entertaining Pod show ever! And a special thanks to all the nitro warriors, we know you want it more than we do, and we are aware of just how hard it is to make it all work in the oh-so short world of thousand foot NitroThunder

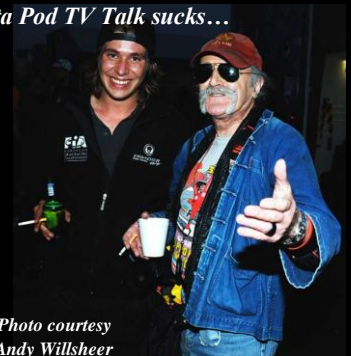


Photo courtesy  
Andy Willsheer



Worst ever signage placement award stays with SPR for the above!



Viva Las Vegas! Although young Noah DNQ'd in the quickest ever NHRA Top Fuel field, he ran a trio of three's with a best of 3.876 at 315.19, placing him 19 out of 22 with a 3.835 bump spot! The quickest & fastest teenager on the planet perhaps - at least on the short track! Way to go Noah



Once again the American Autoparts crew were guests of F&A Racing / Lucas Oil Products, but Wojtek's perch was the mid-track suite, which, I feel, affords better photographic opportunities than the start line balcony



Not only can you hear the power as the fuel cars leave the line, you can almost feel it. And when they blast past in search of 300mph it's kind've mind-blowing when they're side-by-side! Trouble is, even with the short track, that type of Top Fuel racing is hard to come by at the Pod, even though the teams are all out there hoping for a full pull on each pass – but that's drag racing! It didn't happen here - Stig left first but was slowed by tyre shake, leaving Micke Kågered to take an easy win with a 4.11 at 280.40



Duncan Micallef slowed down a tad from his 300mph pace, but still ran 4.02 at 295.86 for an easy win over Tethys  
  
Chris Andrews put the Lucas Oil ahead at the hit, but severe tyre shake and a pedal job blew the blower relief panel, the safety cut-out popping his chutes while Urs Erbacher ran a second quicker than his previous run with 4.19 at 283.94



Any chance of Thomas Nataas backing up his 3.94 for a record went up in smoke early, but his bye run gave him and the Andersen's a second straight FIA championship with a 4.99 at 143.03 – way to go Batman!



NitroFire from the bikes is different, but still great to see and feel



Just like their two earlier races, Jason Phelps was out of the gate first, but he encountered tyre shake and slowed as Gordon Smith moved on with a 4.44 at 273. Kevin Kent had a bye, hit problems and coasted through



Pro Mod saw a great side-by-side battle, with Mattias Wolcan's 5.96 at 240.30 taking out Bruno Bader 6.02 at 233.65 in the Gotham City Sting Ray. Wojtek also caught the start of the first race of eliminations, an amazing duel between David Vegter and Micke Gullqvist. Happily SantaPodTV's main man put the sequences behind the Kaiser's end of show chat rather than showing his profile as has always been the case in previous years. As you can see from the Snips below, they were far more entertaining for viewers any day of the week. David Vegter's MPM car took the win with a 7.20 at 204.42 over Micke G's 7.34 at 196.27



SantaPodTV also showed the wild rides above from the first round – click the link and it out, you'll enjoy the ride, honest! Fans also saw another great side-by-side match when Marc Meihuizen's 6.05 at 241.17mph took out Roger Johansson's 6.06, 237.69. That win gave Mattias Wolcan the FIA Pro Mod title



The AAP crew were going to lunch when Wojtek heard the sound of eight trunks trumpeting as the fuelers fired up, ran into the stands and grabbed these great action shots. The images have all been given eXtreme crops. ML doesn't like the spelling, but the full-frame mini-photos show just how eXtreme the crops are!



It had taken some time to locate ol' Nitro Nostrils with whom I'd left Wojtek's big lens – but that's cool, as he got it hooked up just in time for some in y'face action and some NitroThunder!



Wow - talk about asleep at the wheel!

Duncan Micallef strapped this gi-normous 0.0674 to 0.2518 holeshot on Urs and was off and thundering with a car length lead!



Urs was still carrying the front wheels a car-length later, and you can almost hear him screaming to his car, "Go, go, go," - in Swiss of course!

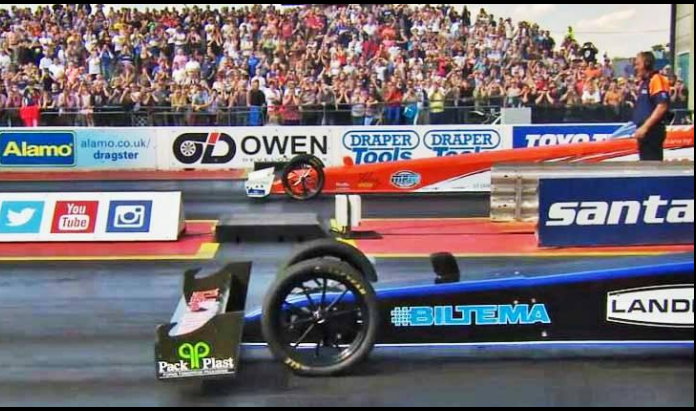
Unfortunately, Wojtek's Nikon only takes four shots before "going to sleep" for a few seconds, and by the time it woke up the cars were through the lights! However, thanks to SantaPodTV, here are Snips of the Maltese Lion's fireball, and the result – just love today's technology!



To say Urs got lucky is an understatement, but he won the race, giving him a shot at another FIA Finals title. More than that, his pleas worked, the run giving his best numbers of the weekend, 4.21 at 281.99



Then Wojtek was "taken" to Lunch! Mind you, I missed the fuelers "LIVE" too, but tuned in later to catch the replay on SantaPodTV and made more Snips



Batman also took a huge hole shot 0.0586 to Micke K's 0.1061, and then he too got lucky, having to drive the car straight...



...while Batman was smokin' an' sliding, Micke K was thundering and coming on like a freight train! But Batman's holeshot was enough to take the win with a 4.33 at 219.12 over Micke Kägered's 4.30 at 250 by just 0.0169seconds



Had this been on the a good ol' quarter mile – well our in-car view shows Micke K's orange car blasting by at the old mark!





Oops, I got those runs the wrong way round! Batman and Micke K ran first, with down-time for a cleanup after Duncan Micallef went k'boom! Oops indeed, but there y'go - the layouts are done an' dusted! At left is the official announcement on SantaPodTV's LIVE show as one of Gabby McDonald's crew checks the track surface. Shortly later, Gabby came out in her Rune Fjeld Motorsports fueler, hoping to make her final pass to gain a Top Fuel licence



You just know those Irish eyes were smiling as she rolled out and made her burnout – and boy did she kick butt! The yellow blur at right is ol' Nitro Nostril's shooting the image below, thanks Andy



mcSnips courtesy  
SantaPodTV  
Santa Pod  
TV



Photo courtesy Andy Willisheer



Gabby was on a pass, hitting the eighth with a 3.24flat at 246.33, and then problems set in. She lost a cylinder, pedaled then started mixing 'em up as you can see from these Snips, yet she still clocked a 4.11 at 266.55mph – the quickest run of the afternoon, and third quickest of the day!

**Congratulations and good luck to Gabby McDonald FIA licensed Top Fuel pilot and ready to race!**



Sadly those facts never made it to SantaPodTV, even when they used her car for PR purposes behind the Kaiser's words! Thing is, without the malfunction, Gabby would've been a real four zero hero!



*I've always thought bike racers are nuts – but you just know they have a ball with wild rides like these, but the wheelie above probably cost him the race!*



*Huge smokey burnouts are said to aid traction, but in this case it was just a thrill for the fans as you can see below...*



*The FIA Pro Stock championship battle came down to this race, and Jimmy Ålund's blue car led from the hit, and his stout 6.57 at 211.10 beat Magnus Pettersson's 6.63 at 208.00 to win the title by a tenth and a half. Having that happen in the final race of the year made for an exciting Pro Stock season!*



*Although Sweden's Johan Lindberg had won the FIA alcohol Funny Car title and qualified on the pole at the US Nats and again here at the Pod. In the final he met second generation rookie racer Gareth Ellis, who'd qualified third in the six-car field with personnel best of 5.698 at 250.99mph. As you can see from Wojtek's shot, the FIA champ had problems at the hit and got sideways, leaving Ellis to get his first event win with a 5.774 at 249.59*





The FIA's top alcohol title was won by Chris Polidano, but the Habermann brothers made it through to the final, but Timo's car fired on its own. After the burnout, the car was backed up carrying a Union Jack in tribute to the Pod fans that'd been so supportive of the two teams. Then he made a wild wheels-up launch



Timo's still wide open and haulin' the mail here, but he soon clicked it off and cruised on through for the win



FIA Top Fuel champion Thomas Nataas ended his season in style with an almost laid back 4.02 at 303.85. Urs Erbacher was mixing cylinders from the hit – and hidden by that VIP pole!



Then Urs shook the tyres, following Batman through the lights with a 4.28 at 285.72



Sadly Per and Karsten Andersen, and Thomas Nataas announced they were retiring from racing – which is a real bummer for us nitro lovin' fans. Still I guess we should be grateful for the years of power performance they've shown and wish them well



It was bad enough that the European Nitro Funny Car series only had three cars, but even less of a thrill when the Shockwave fuel coupe did not answer the call. Kevin Kent did his best for the fans, starting with a strong burnout





These VIP fans seem to be enjoying the spectacle, but drag racers are meant to do it in pairs!



Regular fans got to feel the sound of NitroThunder – but not for long as Kevin clicked it off early to a 4.55 at 241mph



Getting quite fond of that VIP lamp post – not! Wojtek shot the launch, and once again these Snips from SantaPodTV show that the Pro Modified final was a doozy – love the Snip at right



Newly crowned FIA Pro Mod champ Mattias Wulcan won a pedal fest final with a 10.36. Both cars were out of shape and Marc Meihuizen was disqualified for hitting the wall and crossing the centre line

All FIA race data courtesy  
[Eurodragster.com](http://Eurodragster.com)  
[eurodragster.com](http://eurodragster.com)

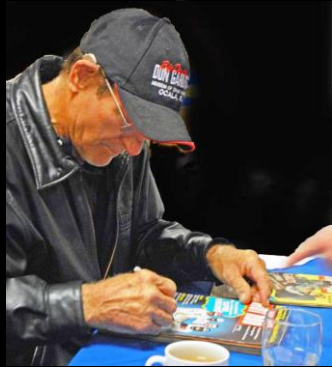
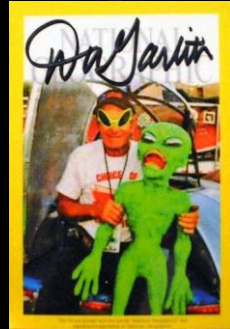
# Wow dudes!

Presented by TJ Zizzo and Rustoleom  
courtesy LithyKoonProductions and espn



Talk about cool – following a “gi-normous” explosion those were the words uttered by TJ Zizzo during his first round ride at the US Nationals. “Wow Dudes” indeed. We’ll have an in-depth look at this conflagration next time; God willing an’ the cr’k don’t rise

The sunset below was shot at Santa Pod; inside the VIP suite, Big Daddy Don Garlits had just finished talking to a bunch of lucky fans while I’d been stuck in a horrendous traffic jam back in London. No problem, at least I’d not been involved in the incident which caused it. Whilst I was there Don signed copies of his book for the guests (it’s a great read), and many other items including this pile of Hot Rod magazines one fan had bought, many featuring Big Daddy on the cover. I too had some photos signed for future viewing, but for now here’s a shot of Don with a pal at the US Nats



# COMING EVENTS

*(With thanks to Classic American and Custom Car Magazines, from where most dates have been taken)*



*"For Britain and the Hell of It," a major exhibition of British Land Speed Record cars, is running at The National Motor Museum, Beaulieu, Brockenhurst, Hants SO42 7ZN until March 2015 (Call 01590 612345 or [www.beaulieu.co.uk](http://www.beaulieu.co.uk))*

**January 10-11, 2015**

*Ultimate Custom Show, (cars, trucks and bikes), Manchester Central, Manchester M2 3GX (01775 768661 or [www.ultimatecustomshow.co.uk](http://www.ultimatecustomshow.co.uk))*

**April 3**

*American, Hot Rod and Custom Car and Bike Show, Horndean Showground, Five Heads Road, Horndean, Hants PO8 9NZ ([www.route-a3.co.uk](http://www.route-a3.co.uk))*

