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Notes From the Pro Mod Reporter's Notebook

by Jim Luikens

The 2013 NHRA Pro Mod Drag Racing Series has now reached the halfway point of its season with the completion of the Ford NHRA Thunder Valley Nationals presented by the Tri-Cities Area Ford Dealers at Bristol Dragway. I thought it would be interesting to look back and see what could be gleaned from the Pro Mod results during the first half of the season.

I was immediately struck by the incredible parity between the three engine combinations — supercharged, turbocharged, and nitrous — that are accepted in competition. History has shown that it is very difficult to achieve parity between different engine combinations when they are allowed to compete in the same heads-up class; however, it sure looks like Pro Mod rules makers have got it right. Through the first five races, there have been two supercharged winners, two turbocharged winners, and one nitrous winner. I'd call that nearly a dead heat.

The No. 1 qualifying position has been the exclusive territory of just two drivers, Danny Rowe and Mike Castellana, who have split all five No. 1s. Rowe's (supercharged) three poles barely beat out Castellana's (nitrous) two poles. Interestingly, all five No. 1 times have held up for the low e.t. of the event.

The turbo-powered entries really shine when it comes to recording top speed of the event. So far, four of the five top speeds have been recorded by a turbocharged car this season. Rowe claimed the fifth top speed with his supercharged entry.

Taking a look at the points sheet reveals a similar parity. Slightly more than 100 points separate the top 10 drivers at the halfway point. Last year's champion, Troy Coughlin, finds himself atop the chart with 366 points. Coughlin has a very impressive score of three final rounds in the first five events, including a win in Charlotte.

Just 10 points behind him is the series' most recent winner, Rickie Smith. Although Bristol was Smith's only final-round appearance so far this year, strong finishes at other races have propelled him all the way up to the No. 2 position.

Third-place Kenny Lang is roughly one round of racing behind Smith. Lang has two final-round appearances so far this year driving a '63 Corvette that is owned by fellow Canadian Al Billes. Lang still owns the '69 Camaro that he campaigned last year and the '53 Corvette that won the first Pro Mod event on the NHRA tour ever in Gainesville. That means one turbocharged, one nitrous, and one



supercharged entry hold down the top three positions in the points standings. More evidence of the strong parity that currently exists in the class.

The supercharged entries of Englishtown winner Mike Janis and low e.t. man Rowe are tied for fourth place in the standings. Rowe would most likely be higher in points had he not missed eliminations in Englishtown after qualifying No. 1 to attend a high school graduation.

Just three points behind Janis and Rowe in another supercharged entry is Gainesville winner Von Smith. After Smith, only 10 points separate the drivers seventh through 10th. Castellana is seventh with 260 points, and Houston winner Clint Satterfield is eighth with 258 points. Chip King is just one point behind Satterfield in ninth with 257 points, and Pete Farber rounds out the top 10 with 250 points. Further back are Mike Knowles, Steve Matussek, Chris Juliano, Eric Dillard, and Michigan's Harold Martin.

Only one race (Norwalk) remains before Pro Mod competitors take a two-month summer break. They will return to race at Indy and then two more times in September and once in October to finish the season. If the first half of the season is any indication, the championship race will be close all the way to the finish. Stay tuned for a thrilling conclusion.

