

NATIONAL

ISSUE 19 ★ VOLUME 54 ★ SEPTEMBER 20, 2013



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PERIODICALS

DELIVER BY SEPTEMBER 20, 2013

Notes From the Pro Mod Reporter's Notebook

by Jim Luikens

With the recently completed Chevrolet Performance U.S. Nationals behind them, NHRA Pro Mod Drag Racing Series teams have just three events remaining on their schedule. At the three-quarter mark of the popular 250-mph doorslammer season, the championship race is starting to take shape.

Primarily as a result of his strong performances in the last three races, Rickie Smith has recorded 572 points so far and handily leads the pack. His points total provides him a comfortable 98-point lead over second-place Troy Coughlin, who is not near as secure; he has five drivers within 97 points of him. Nothing is ever over until it's over, but it's good to be Smith right now. By the way, Smith has promised his wife that he will retire at the end of this season no matter how it turns out.

The No. 1 question on everyone's mind this week was, "How is Tim Tindle?" Tindle was released from Indianapolis' Methodist Hospital on Sept. 5. Anyone who has seen his crash finds it hard to believe that he was able to leave his race car under his own power, much less walk away with no broken bones or anything worse.

Tindle's incident happened during his first-round match with Coughlin. His car was loose from the start of the run, and he was forced to make bigger and bigger steering corrections. Nearing the finish line, Tindle's car suddenly darted toward the left guardwall and impacted it severely, resulting in several barrel rolls. His damaged Camaro finally landed upright but outside the wall.

It was Tindle's second race driving a Danny Rowe Camaro, and he had qualified strongly in fifth place with a 6.006 at 242.71 mph.



Tim Tindle

Tindle's original plan was to finish out the season with Danny Rowe Racing and running the entire 2014 season with the team. Only time will tell if this incident changes his plans.

Earlier that day, Tindle told me that his son, T.J., is being groomed for future Pro Mod competition. Currently, T.J. is competing in a '67 Mustang that was built by Jeffers Pro Cars and is being tutored by well-known Pro Mod racer Quain Stott as he accumulates seat time.

Twenty-four Pro Mod drivers attempted to qualify for this year's Big Go, and several were new, or nearly new, to the series: Kevin Fiscus, Kevin Rivenbark, Eric Latino, Jimmy Widener, Jason Hamstra, and Doug Winters were among those getting their feet wet in NHRA competition. Rumors are that the series will see more newcomers this season with several high-profile first-timers arriving in 2014, including a current NHRA world champion from another class.

Event runner-up Smith qualified No. 1 at 5.963, and Hamstra, in his new Mustang, was the bump man at 6.123. That means the top 16 qualifiers were within .16-second. Even more amazing was that the No. 24 qualifier, newcomer Winters, recorded a 6.325, a mere .20-second from making the field. It looks like Pro Stock parity has come to Pro Mod.

Craig Cawte (pronounced Caught), of Cranbrook, B.C., was driving the ex-Jay Payne/Rick Stivers '68 Camaro at the U.S. Nationals. During his final qualifying attempt, his right door choose to take flight during the run. A rush to find a replacement door was negated when Cawte was eventually bumped out of the program. His best run of 6.127 seconds left him just .004-second short of making the field. By the way, his Camaro almost looks like a pure Stocker compared to some of the more aerodynamic Camaros that have been built recently.

The Pro Mod traveling circus moves on to zMAX Dragway in Charlotte Sept. 13-15 for the Carlyle Tools NHRA Carolina Nationals presented by NAPA Auto Parts.



Craig Cawte