

NATIONAL

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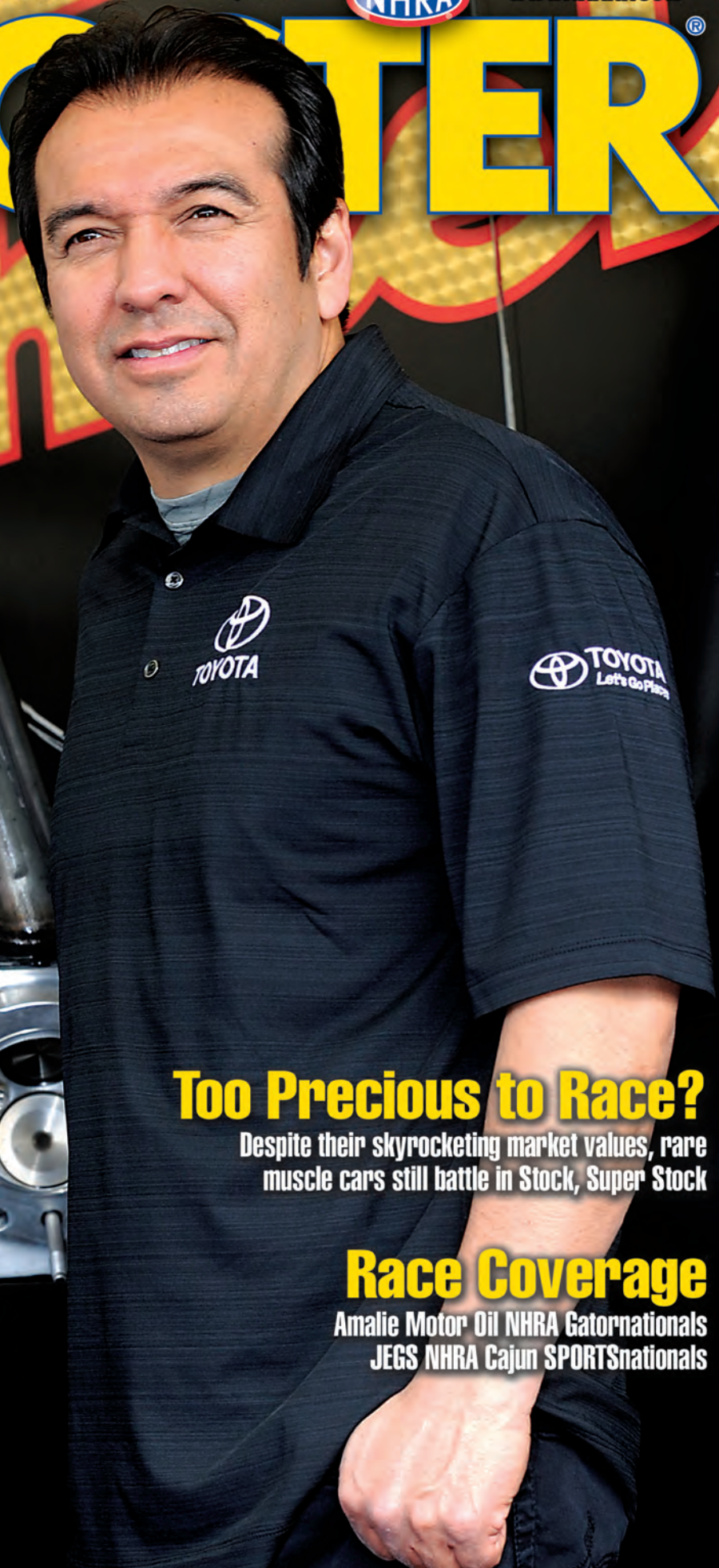


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DRAGSTER

STILL FIGHTING

Seven years removed from his last title, Tony Pedregon remains true to his roots



Too Precious to Race?

Despite their skyrocketing market values, rare muscle cars still battle in Stock, Super Stock

Race Coverage

Amalie Motor Oil NHRA Gatornationals
JEGS NHRA Cajun SPORTSnationals

\$3.95 NationalDragster.net

PERIODICALS

DELIVER BY APRIL 11, 2014

Notes From the Pro Mod Reporter's Notebook

by Jim Luikens

The ever-upward trend that the NHRA Pro Mod Drag Racing Series exhibited in 2013 carried over unabated into 2014. Thirty-nine teams have committed to run the entire 2014 season, and 27 of them were on hand at the Amalie Motor Oil NHRA Gatornationals competing for one of the 16 available starting berths. Von Smith was a no-show because his pre-entered car was delayed returning from the Winter Series in Qatar.

Interest in support for the series continues to grow as well. Redhorse Performance, a manufacturer of high-quality performance hoses and fittings in the Midwest, is the latest to announce its involvement. It joined J&A Services, JEGS, Precision Turbo & Engine, Offwire, and Aeromotive as sponsors this year. A very high-profile sponsor is also rumored to be close to committing to the series.

Just like at the majority of Pro Mod events last year, it was a turbocharged entry that set top speed of the meet, at 251.16 mph; however, this time it was a turbo with a twist because the high-mph distinction came from a nonqualifying entry. Harry Hruska, owner of Precision Turbo & Engine, returned to the series at this event with the same '68 Camaro that was previously driven by Brad Personnett. Don Walsh, of Wixom, Mich., is the new team driver, and his 5.981 qualifying time left him 20th on the chart, four spots away from making the starting field.



Don Walsh

For his part, Hruska was pleased with the outing. While the car did not qualify, he felt that the team had a good outing overall. The car is a previous winner on the NHRA Pro Mod tour, in Las Vegas in 2010, and obviously made good power in its return in Gainesville. Hruska said that the car was trying to tell them something, but there just wasn't enough time to figure out what it was saying. He also continued to hint of something big to come soon. He wouldn't divulge what it is, but at least now he has allowed that he has the Bristol race targeted as its debut event.

Danny Rowe's 250.55-mph run in Gainesville was the fastest of the blown cars

and just a tick behind Walsh's pace-setting 251.16. In an understatement, Rowe allowed that Jimmy Rector, his highly renowned crew chief, found some more power during the off-season. In eliminations, Rowe defeated Dan Stevenson in the first round with a 5.949 before meeting new teammate Steve Matusek in round two. There, a 5.919 was good enough to hold off Matusek's 5.996. Rowe lost in round three to eventual runner-up Rickie Smith.

The Canadian contingent was out in force with five cars on the property. Three of the five cars qualified, and Ontario's Eric Latino was the best of the three with a No. 7 qualifying effort. His top qualifying speed of 248.16 mph was the second-fastest of the supercharged cars, behind only Rowe. Latino was quick to credit Paulo D'alimonte, his crew chief, for the team's good results. D'alimonte joined the Latino team after serving time with Canadian stars Raymond Commisso and Tony Pontieri.

After a long off-season of hard work, Clint Satterfield and his ace sidekick, Bob Gardner, saw all of their work result in a disappointing best qualifying time of 6.572 seconds, which left them 27th, and last, on the sheet. Satterfield and Gardner can take solace in that the next event on the tour, the O'Reilly Auto Parts NHRA Spring Nationals presented by Super Start Batteries in Houston, is one of the shortest tows from their home base in Albuquerque, N.M. They are the defending event champions in Houston, and hopefully better days and better times are right around the (800-plus-mile) corner. **ND**



Eric Latino