

NATIONAL

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DRAGSTER

SITTIN' DOWN WITH BROWN

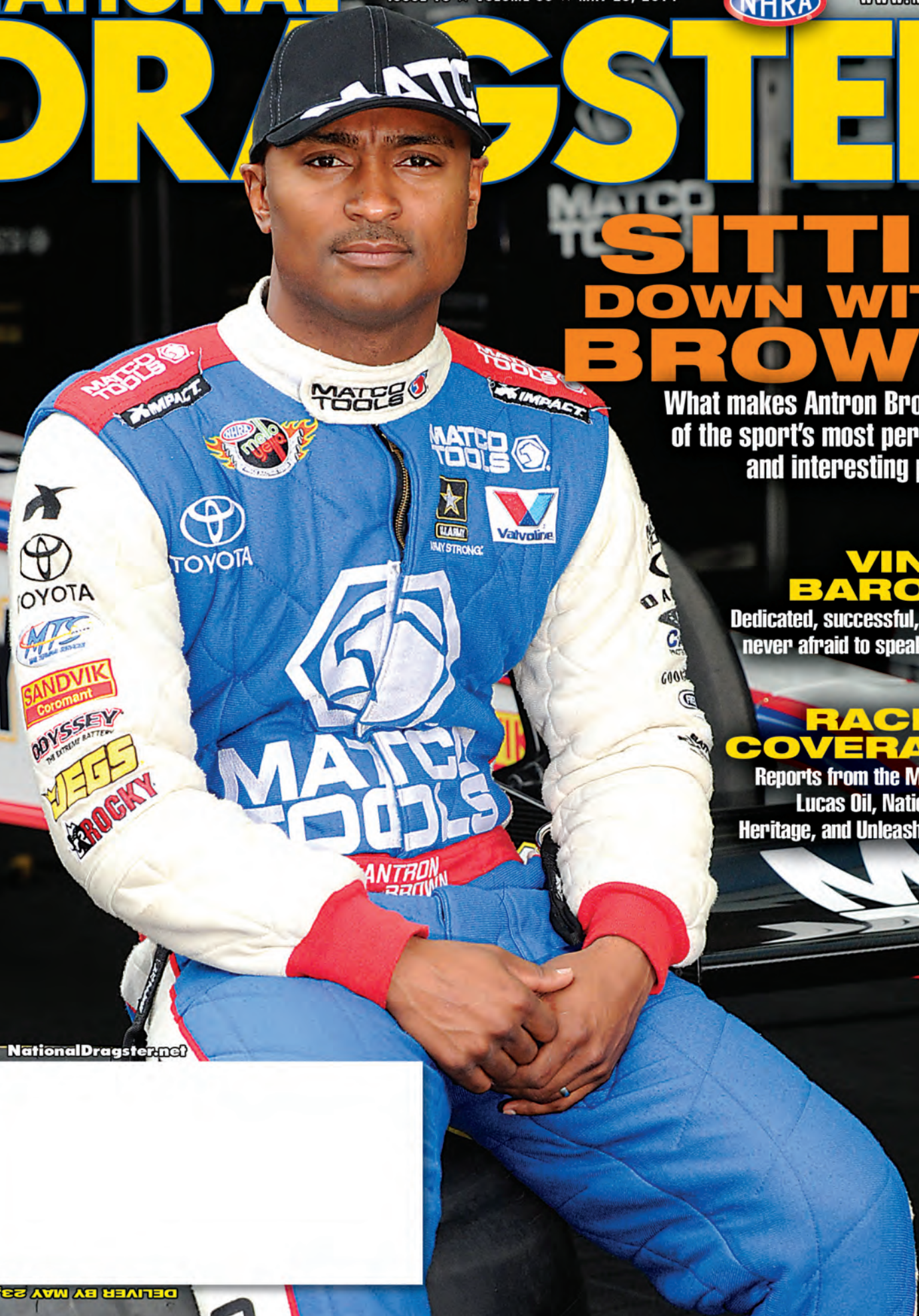
What makes Antron Brown one of the sport's most personable and interesting people?

VINNY BARONE

Dedicated, successful, and, yep, never afraid to speak his mind

RACING COVERAGE

Reports from the Mello Yello, Lucas Oil, National Open, Heritage, and Unleashed series



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PERIODICALS

DELIVER BY MAY 23, 2014

Notes from the Pro Mod Reporter's Notebook

by Jim Luikens

J&A Service, a leader in oil and gas well servicing and exploration, was the presenting sponsor of the Pro Mod class in Houston. J&A is owned by Jim and Annie Whiteley, both successful NHRA alcohol racers, of Grand Junction, Colo. J&A was the first of several presenting sponsors that have committed to presenting an NHRA Pro Mod event in 2014. Houston is one of only two NHRA Pro Mod Series events that are held west of the Mississippi River, although the St. Louis event comes awful close to that famous dividing point.

Steven Whiteley has joined his famous father and mother behind the racing wheel of a third J&A entry this year. For Steven, his vehicle of choice is a '68 Camaro Pro Mod entry. He was defeated in the first round in Houston by last year's champ, Rickie Smith, but actually went to round two in his debut event in Gainesville last month. Father Jim couldn't be happier that he is doing something with his son that they both enjoy so much.

It was the Mike and Mike show in the final round when Gainesville winner Mike Castellana faced off with Mike Janis in an all-late-model Camaro matchup. Janis won his first race of the 2014 season with a 5.927-second run while Castellana's quicker 5.904 was negated by his -.009 red-light. Castellana had won this race back in 2011 and was



Steven Whiteley

looking to add a second Wally from Houston to his impressive collection.

Don Walsh, driving Harry Hruska's Precision Turbo & Engine early model Camaro, set top speed of the event for the second straight race; however, this time the event results were much better. In Gainesville, his 251.16 blast held up for top speed despite not qualifying, but in Houston, his 250.51 top speed was recorded in a first-round win over Jim Laurita, who was the No. 1 qualifier for the second time in the last four Pro Mod races (dating back to St. Louis last year). Laurita is another competitor who is overdue for a breakthrough event.

Many trackside observers felt that Saturday

night's first round of eliminations was the most competitive round of Pro Mod ever. Of the eight races that made up the first round, six were clean runs that were decided by a tenth of a second or less. Each race was a thrilling side-by-side battle in which the winner was not obvious to the naked eye. A seventh run had a difference of only .017-second, and the eighth was effectively a bye run when one car broke after staging.

The Danny Rowe Racing entries of Danny Rowe, a winner in Houston in 2010 and 2012, and Steve Matusek had an impressive outing. Each reached the third round, which meant that they made up two of the four semifinalists. Unfortunately for them, both drivers lost in that round and came up just short of putting one or both cars in the final round.

Among the 11 nonqualifiers in Houston were high-profile racers such as Raymond Comisso, Jim Whiteley, 2013 winner Clint Satterfield, Kenny Lang, Chip King, Robert Patrick Jr., Bill Glidden, and Todd Tutterow.

More than 75 racers have now expressed an interest in being a part of NHRA Pro Mod racing, with Patrick the most recent to commit to running the entire season. The fields for the next two events, Atlanta and Englishtown, are over capacity at 104.2 and 104.5 percent, respectively, while the entry percentage for Bristol sits at exactly 100 percent.

Castellana left Houston with the points lead because of his two final-round appearances so far this year. Janis, Smith, Rowe, and Matusek round out the top five. **ND**



Steve Matusek