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# Notes From the Pro Mod Reporter's Notebook

by Jim Luikens

It was all Rickie Smith in Atlanta this year. The reigning NHRA Pro Mod Drag Racing Series champion earned his first victory of the 2014 season on the back of a booming 5.795-second qualifying run that earned him the pole position at the Summit Racing Equipment NHRA Southern Nationals. That run matched up with a speed of 250.13 mph, which held up for best of the meet. It was the first time in the last two seasons that a nitrous-equipped car snagged top speed of the meet.

In the first round Saturday night, Smith stepped up yet again to an even-better 5.778 at 250.04 mph to defeat Chip King. Monday's eliminations, delayed by rain from Sunday, saw Smith record consistent elapsed times of 5.814, 5.838, and, in the final, 5.828, which was enough to defeat a slowing Von Smith.

Von was a surprise finalist after his 5.976 placed him only 15th on the final qualifying sheet. He then earned his way to the final round thanks to some outstanding driving that included recording both the first- and second-quickest reaction times of the meet in the class. He notched a .021 reaction time in his first-round victory over Jim



Kevin Fiscus

Laurita, then recorded a .016 in his semifinal defeat of Kevin Fiscus.

Danny Rowe drove to yet another semifinal finish with wins over Mike Janis (who had won the previous event) and Steven Whiteley. Rowe qualified a strong fourth with an elapsed time of 5.872 seconds, and there is no doubt that his renowned crew chief, Jimmy Rector, will have him and teammate Steve Matussek final-round bound in the near future.

The Precision Turbo & Engine Camaro of Don Walsh continued to show improvement. In Gainesville, Walsh qualified 20th despite recording top speed of the meet at his first event of the year. At the next event, in Houston, he made his first start of the year as the No. 16 qualifier and earned a first-round win. In Atlanta, he jumped all the way up to 10th in the final qualifying standings and made his second start of the 2014 season. A first-round loss to

Gainesville winner Mike Castellana marked the end of his day, but his progress curve is definitely trending in the right direction.

Illinois racer Dan Stevenson had an up-and-down weekend. He qualified 12th in his nitrous-powered '13 Camaro but hit both walls in a first-round matchup with Whiteley. Despite the apparent severity of the crash, word is that the car has already been repaired and is not expected to miss any stops on the 2014 NHRA Pro Mod tour.

Billy Glidden was a nonqualifier when his 6.006 best left him just outside of the all-five-second qualified field. He and his wife, Shannon, worked very hard to make the field, but their 840-cid engine, probably the smallest nitrous-equipped powerplant in the field, was not up to the task in the damp Atlanta air. To add to their challenges, they are campaigning a 10-year-old Mark Pawuk Pro Stock chassis that has been reskinned with a Mustang body for Pro Mod.

All Pro Mod cars sported windshield banners from Protect The Harvest, which became the latest supporter of the NHRA Pro Mod Series. **ND**



Billy Glidden