

NATIONAL

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# DRAGSTER

## THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

*The future looks bright for Pro Stock  
Motorcycle rider Scotty Pollacheck*

### BROTHER'S KEEPERS

*The Hools have built one of the  
best Top Alcohol Funny Car teams  
in the country*

### EVENT COVERAGE:

- NHRA Toyota Nationals
- New England Hot Rod Reunion
- NHRA National Opens
- NHRA Unleashed - Indy





# Notes from the Pro Mod Reporter's Notebook

by Jim Luikens

For the second straight year, Rickie Smith is the NHRA Pro Mod champion. He put the exclamation point on his championship season with a win at the Pro Mod season finale in Las Vegas. Last year, Smith proclaimed that he would retire if he won the championship but then reversed himself and decided to come back for at least another season. This year, he refused to be pinned down about his future plans, but he certainly looked a lot more ready to retire now than he did a year ago.

NHRA announcer Brian Lohnes co-hosted the Pro Mod Championship Banquet with journalist Wes Buck. The banquet followed the conclusion of Sunday's racing activities and was held at the Monte Carlo Resort & Casino. The top-10 drivers in the points standings were recognized, and the top-three points earners took the stage to receive their checks and share a few comments about their 2014 seasons.

Special awards were handed out to Steven Whiteley (Rookie of the Year), Jim Bell (Most Improved Driver of the Year), and Steve Petty (Crew Chief of the Year). Steve Matussek was this year's winner of Pro Mod's highest honor, the Steve Engel: Big Guy, Big Heart Award. Sponsor Appreciation plaques



Richard Snavelly

were also presented, and every driver in attendance received a bottle of Agave Underground Tequila.

A special highlight of the evening was a skit by Lohnes that outlined the "10 things that you did not hear Rickie Smith say in 2014." Counting up from No. 10, Lohnes provided a humorous take on some of Smith's more famous pronouncements from the last racing season, including this jewel, which received the greatest response: "50 pounds; is that all? Sweeeeeeet!"

The other drivers who had a

mathematical chance at the points title going into the final race were Troy Coughlin, Mike Janis, and Von Smith. Janis cut the contenders to three when he surprisingly failed to qualify. However, it all became a moot point for the other two drivers when Rickie Smith won his second-round matchup, thereby locking out anyone else from claiming the 2014 title.

NHRA's Tom Compton and Graham Light were in attendance, and during his remarks, Compton expressed his support for the series, noting that five years have already elapsed since Pro Mod was introduced into NHRA competition, and he invited everyone present to stay tuned as he proclaimed that big things are coming.

Smith and fellow driver Don Walsh provided an interesting footnote to the 2014 season: Smith began his season driving a new-style '13 Camaro before switching to a '69 Camaro at the Chevrolet Performance U.S. Nationals, and Walsh started the season driving a first-generation '68 Camaro before switching to a fifth-generation '14 Camaro at the same event.

A total of 43 different drivers

earned points during the 2014 NHRA Pro Mod season. That figure continues an upward trend that has seen participation grow every year except one since the eliminator became a part of the NHRA national event tour in 2010.

Pete Farber was in Las Vegas driving the '63 Corvette that we last saw Mark Martino running at the U.S. Nationals. The Corvette is owned by Farber's engine builder and tuner, Al Billes, and was pressed into service after Farber hit the wall with his familiar Dodge Charger Daytona at the Pro Mod event in St. Louis. Farber's Daytona is mostly repaired and will be in good shape by the start of the 2015 season.

Californian Richard Snavelly was a pleasant surprise in Las Vegas. Snavelly, driving his turbocharged '69 Camaro, made his NHRA Pro Mod debut. During qualifying, he recorded the first 253-mph run in NHRA Pro Mod this year (253.09 mph), and during the first round of eliminations, he recorded an even higher speed, 253.14 mph, while defeating tour regular Dan Stevenson. Snavelly's day ended in the second round when he lost to eventual winner Smith.



Pete Farber