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## THE BIG GO!

COMPLETE COVERAGE  
OF THE CHEVROLET  
PERFORMANCE U.S. NATIONALS



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# NOTES FROM THE PRO MOD REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

BY JIM LUIKENS

From the time the news broke in early August that Justin "Big Chief" Shearer was going to participate at this year's Chevrolet Performance U.S. Nationals, no other competitor received more fan, Internet, and media attention than Shearer and his Crowmod '67 Firebird.

In qualifying, Shearer's 53-year-old cast-iron Pontiac engine was outclassed by the billet-aluminum Hemi engines that dominate the class today. After a shakedown run of 7.127 seconds, he made three quicker runs of 6.423, 6.364, and 6.361.

Shearer's best run of 6.361 at 226.47 mph left him 31st (of 33) on the final qualifying sheet and eager for more NHRA competition.

Von Smith was the surprise winner at Indy this year. After a -.001 foul by Troy Coughlin Sr. in the final round and a very loose run by him, Smith was surprised when the top-end crew waived him over for the winner's interview. The unexpected victory was his first this season in NHRA competition and proved to be very emotional for him. The win also added to the impressive national event victory total of his legendary tuner, Frank Manzo.

For the second year in a row, a newcomer to the series towed out from California for the U.S.



**Doug Winters turned in a strong effort with his turbocharged Chevelle. After qualifying for the record field, he took out current points leader Rickie Smith in the second round on a holeshot.**

Nationals and promptly set top speed. This year, it was Michael Bowman, of Oak Hills, Calif., who rang up the big number at 256.89 mph in his '69 Chevelle. After qualifying No. 3, he was matched up in the first round of eliminations with the near-identical '69 Chevelle of North Carolina's Doug Winters. Bowman had to lift to an 8.862 while Winters ran away with a 5.979 winning elapsed time.

Jonathan Gray returned to the Pro Mod wars at Indy with a very beautiful car. Driving the Hairston family's '07 Pontiac GTO, he ended up 20th on the final qualifying sheet with a best elapsed time of 5.934 seconds. Gray's GTO brought to 13 the number of different body styles competing in the NHRA J&A Service Pro Mod Series at Indy this year.

Some of the other new, new-to-them, or rebuilt entries debuting at Indy this year were the '68 Firebird of Shane

Molinari, the '69 Camaro of Gerry Capano, and the '16 Corvette of Sidnei Frigo.

Besides the new or updated race cars, several competitors used their two-month summer break to update the driveline of their existing car. One of the convertor cars switched to a manual-drive setup, and a manual-drive car was upgraded to a Leanders clutch from Sweden. With nearly all of the performance gains already extracted from the engine compartment, it appears that the driveline is the next place to look for improved elapsed times.

One of the main attractions of Pro Mod is the variety

of power adders that are available for use by the racers. Participants can run their choice of a turbocharged, supercharged, or nitrous-oxide-assisted engine. Of the 33 Pro Mod cars that attempted to qualify at Indy this year, 15 were supercharged, 12 turbocharged, and six nitrous-assisted. Interestingly, 28 of the 33 cars on the grounds recorded a five-second elapsed time during qualifying.

Turbocharged entries grabbed four of the top-five qualifying positions, but those were the only turbo cars that were able to make the 16-car starting field. Nitrous-assisted cars also garnered four starting spots with supercharged entries filling out the remaining eight positions.

In the semifinals, it was turbo versus turbo and blower versus blower, which led to a turbo versus blower final round.

With a couple of this year's heavy hitters sitting out the Big Go this year and several more good cars already committed to coming next year, I can hardly wait to see what the 2017 season brings.



**Jonathan Gray returned to the class following an accident earlier this season in Houston. He drove the Hairston family's GTO but did not qualify with a 5.934 best against the tough 5.892 bump spot.**

## PRO MOD

1. Troy Coughlin, Delaware, Ohio ('15 Corvette) . . . . . **5.773, 254.76**
2. Von Smith, Kingston, Tenn. ('16 Corvette) . . . . . **5.800, 248.71**
3. Michael Bowman, Oak Hills, Calif. ('69 Chevelle) . . . . . **5.821, 256.89**
4. Michael Biehle, North Vernon, Ind. ('67 Mustang) . . . . . **5.829, 253.90**
5. Bill Glidden, Whiteland, Ind. ('14 Camaro) . . . . . **5.838, 254.62**
6. Rickie Smith, King, N.C. ('15 Camaro) . . . . . **5.850, 249.53**
7. Khalid alBalooshi, Marina Del Ray, Qatar ('68 Camaro) . . . . . **5.853, 247.25**
8. Eric Latino, Whitby, Ont. ('69 Camaro) . . . . . **5.859, 247.97**
9. Bob Rahaim, Grosse Pointe, Mich. ('15 Corvette) . . . . . **5.861, 246.71**
10. Mike Janis, Lancaster, N.Y. ('13 Camaro) . . . . . **5.863, 245.09**
11. Jim Whiteley, Grand Junction, Colo. ('69 Chevelle) . . . . . **5.866, 246.12**
12. Mike Castellana, Muttontown, N.Y. ('15 Corvette) . . . . . **5.868, 244.78**
13. Chip King, Roxboro, N.C. ('70 Charger) . . . . . **5.873, 245.23**
14. Doug Winters, Pleasant Garden, N.C. ('69 Chevelle) . . . . . **5.890, 243.11**
15. Danny Rowe, Laguna Hills, Calif. ('15 Corvette) . . . . . **5.892, 246.66**
16. Steven Whiteley, Grand Junction, Colo. ('14 CTS-V) . . . . . **5.892, 246.53**

**ALTERNATES:** Steve Matusek - 5.895, 247.84; Jay Payne - 5.917, 245.36; Todd Tutterow - 5.933, 246.30; Jonathan Gray - 5.934, 250.60; Gerry Capano - 5.937, 242.84; Dan Stevenson - 5.945, 250.13; Kevin Rivenbark - 5.954, 239.87; Shane Molinari - 5.964, 249.30; Mike Knowles - 5.968, 241.84; Robert Patrick Jr. - 5.981, 242.50; Jim Bell - 5.984, 245.99; Harold Martin - 5.987, 241.11; Clint Satterfield - 6.079, 244.25; Sidnei Frigo - 6.318, 169.02; Justin Shearer - 6.361, 226.47; Ruben Tetsosvili - 6.502, 166.79; Chuck Little - 7.545, 132.62.

